



Planning A Garage Sale

PLANNING A SALE

Through a “garage sale” or “yard sale,” you can rid the house of unwanted items, make some money and have a little neighbourly fun.

Also, if you organize a garage sale prior to moving, you will lighten the weight of your shipment without having to throw or give away the items you no longer need or like - a further saving.

In order to assist you we have assembled some guidelines designed to make your garage sale a successful one.



A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE SALE

- **Phone or visit your local Licensing Commission or municipal authorities** – some communities have precise rules on holding garage sales and require permits or at least a notification.
- **Contact the Sales Tax District office of your provincial government for information.** Some provinces may require that you collect sales tax. If this is the case, you will have to obtain a vendor’s permit in order to levy the applicable tax. Note that Federal taxes do not apply to garage sales.
- **Check local, provincial and federal laws** before selling firearms, ammunition or explosives. The selling of some other items – bedding, food, clothes, etc. – may also be covered by local or provincial ordinances.
- **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.
- **Visit resale shops, antique shops, flea markets, etc.** – you may have a pleasant surprise at finding out that some of your discards are worth a lot more than you thought. You can also go to your local library and have a look at some specialized magazines.
- **Consider holding a joint sale** with one or several other families. You will have a larger display of merchandise, the sale can be held in the home with the best location and the families can share the work. Don’t forget to include an owner’s code on all the price tags, unless you decide on organizing a small flea market where each family have their own selling space.
- **Consider taking consignments** – if you don’t mind the extra responsibilities and book-keeping, you can be sure to get publicity from the consignees and increase your profits according to the commission you charge – 20% of the selling cost, on average.

Decide On...

When To Hold Your Sale

Fridays, Saturdays or Sundays are the traditional garage sales 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, Canada Day, Civic Holiday and Labour Day weekends as a lot of people leave their home during the long weekends.

The best time of 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 in the morning.

If you are holding your sale outside, plan an alternate date in case of bad weather.

Where To Hold Your Sale

You can hold your sale in a barn, your porch, your basement, your yard, etc.

In a yard sale, everything has to be taken inside every night as sudden showers may cause damage. 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.

What To Sell

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

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.

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 the buyer to purchase and allow them to identify bargains. Self-adhesive tags are quicker, more convenient and will make last minute changes easier than masking tape. Also, 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 colour 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 20cm (8") high, 1.25cm (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, neighbours, etc.

The Day 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 sale 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.
- If your sale is a family venture, enlist as many members as possible and give everyone a particular task.
- Determine policies with your helpers and make sure everyone will stick to them. Accept only cash and post a big sign to that effect – cheques may bounce. Ask for a deposit if a customer wants an article "held" and set a time limit for holding the item. Haggling is a touchy point. As a general rule, it is best to keep your prices more or less firm. A good way of coping when someone offers you \$5.00 for an item tagged \$10.00, is to say you'll sell at his/her price if it is left at the end of the sale.
- Don't forget to set your alarm clock for early rising next morning!



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 valuables under lock and key.
- Keep your cash box out of sight and keep the larger bills on your person.
- Never leave the sales areas 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. Close supervision generally discourages thieves.

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.
- If you intend to hold another sale, write your own critique.
- 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, Good Will, St. Vincent de Paul Society, church rummage sales, various organizations specializing in the collection and repair of toys for needy children at Christmas. They may even pick up the goods from your home and give you a tax receipt.

Questions?

Ask your Williams Moving Consultant or call our toll free number for further information about our helpful moving tips.