



# Your Monthly Money

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## 10 Tips for How to Sell Out at Your Garage Sale

**The last thing you want after your big sale is to drag half of all that stuff back inside.**

When I spotted a garage sale sign yesterday, I had to circle the block after missing my chance to turn. By that time, the sign had blown over, but I stopped to read the tiny address scrawled at the bottom. I drove down the street, but there was no sign of a sale. Then I looked way, way down the long driveway. A girl sat on a side door stoop next to a bunch of clutter dumped onto the driveway. I looked around for a few minutes and left. I could see a wasted weekend ahead for that family. But your sale doesn't have to be a bust.

One time, a friend and I threw a sale that took up two front lawns. At day's end, all that remained was a small box with plastic Easter eggs and a few books. I marked the box "free" and set it on the curb. Thirty minutes later, it was gone. So, how did I do that? The keys are good planning and knowing how to let go.

Here are my favorite tips for getting people to your sale and watching them drive away with your old things while you count the cash.

### 1. Put up lots of signs

I'm not talking about two or three. More like 10. Use colorful poster board and markers. Write in big letters on signs the things you're selling such as "Clothes! TV! Furniture!" and the dates and times of the sale. Place your signs at multiple locations on every through street in every direction and select side streets near your home.

## 2. Make a spectacle of your yard

My friend Carmen used to show up at my house at 7 a.m. to string up multi-colored flags between two trees on my front lawn whenever we hosted a sale. Put a big sign in the yard, "Huge sale! Everything must go!" Don't hide your sale in your garage or behind your house. Put most items in the front yard and driveway so people know you're there.

## 3. One day is enough

Do you really want to drag furniture, tables, and knick-knacks in and out every morning and night for three days? Pick a Saturday when the weather forecast is perfect, have everything ready by 8 a.m., and then give it everything you've got.

## 4. Price items in advance

Don't try slapping stickers on items after the sale begins. That's stressful for you and frustrating to people who don't want to ask about the price of every lamp or bookcase. For easier pricing, try pricing by table with a sign such as "Each item on this table: \$4."

## 5. Display is everything

Nobody wants to sort through a storage bin stuffed with wadded-up shirts, sweatpants, and business suits. Hang up clothing or set it folded on a table in some semblance of order. Arrange display tables and furniture neatly so people feel relaxed and take their time.

## 6. Enlist a friend to help

Don't try doing a sale by yourself. You'll get overwhelmed by rushes of people, want to each lunch, and will definitely have to go the bathroom at least once. Ask a friend or two to work the sale with you.

## 7. Price low

Yes, you paid \$80 for that sweater five years ago but now it's a garage sale sweater and it sells for \$3 or \$4. Look at it this way: Whoever buys that sweater is going to be really happy. Is it so bad to add more happiness to the world? Plus, you'll have one less thing to tote to Goodwill.

## 8. Offer deals on quantity

If you're selling CDs for \$1 apiece, sell 7 for \$5. If books are 50 cents each, offer a deal of 10 for \$4 or 5 for \$2. You'll clear the shelves fast.

## 9. Don't dig in

Do you want to get rid of stuff or not? Unless someone's offer is ludicrous, don't get into a competition over who's going to come out ahead. Let that person leave feeling like they found the best deal ever and move on to the next transaction.

## 10. Have fun

Play music that makes people happy while they shop. Put out a cooler of free bottled water. Chat people up if they like to talk. Make the experience more fun than work.

You may not end up with as much money as you'd have made putting in two or three days of work. But you'll walk away with cash in your pocket to pay down debt or buy groceries or new clothes. That's still a pretty sweet deal.

### **Bonus Tip. Sell Water**

Selling bottled water at a garage sale might seem like an odd thing to do but if theme parks can get \$8 for 12 ounces of cool, refreshing water, why can't you? If you have a warehouse membership you can usually get drinks for a decent price. Figure out what the cost is per bottle and round it up to the next dollar or more so you don't have to give change. People may browse longer and might be more inclined to buy with a tasty drink in hand.

If you have kids you can put them in charge of drink sales. A chance to teach them financial literacy while you purge your outdated wardrobe.