

How to Hold a Garage Sale by Tom Kreuzer

A Garage Sale Provides

- A family activity everyone can take part in.
- A way to reduce clutter.
- A way to make money.
- A way to meet neighbors and trade treasures.
- A way to recycle unwanted items. Your trash is someone's treasure.

All During The Year Or Spring Cleaning

- ❑ Pick a room in the house - Look in all the closets, drawers, boxes, shelves, and any other nook and cranny in the room. If you have not used an item in the last year, it is a good candidate to sell. After checking all the rooms, check the attic, basement, car trunk, and garage.
- ❑ Make a box and label it "Free Items" for small toys or other items. Don't throw any items in the trash; add to the free box. Examples: Old t-shirts with stains can be used as rags. Broken items can be used for parts or fixed.
- ❑ During the year as you buy or get new items of clothing, put aside the old items for the sale. One in - one out. Example: New pair of shoes in, old pair to sale.
- ❑ Price items.
 - ❑ Site with a short list of standard sale prices
http://www.garagesalesource.com/articles/garage_sale_pricing/
Site with detail on 1000s of prices
<http://garagesalehomepage.com/PricingMain.php>
 - ❑ For bigger ticket or rare items, check www.eBay.com using the "Advanced Search" with the "Completed listings" option to see what prices sold for.
 - ❑ Price most items in \$1 increments, it is easier to total for checkout and make change. Tape multiple items together if they are worth less than \$1 or for loose items mark them 2 for \$1 (Example toys or books). If you must use less than \$1, use 25, 50, or 75 cent. If it is less than 25 cents, put in a free box.
 - ❑ Designer clothing is best sold in a consignment shop. You can try to sell at your garage sale before taking to a shop if you want. Most consignment shops give you 50% of what they sell it for.
 - ❑ Large items like furniture are best sold on www.Craigslist.com or www.eBay.com.
 - ❑ Like items that are all the same price don't have to be individually priced. Make a small sign and hang or tape it near the items during the sale. You can also put the items in a box and mark the price on a flap of the box. Make a list of the items and prices and have that at your checkout table.
 - ❑ Mark prices using masking tape or buy labels and tags at most stores. I like to use a green or blue masking tape so it stands out on the item.
 - ❑ If your sale will include items from other family members or neighbors, put a code, like your initials, below the price to identify who should get credit for the sale.
 - ❑ Some sales use different colored sticker dots to price items. Example: Everything blue is \$1, red is \$2, yellow is \$3, etc. Buyers hate this because they have to keep looking at sign to see what the color means and it makes it hard to total their purchases. Don't use colored sticker dots.
 - ❑ Price or have a sign for everything. Most buyers will not ask you for a price during the sale. For high price items you can put a price like "\$200 or best offer". Have the buyer leave a name, phone number, and price they will pay. If you still have the item at the end of the sale you can phone the high bidder.
- ❑ Wash or clean items, they will bring a better price. Don't spend more time cleaning the item than it is worth. If it is really in bad shape, add to the free box.
- ❑ If the item has an original box, instructions, extra cords, etc. attach them with tape to the item.
- ❑ Place books, CDs, and records in a box with the titles up and visible so you can just place on a table for the sale. Put the price on the box flap.
- ❑ Use clear bags for small items or to combine items for one price.
- ❑ If an item does not work or is broken, write the problem using masking tape on the item. Example for a boom box: CD does not work
- ❑ Collect paper bags, plastic bags, boxes, and large cardboard that you will use for checkout and signs during the sale.
- ❑ Tape items with sharp edges so buyers don't cut themselves.
- ❑ Invite neighbors or friends to sell at your sale if you have the room. The more items at your sale causes buyers to stay longer and buy more.

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- ❑ Advertise your sale. You want to get the word out to as many buyers as you can. If buyers don't know about the sale, you will have very few buyers at your sale.
 - ❑ Signup for the neighborhood sale if possible. Example: Highland Garagefest May 15, 2010 www.highlanddistrictcouncil.org. It will save you money and time it would have cost to advertise in the papers and online. There also will be more buyers in the area for the other sales than you would normally have for any other date.
 - ❑ If you are not in a neighborhood sale, put a garage sale ad in papers like the Highland Villager, St Paul Pioneer Press, and Star Tribune. Use free online sites. Some examples of sites can be found at: <http://www.yardsalequeen.com/>

