

Garage Sale Tips

Advertising

- When placing an ad, check the way each publication arranges garage sale listings. Some papers start with ads that have numbers first, others put them last. To get your ad listed as high in the listing as possible, make sure your ad has a #1 or #2 or a word starting with 'A'. Example: 2 family garage sale, A five family yard sale.
- Lead shoppers to your home. Make good clear bold signs and arrows. Check signs regularly to see if anyone has moved them to point to their sale. (Isn't that rude?? It happens!!) Always ask permission from any homeowner on whose property you would like to place a sign. Show them one of your signs to alleviate their concerns that you might damage their lawn or worse yet, their sprinkler system with your signs.

Stuff to have on hand

- Grocery bags
- Newspaper for wrapping breakables.
- Clipboard, paper, pencil.
- Extension cord to test electric things and batteries to test toys.

Money

- Have plenty of change. Be ready for larger bills as soon as you open.
- Have a No Return policy and clearly post it, unless you want it back the next day.
- Take checks at your own risk.
- Keep a modest amount of money near you; Keep larger bills and most of the money in the house.
- When making change, keep buyer's bill in plain view to prevent misunderstandings.

Safety

- Watch for shoplifting, look inside of containers. (like coolers and luggage etc... Yup, that happens too!)
- Cover things up in the garage.
- Be aware of overly inquisitive 'pre-robbery' shoppers who might be shopping for the new TV's or computers inside.
- Keep house locked.

Pricing

- A rule of thumb is price 1/3 of original cost unless item is current and nearly new.
- Pricing is relative to how badly you want to get rid of the item.
- To discourage early birds, put up a sign charging them double.
- Lower prices at the ½ waypoint or at lunchtime.
- For a pricier item that you are not ready to dicker on yet, hold the lower offer, take phone number and call if the item doesn't sell at your original price. Also, understand that the buyer may change his mind and may not wish to buy it after all.
- When asked about a price, don't be wishy-washy. ("How about .50 or 1.00?" Which would you pick??)
- Pricing on TOPS of things makes it easy for shopper to see.
- Use inclusive pricing, example: All Books .25 cents.
- Don't use pricing by table (Anything on this table __cents) could cost you. Things could get mixed up.
- For great quantities (baby clothes, McDonaldland toys), use a "Fill a Bag" price. Fill a Bag for a buck. As the best selections dwindle lower price accordingly.
- Consider buying a pricing gun at your local office supply store. (Check the ease of getting refill stickers. Choose white for multiple family sales. Color-coding with highlighters.) Using it for one garage sale will save time and effort.

Presentation

- Make sure items are clean.
- Put things in original boxes with instructions if possible.
- Be sure to mark 'as is' and be clear about its condition. It's okay to sell something broken or with missing parts, as long as you note it. (In many states, you are obligated, by law, to operate under the fair trade practices of the state. You might be legally responsible to stand behind your product and return money to a shopper if the product is not represented truthfully.)
- Get things up off the ground, unless they are large and freestanding.
- Get tables, use plywood on sawhorses or between chairs, and cover tables with table clothes or sheets.
- Bag 'n Bundle. Put one diamond amongst ten rocks. It gets rid of the rocks and lets you charge more for the diamond.
- Play music loud enough to allow buyers a little privacy for conversation.
- Be attentive to buyers but not looming.
- Be ready to open at least 30 minutes *before* your actual starting time. Shoppers will be ready even if you aren't! To keep shoppers at bay, ribbon off your driveway until you are ready. You could also set up inside the garage and lift the doors when you are ready. If you choose to open early, you may contend with angry shoppers who honored your stated time, especially if they have come for an item specifically mentioned in your ad.

Clean up

- As you sell your stock, condense down to fewer tables. It will appear that you still have a lot to pick from and you can put tables away as you go.
- Don't want to store unsold items? Donate to a local charity. Photograph and attach pictures of the donated items to the receipt that charity gives you.
- If you are keeping things for the next sale, box them up by category: toys, kitchen items, garage stuff, etc...When you unpack for the next sale, it will be easy to put items out. Label the boxes well.

Linda Ely is the owner of Organizing Matters, an Organization Consultant and a member of NAPO, National Association of Professional Organizers. Linda is the founder of Faithful Organizers, the only nationwide virtual community of Christian Professional Organizers.

Organizing Matters is committed to helping clients reach their goal of a more organized home, workplace and schedule. To learn more, *visit* www.OrganizingMatters.com or *e-mail* her at LindaE@OrganizingMatters.com