

Garage Sale



Thirteen Garage Sale Tips

We say, "Garage Sale." You sigh. You cry. You plea, "No, not a garage sale!"

Let's get the obvious out of the way: It *is* an insane-crazy-lotta work.

It's also insane-crazy-lotta worth it. We spent about 100 hours unpacking, sorting, pricing, and repacking stuff. This is no easy task and requires lots of time on the road picking up loads of treasures at a moment's notice, but it is truly all worth it in the end!

Over the course of the last two years we have put on a total of 6, yes, 6 massive, ridiculously outrageous, yard sales. We are talking 4 car wide driveway, plus the whole side yard full of treasures and at one time we had 35 moving boxes crammed full of clothes stacked to the ceiling waiting to find a new home. That is a lot of folding for this momma who dreads doing laundry! ☺

If you aren't the garage sale type, you may need a moment to digest that. So, while you do that, we will give you two reasons why garage sales are worth it.

Reason #1

By God's grace, our total raised from all of these sales was over \$17,000. It sounds crazy to me now, even as I type it, but it happened. It was our biggest form of fundraising, and the only investment was the ad we put in the paper, boxes to store goods, plus a few items from our local dollar store.

Reason #2

You will not only meet some amazing people who might also be adopting or have been adopted or just want to support you in your endeavor, but you will also have the opportunity to share with others why you are adopting! This was one of the biggest witnessing opportunities we have ever

had and we have met a lot of really awesome brothers and sisters in Christ who showed us what it means to truly give until it hurts. And of course, there are also those garage sale characters that you would never have the opportunity to meet unless you put a bunch of junk in your yard and sat outside all day inviting total strangers to your house to dig through your junk!

Crazy Guy: Hey, would you . . .uh . . . take fifty cents for this?

Me: Um, sure.

Crazy Guy: What is it?

Me: A paper shredder.

Crazy Guy: Oh that could come in handy.

Crazy Guy proceeds to clench both fists, look up to the sky, and shout, "I LIVE FOR THIS!"

That was totally worth fifty cents.

Okay, so now that you've relaxed a little and are hoping for your own crazy-guy story, here are my tips for having a great sale.

1. Get a ridiculous amount of stuff.

Shoppers want sales that have a ton of stuff. We had donations from **a ton of families**, and I'm glad we did. You can ask your church body for help. You can ask friends and family. You can put out a note on Facebook. You can even pass out a card at a community garage sale, telling them what you are doing, and asking for leftovers. Listing a free craigslist add detailing what you are doing/asking for garage sale leftovers is also a great way to get donations (be sure to link to your blog in your post so people know you are for real. This is also an opportunity to witness to others!). The more stuff you have, the more people will buy.

2. Secure a PRIME location.

We can't stress this enough. Location is key.

Don't expect to sell your ton of stuff on a lone country road. We held our sales at our home that is in a prime location, but advertising is always key. The more signs you spend time putting up in the wee hours of the morning with good directions, the more people you will bring in!

3. Sort the stuff.

We know. Really, we DO know because we did it. It is not always fun, but it will be a huge help. To be honest, some of my favorite memories from the last two summers is spending nights in the garage with my husband and girls digging through our stash (all the neighbors totally thought we were hoarders!) playing dress-up and laughing at some of the crazy things that were donated to us. We went through thousands of items (sometimes with friends, sometimes not) before our big sale. After you sort, box it up and label the box.

Sorting the stuff allowed our sale to be organized. People appreciated this, commented about this, and shopped longer because of this. We had designated tables for housewares, baby boy clothes, baby girl clothes, children's clothes, books, games/puzzles, decor, holiday decor, pictures/frames, women's clothes (by size S/M/L/XL), gadgets/tools/hardware/electronics, purses/bags, jewelry/health & beauty, etc.

4. Don't keep JUNK.

While you are sorting, you'll also need to have bags for trash and a pile for Goodwill. Clothes with rips, stains, missing buttons, etc. — you probably shouldn't try to sell that stuff. If you find something broken, trash it.