One Week Before The Sale

- ❑ Plan for the tables you need to setup. Ask friends and family if they have a table you can use for the sale. Tables can be improvised from upturned boxes, boards, old doors, or anything big and flat. Use saw horses, cinder blocks, or other items to hold them up. Items are less appealing when displayed on the ground and many buyers will not bend down to look.
- ❑ Plan on using a patio table or card table for your checkout. Also, a patio table with an umbrella can protect you from the sun or rain during the sale.
- ❑ Make signs.
 - ❑ Cardboard works best, use 2 ft by 3 ft or larger. An 8 ½ by 11 sign is too small for buyers to see from their car.
 - ❑ Make enough signs to cover the busy roads buyers will be using near your sale. This usually means about 4-6 two sided signs or 8-12 one sided signs attached to poles.
 - ❑ Use a big black extra wide felt pen with letters about 6" high. Make letters readable so a car driving by can read it from a distance and know where to go.
 - ❑ The sign should have the word "Sale" at the top with an arrow pointing the way and the address. Add the time you are open at the bottom if you have room. Example: Today 9-3 PM. Anything else on the sign is just a distraction.
 - ❑ If your sale is in the alley, put a BIG sign in the front yard with "Sale in Alley". If your sale is in the front of the house and other sales are in your alley, put a BIG sign in your alley with "Sale in Front". Make sure to have a clear clean path from the front of the house to the alley.
 - ❑ Make a 8½ by 11 sign "All Sales Final" and "No Checks" that you will put on the checkout table.
 - ❑ Wood stakes don't work for signs, they are hard to pound in and will fall over. See the tips on the day of the sale on how to put your signs up.
- ❑ Go to the bank and get change for the sale if needed. Have at least \$3 in quarters, \$20 in \$1s, and \$20 in \$5. If you have items for sale above \$20, you should have \$10 and \$20 also. Count and record the total amount you have for change, this will be used to figure the total made after the sale.
- ❑ Plan to hang most clothing on hangers. If you need extra hangers you can usually buy them at thrift stores if you ask.
- ❑ For the checkout table have a:
 - ❑ Cash drawer or box with a lid to store change and bills. You could use a carpenter's apron or fanny pack if your sale is small and you will handle all the checkouts.
 - ❑ Pad of paper and pens to record sales if you have multiple people selling at your sale and for adding up sales.
 - ❑ Calculator to add up those large multiple item sales you hope to have.
 - ❑ Tape measure and yard stick for buyers to check the size of an item.
 - ❑ Small trash can or pail to put trash in.
 - ❑ Bags and boxes you have been saving and newspaper to wrap fragile items.
 - ❑ Tape or labels to price items you may have missed or mark down during the sale.

The Day Before The Sale

- ❑ Sweep the garage clean. A dirty garage reflects on the items you want to sell.
- ❑ Setup tables in your garage and begin to haul and setup items on tables. You can cover the tables with old sheets if you have them. Leave at least a 3 feet aisle for buyers between tables. Two people should be able to pass each other.
- ❑ Use old sheets, tarps, or ropes to cover shovels, shelves, mower, junk, etc. in the garage that aren't for sale. This will save you having to say 100 times to buyers "Sorry they are not for sale".

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- ❑ If your garage is dark, add lights to light the tables. Buyers can't buy what they can't see.
- ❑ Put items for men, women, or kids together with other for men, women, or kid items. Arrange like items together on the tables like a store. Games, nic nacs, electronics, jewelry, shoes, kid's cloths, woman's cloths, books, outdoor, kitchen, sports, tools, etc.
- ❑ If you have more items than will fit on tables inside the garage, plan to setup large items outside the day of the sale. You can also setup tables outside the garage, but have plastic or tarps to cover the tables if it rains.
- ❑ Set aside a card table or patio table with chairs that will be used as your checkout table.
 - ❑ Position it where buyers enter your sale so you will have a good view of buyers as they come and go. Don't put it in the back of the garage.
 - ❑ Valuable items should be on the table closest to the checkout so you can keep an extra eye of them.
- ❑ Have an outlet or extension cord to plug in electrical items.
- ❑ Check for possible tripping or cracks that buyers might encounter as they shop.
- ❑ Put in cheap or old batteries into items that run only on batteries. You can buy batteries at the Dollar store. If you don't have cheap batteries, have some good batteries at your checkout table for buyers to use to test items.
- ❑ Hang a 10 ft pipe, roof rake, or ladder to make an area in the garage where you can hang clothing. Wrap the ends with a small towel so buyers will not run into the ends.
- ❑ If you have kids, they can sell coffee, hot cider, pop, lemonade, or bars during the sale. Bake or mix what you plan to sell. The kids should have their own table, chairs to sit, and cash box or change.
- ❑ Make sure you have enough copies of the maps if it is a neighborhood sale. Have at least 50 copies to hand out.
- ❑ If it looks like rain the day of the sale, have tarps or plastic ready to cover items up.

