

Need to lighten your load?

Tips for making the most of your next “military” garage or yard sale.

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Garage/Yard sales are very popular in the military. That might have something to do with our mobile lifestyle. As we all know, all too well, the curtains from the house at one post may not fit the windows of the home at the next duty station. The pressed-wood desk you had purchased for your sons’ room definitely won’t make it through a move, and how many cookie sheets do you *really need* anyway?

Garage/yard sales not only help your customers save money by shopping gently loved items, they also let you *make* money for spending later!

It has been said over and over, “one mans trash is another mans treasure”. You can find unique items you can't just pick up at the mall. Think about it, even when you do buy something brand new, the next day it will be considered "used". Not to mention, we worldly military crowds can have some pretty neat stuff from which to pick.

Having a garage or yard sale is *hard* and *exhausting* work but they can be quite profitable. Here are a few tips to make your next sale a success!

- Find out if your post or neighborhood sponsors a “post wide” or “neighborhood wide” sales these are simpler because they do all or most of the next several steps for you
- Find out if you have restrictions in your neighborhood or local government – you may need a permit
- Advertise your sale on the web and in your local newspaper
- Put up signs, but be aware that there are laws regarding the placement of signage
- Put up advertisements at the commissary/grocery store or around post on bulletin boards
- If you do many sales invest in good signs that are reusable
- Use a marker or crayon (dark colored) for your signs and make them easy to read – NO ballpoint pens
- Avoid putting your signs on utility poles
- When posting your signs make sure they are up where they can easily be seen
- Don’t crowd your signs with excess wording – keep it simple
- Once your sale is over TAKE DOWN YOUR SIGNS
- Avoid having a perpetual sale – pick a date – have it – and then donate the excess to a local charity
- Make sure you have adequate parking
- Be considerate and let your neighbors know that you are going to have a sale
- Don’t pick a holiday weekend
- Expect Early Birds – but if you don’t really want them let them know

- Know when major employers in your area pay their employees and schedule your sale around payday – or for military just pick the weekend following the 1st or 15th of the month
- As you accumulate stuff for your sale, make sure you don't sell something you'll regret later – a good tip is to put it out in the garage in a pile and then if you don't use it for a month you know it's something that you need to sell
- Do not sell anything without the owner's approval (i.e. your neighbors borrowed drill)
- Get your children involved by telling them they can keep any profits earned from the sale of their old toys or clothing
- Clean up your yard
- Get rid of anything that you don't want to sell by covering it or putting it away from the sale area – sometimes this means you need to have a “driveway sale” and close your garage door
- Keep your pets in the house or in the back yard – even if they are friendly some people are afraid or dislike animals
- Customer Service – don't just SIT and read your book while people browse – get out there and sell
- Price Everything
- Fold it neatly and put items in “shop-able” fashion
- Make signs for larger items
- Be descriptive – if something doesn't work tell the customer, if it is missing a part let them know
- Use cheap metal hangers so that if the customer wants to take it home you can offer them the hanger
- Put items that are attractive to men toward the street – men are harder to convince to “bargain hunt” than women
- Offer drinks (coffee or lemonade)
- Have background music (easy listening)
- Have change and plenty of it – you can always go turn it back into cash
- Offer to take credit cards for large items, you can set up an inexpensive card processing through [paypal.com](https://www.paypal.com) or [propay.com](https://www.propay.com) (amongst others) and process them through the internet
- Don't accept checks unless you are ready to deal with it when it is returned
- Guard your money box
- Have plastic bags available for customers purchases
- Post an “ALL SALES FINAL” message near your money box

- Don't be afraid to "bargain"

The best advice is to split the sale costs with a friend or do a multi-family sale. They are easier to afford, and a lot more fun when everyone can get involved.