

# HOW TO HAVE A GARAGE SALE

Wondering what to do with that ancient bin full of baby clothes in your basement? What about old fishing poles, lampshades, the drapes from your former house, or that box full of mismatched glasses? If one woman's trash is another's treasure, you could be sitting on a gold mine. Garage sales are summer fixtures all over Canada, frequented by eager bargain hunters on the lookout for great deals. Plus, they're a great way to rid your home of clutter and make a few extra bucks while doing it. "Surprisingly, items that you may think are destined for the junkyard often sell," says Heather Knittel, co-founder of Good Riddance Professional Organizing Solutions in Vancouver. Sure, garage sales take a lot of organization and energy, but don't fret. Here's how to throw a successful sale. LISA GOLDMAN



One woman's trash is another's treasure. The right kind of garage sale could earn you bundles.

## ORGANIZE YOUR STUFF

Get yourself sorted before you start throwing all your wares into one giant pile. "Look for those items that haven't been used or worn for some time and that you definitely want out of the house," says Knittel. Keep all your kitchen products, DVDs, books, toys and clothing in separate bins until you're ready to price and display. When you're finished collecting and filling boxes, pick a big room in the house where items can be grouped by category until everything moves outside, she says.

Once you've scoured every inch of your house

for odds and ends you're hoping to part with, make sure each piece is clean and presentable. (Wiping down a side table or dusting off your old stereo speakers before putting them up for sale could mean the difference between \$1 and \$10.) Don't bother trying to sell broken items or ripped, soiled clothing; you probably won't get any takers.

When you start pricing, be sure the method you use is clear and visible. "Colour-coding using bright stickers can simplify the process," says Knittel. "For instance, yellow

stickers represent \$1, blue stickers are \$2, and so on." Remember, shoppers are out looking for a bargain, so don't charge too much.

"Price a little higher than you expect to make and then be willing to negotiate, which is half the fun for some people who go to sales," says Debra Milne, founder of [www.professionalorganizers.com](http://www.professionalorganizers.com). That said, keep in mind your stuff has depreciated over the years, so a useful approach is to charge between one-sixth and one-quarter of the original purchase price. You should also bundle

items to move merchandise faster. (For example, make books 25 cents each or five for \$1.) "Garage sales typically attract buyers who love a deal and enjoy haggling over prices," says Knittel.

When it comes to newer items or older pieces in exceptional condition, it might be best to sell them on auction websites such as eBay or to consignment shops. The same goes for items that are still in their original packaging, with instructions and manuals. If you have antiques, check the classifieds to get an idea of what to charge. >

### PRICING SUGGESTIONS

- To avoid having to make small change, don't price items at less than 25 cents.
- Paperback books usually sell for 25 cents, while hardcovers should be less than a toonie.
- DVDs can go for up to \$5.
- Clothing sells for 10 per cent of the retail value, says Milne, but you can charge a bit more for a name brand or a piece that's never been worn. Baby clothes that are in good condition can go from \$1 to \$15.
- Bedroom sets in great condition can get 20 to 30 per cent of their original cost.
- Coffee tables can go for up to \$25.
- Sofas in great condition can go for up to \$100.

### PLAN THE DAY

If the sun is shining and it's warm and dry out, sales on either Saturdays or Sundays will draw equal crowds. Don't let long weekends deter you; there are lots of potential buyers who stay in town. Aim to open the sale up early. An 8:00 to 8:30 a.m. start will give you time for any last-minute setting up, and to get bagels and coffee for your crew. "Serious garage-sale mavens will be out hunting early in the day," says Knittel. It's common for traffic to be heavy in the morning, then peter out in the afternoon. You can also expect some shoppers to return later in the day to see if you've lowered your prices on remaining items.

A few days before the big event, you'll want to bombard the neighbourhood with plenty of posters detailing your sale. (Don't forget to include the date, hours, address, whether it's a multifamily or street sale and a teaser of some of your hot items: "Kids' clothing in great condition PRICED TO SELL!") It's a good

idea to advertise in your local newspaper, and post signs in community centres, on lamp-posts, mailboxes and so on. Remember to tell your neighbours about the sale, and ask them to spread the word, too.

### SETTING UP THE GOODS

While there's no right or wrong way to set up for your sale, there are tricks you can use to attract more customers.

- Place hot-ticket items (such as CDs, toys, tools, kids' books and furniture in good condition) at the top of the driveway.
  - Get potential buyers to stop by placing a "free" box at the foot of the drive.
  - Be sure to place everything you're selling on tables instead of displaying things on the ground.
  - Keep on top of any messes; no one wants to wade through a sloppy display area to find what you're selling.
  - Be visible to customers. Wearing an apron shows people who's hosting, and its pockets are ideal for storing money.
  - Place expensive items such as jewellery near the cashier or other guarded spaces.
  - Hang clothing on racks or clotheslines. If you're folding sweaters or baby clothes, place them in laundry bins sorted according to size, says Milne.
  - Keep books on bookcases (spines facing out) and knick-knacks on shelving units.
  - Don't allow strangers into your home for any reason.
  - Be sure you have access to an electrical outlet so that people can try out any electronics for sale.
- Even the most successful garage sales have unsold items left over, Milne says. Don't bring anything back into the house. Instead, give your goods to friends or, better yet, to charity.

