

Yard Sale Planning Tips

By Steve Doran

2 month out from the sale:

1. Create a **staging area** in your house for items you want to sell. A card table, workbench or an empty corner work works great. This is will be your sales area.
2. A few hours a week, designate one area to **clean out**. Tackle three closets, a few bookshelves or half of the basement. Keeping the area manageable helps you focus on clearing out without feeling the challenge of purging the whole house at once.
3. Collect items you don't use or are taking up room. Don't evaluate whether someone would want the item, just remove it. Remember the old saying: "One person's junk is another person's treasure." Take all the unwanted items to your sales area.
4. As soon as your table or corner fills up, **begin pricing** those items. The overall preparation is much easier by pricing a little bit at a time. You'll need stickers/masking tape for the pricing as well as permanent markers. As you price the items, move them in a box or grocery bag and set them aside. This clears off your sales area for you to bring down more items. Repeat this process every time your sales area fills up. Eventually, you'll have numerous boxes/bags all priced and ready to go for the day of sale.
5. **Begin recruiting friends** to join you. Neighbors are great, but friends from outside the neighborhood are even better since many do not have the benefit of our neighborhood efforts. Having extras helpers on sales day is a huge advantage, but we'll address that in future postings.

1 ½ months out from the sale:

1. Begin planning how you will lay out items in your yard. Is it flat? Are you on grass or ivy? Will shoppers be able to browse through all the items easily. Plan your "check-out" location first and expand from there. It's best to keep the most expensive or fragile items closest to your "check-out" area.
2. **Start looking for tables.** Remember that it's easier for shoppers to see items from a table than from the ground. All types of tables work; picnic tables, card tables, even your kitchen table. Ask family and friends to borrow their tables for the weekend. If you have a method of transporting larger tables, check with your office or church to see if they'll loan you a few. (Be sure to label these tables as "Not for Sale")
3. Some items are fine just laying on the ground. Think about putting a few blankets in the edges of the yard for these items. Baskets, coolers, shelving, etc. all do fine with this type of display. (A great trick is to buy new shower curtain liners and put these under

the blankets to keep items from absorbing ground moisture. Then on Monday, you can use these for your bathroom and throw out the old ones!)

4. If you are selling clothes, two ladders and a pole will work for a nice display rack.

5. Consider bulking items in boxes for easy sales and pricing. "All paperback books – 25¢ each" "All hand towels – \$1 each"

1 month out from the sale:

1. **Supplies!** Trust us when we say you don't want to be scrambling for these at the last minute. Take some time now and get these organized because the night before, you won't want to be hunting these down. Things to have on hand for your sales table: masking tape, a note pad to record sales., pens & pencils, a calculator, a money tray or bowl. (big Tupperware bowl works really well!) Other things to have on hand for your shoppers:

** Newspaper for breakable items — we usually let shoppers wrap their own items since we don't want to take responsibility if it breaks)

** Bags for multiple items — start keeping your grocery bags.

** String — not essential, but we've had people need to tie their car trunk down VERY important. If you are selling items that require electricity, it would be a good idea to have an outdoor extension cord available of shoppers to test the items. Make sure you have the appropriate accessories for testing as well. (CD for the CD player, light bulbs for lamps, etc.)

2. **Money! Money! Money!** It is imperative that you have change for people. You should consider having \$100 in small bills and change already in your money bucket as the sale starts. People show up with tens and twenties. In the first hour, DO NOT feel you have to always take a twenty dollar bill for a .50 item. It will be impossible for you to go to the bank on this day, so plan your money allocation appropriately.

3. Start thinking about the night before the sale. You will most likely use your living room or dining as a staging area. (You won't want to be carrying boxes up from the basement at 6:00 am the morning of the sale.) Plan out where items will go and how you will free up space in the staging room. Don't forget your big items.

4. **Label appropriately.** For bigger items or items that need more explanation, tape a piece of paper on the item and write about. If only part of your item works, tell them up front. If it includes multiple pieces, write that down. If it's a well know items (i.e. Discovery Toys), write what the retail value might be. It's about enticing people that your item has value!

5. **Don't forget to register for the sale!** The list of sellers is pretty big and since each home will be passing out the list & map of the over 50 homes, you need to register. Each group gets a one line description of their sale. Use words like, "furniture," "baby items," or "5 family sale" to attract attention to your sale.

2 weeks out from the sale:

1. Now that you're accumulating a lot of items, what do you do with them after the sale. Since you have agreed to part with them, continue that theme and donate any items that don't sell. Clothes can be donated in the many "Planet Aid" drops located all around the city. Good will, Purple heart and many church rummage sales will accept the remaining items. Keep a camera handy at the end of the sale and take photos of what's left on the tables at the end of your sale. You'll be too tired to itemize these now, so just pack them up. Use the photos for tax purposes later.

2. **Signs.** It doesn't hurt to make a few of your own promoting your sale. Drive in traffic from I 6th, Alaska or Georgia. The more signs; the more likely people will come into our neighborhood.

3. **Free ads.** It also doesn't hurt to place your own free ad highlighting your items on craigslist.org, washingcitypaper.com, washingtonpost.com. Highlight the fact that your sale is part of a neighborhood-wide sale. You can even include a link to www.shepherdpark.org.

3. **A free table.** This is huge at our house. We've had many items in our house that I hate to throw out, but aren't really worth charging people for, so we put it on a "Take Free" table. In the past, we've given away, old software, mini-blinds and things that might need fixing. Usually, during the sale, we'll take items that aren't selling and give them away by 2:00 pm just to not have to pack them up at the end of the day.

4. **Parking.** Remember to move your cars the night before the sale so people can park right in front and easily see what you are selling. This is also helpful if you have bigger items to load into cars or vans.

5. **Don't forget to register for the sale!**