

HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL GARAGE/YARD SALE

If you are planning a yard or garage sale, planning and preparation is key to being successful. First, you need to find out if there are any restrictions in your town, development or neighborhood regarding yard/garage sales. Some places have special yard sale events per year or have a limit on how many yard/garage sales a person is allowed to have per year.

Things to consider when planning and preparing:

Location – For the best outcome, your location should be easily accessible and have adequate parking to park at least 4-5 cars at one time. If you don't have adequate parking ask a friend or family who has plenty of parking to have a yard sale with you at their home or suggest a block party/yard sale day in your development or neighborhood. Another option is to rent a table or space at a fundraising yard sale put on by a local church/civic group or flea market.

If you're setting up your yard sale on the lawn, make sure your grass has been recently mowed and fill in any ruts in the ground to avoid accidents. If you have a dog, make sure your lawn is poop-scooped prior to the sale. It is best to keep your dog away from your sale as some people are afraid of dogs or are allergic and it also protects your dog from any type of accident or incident.

Day & Time - Don't pick a holiday weekend (Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day) to have your sale. On these holidays people are known to do a lot of traveling or stay home. You'll generally have a better turnout if it's a non-holiday weekend. The only exception to this would be if you live on a road that has a lot of tourist traffic. Holidays like Mother's Day, Father's Day are generally okay.

You may want to check the weather before advertising your sale. If there's 70-80% chance of rain, you may want to pick another weekend or day.

You will have early birds. Some sellers don't mind, others hate it. If you really don't want them, specify "No Early Birds" in your ad and state prices before 7am are doubled. Some people will even try to drop by the day before the sale. If you've had this problem with prior sales, you may just want to state the street or road name on the ad.

Advertise - Advertise your yard sale in print and online. The more people at your sale, the better the outcome. In your ad make sure you include the day, date, starting time, address and/or directions. Also listing your items with some detail draws interest from those looking for specific items and add pictures. To draw more attention, advertise a Free section, special deals or discount pricing at the end of the day. Use catchy phrases like Multi-Family, Neighborhood or Community Sale, Ultimate Group Sale or 20 Years of Stuff! In the case of rain, state a rain date. In addition to your ad, put up flyers on bulletin boards such as grocery stores, churches, or consider having a multi-family or neighborhood sale and split the advertising costs. *Note: The Guide publication offers ads starting at \$8.50 along with 6 pictures at no additional charge. Your ad would be in print and online with a Google map to your location. Your ad would also be delivered in print to over 1600 locations throughout Delmarva and receive over 1000 local views per day on www.TheGuide.com website.*

Signs - Use yard/garage sale signs that are bold in color with large lettering with arrows and street or road name but be aware that there are some laws regarding the placement of signage. Check into the regulations regarding posting signs as it may be illegal to post without a permit especially on public roadways. Put the signs up very early morning the day of the sale. Drawing arrows on the signs help. Use cardboard to place your signs on to make them sturdy. The Guide offers (2) bright yellow signs along with your ad placement.

After you have placed your signs, drive by to see if they are legible. Don't forget to take your signs down at the end of your sale.

Items to sell - Start collecting items for your yard sale months before your sale. Store the items in some out of the way place. This helps to alleviate something getting sold that you didn't want to sell. Make sure you include original boxes and instruction manuals on items if you still have them. Also, check pockets of jackets, purses, etc. to ensure that personal information or items are not left within that you do not wish to lose or sell. If something runs on batteries, put batteries in it (they don't have to be new).

Change - Have a stock of small bills (approximately \$100 total - \$10 bills, \$5 bills, \$1 bills, roll of quarters (\$10). Keep in mind a lot of people use \$20 bills. Have something secure to store the bills and change. Fanny packs are good to use for bills and change as well as securing your cell phone. Cash boxes are fine as well. However, you will need someone to guard it at all times. Don't accept checks unless you're willing to get a bad check or if it's from someone you know well. Checking out can be hectic when you have a crowd. Have a calculator readily available to add up the sale items and to give change.

You could also accept digital payments by purchasing an inexpensive credit card reader. There are some readers that will send the reader free and charge by the swipes. This may be good for larger items. Also, online payment transfers such as Zelle may be an option.

Bags & Newspaper – You will need shopping bags especially if you are having a “fill a bag sale of clothes” or if you plan on having a bag/box lot sale at the end of the day. Lunch bags or Ziplock bags may be good for small toys especially if you're pricing them by the bag. You will also need newspapers to wrap breakable items. The Guide has newspaper end rolls starting at \$1 (call for availability).