The Day Of The Sale

- ❑ Put signs out on busy roads near your house.
 - ❑ Make sure the signs can be seen by buyers driving in both directions.
 - ❑ Use tape, I recommend 3M Transparent Duct Tape, to attach signs to a telephone pole or steel pole. If you can not attach to an existing pole, the yard signs with the two thin wire stakes work best and are easy to setup. You can also use a hammer and 2" roofing nails to put signs on telephone poles. A stapler will not work on most of the old telephone poles. Old political signs work great or you can even use tomato cages.
 - ❑ Get permission if you are putting them on private property. No signs should be put on Highland Parkway. It is considered a public park and they will be taken down.
 - ❑ Don't block other seller's signs or they may destroy yours.
- ❑ Place larger interesting items so buyers can see them as they drive up to the sale.
- ❑ Place a cordless phone or your cell phone near your checkout table in case you get a call during the sale or if a buyer needs to call someone.
- ❑ Lock all the doors and windows in your house so someone can't break in during the sale.
- ❑ Place your pets inside the house so they don't bother your buyers.
- ❑ Move your cars so buyers will have a place to park and can easily see your sale as they drive up.
- ❑ Draw additional attention to your sale with 60 ft of colorful pennants. They can be bought at Sam's Club for \$15 or from a number of other stores.
<http://www.samsclub.com/sams/shop/product.jsp?productId=203465&navAction>
- ❑ Plan to open your sale 30-45 minutes before the stated start time. Early birds will be waiting for you to open.

During The Sale

- ❑ Welcome buyers as they come to the sale. Don't hover over them as they shop or they will leave.
- ❑ Handout maps for the neighborhood sale to buyers who don't have a copy.
- ❑ Plug in electronics so buyers can try them out.
- ❑ Don't take checks unless you personally know the buyer. If you don't know them, tell them you will hold the item while they go to an ATM or bank to get cash.
- ❑ Never let your cash box or change out of your sight. Store bills \$20 and above in your pocket or fanny pack.
- ❑ Watch for shop-lifters or buyers changing price tags. Also, at checkout make sure items are not hidden in an item they are buying.
- ❑ Be aware that there are buyers who try to pass counterfeit \$100 bills.

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- ❑ Don't let strangers into your house to use the bathroom or make a phone call. Send them to the nearest store or gas station.
- ❑ If buyers offer less than the price during the first 2-3 hours of the sale, tell them to come back at 2 PM and you will give them a deal if it has not sold.
- ❑ When a buyer hands you a bill and you need to make change, put the bill partly under the cash box or calculator until after you hand the buyer their change. Sometimes dishonest buyers will say "You gave me change for \$5 when I gave you \$20". If you had put the \$5 into the cash box or your apron, you can not prove he gave you \$5. Only put the buyer's bill into the cash box or your apron after you have made change and the buyer is leaving.
- ❑ Move items around and take down tables as you sell items. If you have items on the floor or ground, put them up on tables when you have room.
- ❑ Make sure to point buyers to your neighbor's sales.
- ❑ For clothing on hangers, keep the hangers for your next sale.
- ❑ Have fun.

After The Sale

- ❑ Pickup the signs you put out. You can use them for your next sale and you should not litter by leaving them out after the sale.
- ❑ Donate left over items to charity. If you donate your items you can use it as an itemized deduction on your taxes. Use www.itsdeductible.com to create a detailed list and total for your donated items. Check with the charity to see which items they will take. Example: Goodwill or the neighborhood cleanup May 22. See www.highlanddistrictcouncil.org.
- ❑ Take down the remaining tables and return your garage back to a garage. Return any tables you borrowed.
- ❑ Add up all the money in the cash box and subtract the change you started with. This is the total profit for the sale. Add up the totals by family member or neighbors if you had multiple people selling at the sale. Split the money.
- ❑ Start planning for next year.