

CANADIAN RELOCATION, "GARAGE SALE TIPS"

DEFINITION OF A GARAGE SALE:

An outdoor sale of used personal or household items held on the seller's premises.

ANOTHER DEFINITION OF A GARAGE SALE:

A method by which people transfer unwanted items around from one house to the next.

THE FINER PRINT:

It looks like more and more municipalities and cities are demanding a license/permit (fee) for holding a garage sale. When you are moving or relocating it is time to get rid of the unwanted "stuff" in your residence so here are some tips for making it a success.

Everyone holding a garage sale is legally responsible for ensuring that products being sold, whether new or used, are safe and meet current regulatory requirements. It is important to only sell items that are in good condition. Damaged articles should be discarded.

Before selling a product at a garage sale, check with the manufacturer and Health Canada to see if it has been recalled and if the problem has been corrected. If it has been recalled and the problem has not been or cannot be corrected, do not sell the product. Destroy it so it cannot be used by anyone else, and throw it away.

HEALTH CANADA, TIPS AND ADVICE:

<http://hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/garage-eng.php>

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE SALE

Visit other garage sales--as a customer, you will be able to learn from them and will have an idea of the general price levels. Start saving shopping bags, cardboard boxes and newspapers your customers will find them very convenient on the day of the sale.

DECIDE WHEN TO HOLD YOUR SALE:

Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays are the traditional garage sale days--most people get paid at the end of the week and don't work on those days. Consequently, they have more money and more time to spend and are more likely to attend your sale in larger numbers. However, avoid holding your sale during Victoria Day, Dominion Day, Civic Holiday and Labor Day weekends as a lot of people leave their home during the long weekends.

The best time of the year to hold a sale is from mid-spring to mid-fall in most parts of Canada. Hot weather won't discourage your potential customers, but cold, snow and icy roads will certainly stop them from attending your sale.

The length of your sale does not have much importance--the longer it will be, the less you will sell each day--neither does the closing time. You will probably have more customers in the earlier hours of your sale than during the rest of the day.

For that reason, the best starting time seems to be early in the morning. If you are holding your sale outside, plan an alternate date in case of bad weather.

In a yard sale, everything has to be taken inside every night and the sudden showers may cause pandemonium. Still it may be worth it to have things spread out in view of passing drivers.

A basement is less desirable because strangers hesitate to walk into your house, whereas a wide open garage is more inviting.

If you live in an apartment, consider creating artificial barriers to avoid finding customers rummaging through your personal belongings under the assumption that everything is for sale.

Before sifting through your home, be sure you are in a "getting-rid-of" mood. Take a record sheet or notebook with you and list everything you want to sell. You can sell just about anything at a garage sale, but keep in mind that:

the larger the display, the longer the customers will linger and the more likely they'll buy; the things you may not need or want could be someone else's treasures;

if you want to dispose of some large expensive items, this will be made easier if you include a lot of smaller low-priced ones, for a lot of garage sale goers have a limited budget; parents will have more time to look around if their children are busy with a few toys you have included in your sale.

A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE SALE

Get paper and pencil or a calculator for computing costs and have your wrapping supplies ready.

Display your items. Remove anything you don't want to sell from your garage and if some things cannot be moved, put a big "NOT FOR SALE" tag on them or cover them with a sheet, a good background for display.

Arrange small articles on tables. With some twine, hang poles from the garage ceiling for clothes racks. Assemble beds or dismantled pieces so people can see there's nothing missing. For books and magazines, mark the asking price on a few big cardboard boxes and pile the books in them. Bundle "go together" items you want to sell as a unit and make grab bags or surprise packages at a moderate price. If possible, have an electric outlet for testing appliances.

Arrange all goods neatly to give your shopper a good first impression but don't make your garage look like a shop--it could turn off a lot of potential customers who enjoy the casual look of garage sales.

Get plenty of change in a cash box and note how much you have on hand to start with.

THE DAY BEFORE THE SALE

Price each article. It will make you think about prices beforehand and you won't have to make on-the-spot decisions on the day of the sale.

On a new article, a general rule of thumb is to charge no more than half the store cost. Prices on used items are lower. The main thing is to keep your prices at absolute rock bottom, remembering that they are the main attraction of your merchandise and the main objective of the sale is to lighten your load.

Remember that a drop of glue, a piece of tape or a few stitches can increase the value of an item. Clean and dust all items.

Keep your prices in multiples of five--5¢, 10¢, \$1.00 etc.--for easier computing and, since a garage sale would be very tame without a lot of haggling and bargaining, don't forget to add about 10% to every price you decide on.

Place a price tag on everything. This will encourage buyers and allow them to identify bargains.

Self-adhesive tags are quicker, more convenient and will make last minute changes easier than masking tape.

Record all the prices and any price change you make.

ADVERTISE YOUR SALE

Advertising your sale is an important part of its success.

Run a classified ad in your local newspaper, the day before the sale starts--people who only get the evening issue will be able to plan on attending your sale the next day. Your ad should include a brief listing of major items for sale, date(s) of sale, rain date(s), business hours and your street address.

If you don't mind people calling you to know what color that rug is, you may include your phone number. To catch the reader's eye in crowded columns, spend a little extra to have a black line put around your ad or a catchy headline in larger type.

Pin notices on church, school, supermarket and club bulletin boards.

If you have children to do the legwork, you may want to run off flyers and distribute them in your neighborhood.

Prepare a sign you will put in front of your house on the day of the sale. Make it large and visible--the letters should be at least 20 cm (8") high, 1.25 cm (1/2") thick, and on a white background. Use indelible ink in case it rains.

If you live on a secluded street, you may want to install additional signs at the nearest crossroads and on the main roads.

Don't underestimate word-of-mouth advertising-- phone friends, tell co-workers, neighbors, etc.

ON THE DAY OF THE SALE

Brace yourself for an early rush of business.

Let your customers browse in peace. You might want to have background music -- some people feel more at ease if they can discuss without being heard.

Serving fresh coffee and donuts makes your sale more fun. People will be encouraged to browse longer while they have a coffee.

After each item has been sold, check it off in your notebook and list any price change. Be ready to answer people's questions, to move things if it seems that more room is needed, to lower prices if it seems that you might be left with a few items on your hands at the end of the sale.

FOR YOUR SECURITY

Keep your cash box discreetly out of sight and keep the larger bills on your person.

Keep your valuables under lock and key. Never leave the sales area unattended.

Request that shopping bags be left with you until the choice of merchandise has been made.

Watch for shoplifters. They'll be watching you or will come with a friend who will try to distract you while the other appropriates wanted items. If someone looks suspicious, follow him/her around and propose your help. Pilfers generally get discouraged by close supervision.

AFTER THE SALE

Count up your money, remembering to deduct the amount you started with and take the cash to your bank or put it in a safe place. Take down all the outdoor signs you put up.

WOW, YOU DID IT!

If you have a few things left, consider donating them to a charitable organization in your community. Some you might like to call include: The Salvation Army, church rummage sales, various organizations specializing in collection of unwanted items. They may even pick up the goods from your home.