Tables/Chairs – People typically don't like bending down or over to view items. Therefore, you will need tables to display items and you will need chairs for those working the sale. If you don't have any, ask family or friends to borrow some. If you plan on having yard sales or picnic and family/friends gathering in the future, it may be a good investment to purchase a couple of tables. They retail about \$45 each. Some people even use picnic tables, outside tables or extra tables from their home. Make sure you cover them with sheets as buyers may want to buy your tables as well.

Hangers - If you are hanging clothing on a clothes rack, on a rope between trees or on your garage door, use cheap hangers as buyers will assume the hanger is included. Don't throw clothing on a tarp in a big heap, most buyers will bypass it. Try to organize clothing by putting tops together, pants, etc. and sort by color and sizes.

Tape Measure – Have a tape measure available in case someone needs to know the dimensions of a piece of furniture or an inseam or waist measurement on a piece of clothing.

Hand Sanitizer – With the constant exchange of money and possible cards, you may want to have a bottle of sanitizer readily available near your checkout area for yourself and the customer.

Prices – As you gather things, put a price on it. Put prices on everything! It can be a lot of work but it's worth it. It will save you time the day of the sale from answering someone every few seconds or selling something at a price you really didn't want. You can purchase preprinted price stickers to make pricing easier. They range from \$4-\$7 with 1000 to 2100 stickers. Also, make sure you post a big sign that states “All Sales Are Final.”

Pricing typically should be a third of what it costs new and no lower than 10% of the retail cost. Remember people that go to yard sales are looking for bargains.

In the event that pricing is lost on an item or a sign is missing, it may be a good idea to make up a pricing sheet so you have something readily available for reference.

Put a large price tag on larger items such as furniture. Clothes are harder to sell unless it's baby or kids clothing. Price the adult-size clothing cheap. Check www.MyFrugalHome.com for a printable pricing guide.

In addition, offer deals such as 25 cents each or 5 for \$1 or place things in small bags and sell as a lot or offer fill-a-bag pricing.

If you are trying to sell something that is fairly high dollar and it's a popular item, cut or print out an ad with the item in it showing the price and tape it to your item.

For items that are broken or have missing pieces, put them in a box marked "Free" stating "Broken and/or missing parts."

Display – Make your items be the most attractive they can be. This will also help with selling your items for the amount you are asking.

Have clothing hanging or folded on a table, hanging on a clothes rack or a rope/string between trees so it can be easily seen. If the clothing is stained, esp. kids clothing, you may want to work the stain out. If you're selling books and CDs, arrange them in a box so that the titles can be easily read.

Wipe items off that are dusty or wash them if they appear dirty.

Constantly replace empty spots on your table as things sell.

Women like to stop at yard sales. However, men don't always want to. Put man items such as mowers, tools, fishing or hunting gear closest to the road or street so they will be more apt to stop.

If you are selling electrical appliances, have an electrical outlet handy or a long extension cord. Same with items that require batteries. Have batteries in the items already or have available for testing.

If you're having the sale in your garage, buyers will try to buy everything in your garage. Cover things you don't want to sell or put a "Not for Sale" sign on it.

Having a kid's area is a great way to gravitate kids towards that area while keeping them away from breakable items and the parent(s) can browse more easily. If you have kids and you want to get rid of their outgrown toys, involve them by having them set up their own table selling their stuff and let them know they can make room for new toys with the money they make. Of course, make sure you help with the pricing.

Atmosphere - Play easy listening music. It makes the people at your sale more relaxed and they can easily chat with their partner without feeling they have to whisper.

Don't over talk. They don't need a story or every detail about every item they touch.

Don't make your potential buyers uncomfortable by staring.

If you have coolers, consider selling sodas, tea or water, snacks, etc. on hot days. Sell what you like so you don't mind if you have leftovers. Have a trash can close by. The longer people stay at your yard sale the more likely they will buy something. If they just stay and browse, that's good as it may lure others to the sale. You want a crowd at your sale. It draws attention.

If they need to use a restroom, give them directions to the nearest convenience store or fast-food restaurant.

Deal Seekers - Expect buyers that will want to haggle and bargain with you on items. Tell them it's worth the price as indicated and maybe if it doesn't sell you may sell it at a lower price at the end of the day.

Be careful as you may get a customer who wants to help by giving the total of their purchases. It may be a ploy to not pay the true full amount.

Think twice about allowing holds. Most people don't come back. If they really want it, they'll usually buy it once they know they can't put it on hold.

Consider that you may have individuals show up at the end of the day wanting to purchase lots. For example, a box of books, CDs, video games, etc. They may be resellers looking to resell. Sometimes it's worth getting the items sold but have a low price point in mind so you don't feel flustered on the spot.

After the Sale: Nothing that went into the sale should go back into your house. Enjoy the profits from your sale and that the unused items are now someone else's treasure. Set up a time to drop off any remaining items to a local charity organization. Also, return any borrowed tables and don't forget to take down your signs.