Don't keep junk. If your sale looks trashy, people won't stay as long and you won't sell as much. We hereby give you permission to toss the trash. Don't worry, you won't offend anyone, everyone has good intentions, but, to be honest, we made at least one dump run for each of our sales. Our rule was always to take everything that was being offered, even if we knew we were going to have to trash it, this is just part of the process.

5. Clean it up and make it marketable.

If something was a little goobered up, we would wipe it down with a baby wipe or Mr. Clean Eraser. This was especially necessary for toys and housewares. We sold a LOT of previously sticky and slimy items.

We kept a little bag with all these things: rubber bands, safety pins, masking tape, baby/Clorox wipes, Mr. Clean erasers, etc. This helped us make things a little more presentable.

We also kept my price tags in a small plastic tub with scissors and tape (my yard sale prep kit). We purchased plain dot stickers and also used up some leftover address labels by printing sheets with multiple amounts on them and then cut them into strips with my handy dandy scrapbook paper cutter. When we were pricing, the labels were ready for us and it saved lots of time.

6. Price it cheap.

You can mark two items for \$1 each. One sells and one doesn't, so it has to be packed away for Goodwill after the sale. OR you can price both items .50 and sell both items. You still made your \$1.

We typically priced things 10-25% of their original cost. *IF* it was in pristine condition or brand new, you could charge 30-50% depending on how common the item is.

Adult clothes are not great sellers. In order to fix this problem, we hung up the super nice stuff (suits, leather jackets, etc.), and marked it individually. Everything else was \$1 for shirts and \$2 for pants. At the end of the day, we did a box/bag sale where the last hour people could fill a box/bag for \$5. We made a ton of money this way, and people thought the price was worth looking through the piles and stacks.

7. Pray for hoarders to come.

Kidding. Maybe.

8. Think about other ways to raise money at the same time.

Do you have other upcoming fundraisers? Pass out information.

Could you couple the garage sale with a bake sale?

Maybe you know some kiddos who would like to host a lemonade stand?

Do you have a blog? Pass out cards with a link for people who want to follow your story.

If you have pics of your child, make a large poster and have it at the cash table to share who your customers are supporting. We also had a donation jar at the cash table by the photos and we made a lot of extra money that way too!

9. If you need it, take it.

We grabbed some things we needed from our garage sale stash. If items are going to save you money, take them. Put the money you would've used to buy said items in your adoption fund! No one says you can't be a customer at your own sale!!!

10. Advertise, Advertise, Advertise!

Put an ad in the paper. It's worth it. Don't forget to share on facebook, on your blog/website, tell all your friends and family, and throw up an ad on craigslist with good pics of the massive hoard you have collected, highlighting the biggest ticket items. We told everyone and asked everyone else to tell everyone they knew. Be sure to not forget to take the time to make lots of signs to put up around town. Make them BIG and clearly communicate that it is an adoption fundraiser. After having so many sales, we actually started to have regulars who knew it was us by our awesome signage! ☺

11. Make meals ahead.

If you are like me, you will be tempted to eat out after a ten hour day of sorting and pricing. If you pop something in the crock pot before you start working, you will not be tempted. I also used the crock pot on the days of the sale to make sure my family had food. This is an important part of the garage sale process you don't want to overlook as the early start to your day, coupled with hunger = not a pretty picture for customers when they approach the cash table! ☺

12. Let your friends help.

If friends want to know how to help, they can . . .

- help you find items for the sale. They can share your Facebook plea or ask family/friends.
- help you sort the enormous piles of stuff.
- make price tags for you.
- help you price items.
- babysit your children while you work.
- help the day(s) of the sale. We found that we needed four adults to keep things running smoothly.
- run a bake sale in conjunction with the garage sale.

13. If it doesn't sell . . .

Someone donated quite a few collectibles to our sale. Instead of donating those to the Goodwill,

we found a buyer online who purchased them for a chunk of change. Consider what items might sell on Craig's list or Ebay for a higher price, and try them there.

You can give your other leftovers to another adoptive family to get their sale going! This was one way we became good friends with another adopting family. I think we swapped things back and forth 4 times one summer! ☺ This is also a great way to meet other adoptive families and bless them during this crazy process.