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CASH FOR YOUR CASTOFFS

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA

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If your closets and storage areas are jammed with things you don't use or need, it's time to organize a garage sale. Today, consumers happily exchange useful items of all sorts at garage sales. A period of belt tightening is not desirable in itself--but it sometimes does encourage using intelligence in matters of resources and outlays, which in good times you may have been too timid to practice.

One of the popular enterprises in these inflationary times is selling second-hand clothing. Since children outgrow clothes which are still in excellent condition and men and women grow tired of them, a garage sale featuring cast-off clothing provides good bargains as well as profits for the owners.

In the early planning stages, people who hold these sales should be aware of state and local ordinances that might apply. A garage sale is most often defined as "sale of personal possessions, generally made up of discarded items that still may have some usefulness to others."

In Virginia, the Commonwealth Attorney's office reports nothing in the code under garage sales. But if such sales were to become something more than a casual happening, they would move into the normal sales area and be subject to sales tax, among other things. In the District of Columbia, the law requires that second-hand dealers have a license. But it also states that a person does not need to obtain such a license to sell his personal belongings.

When you plan to hold a garage sale, remember to confer with someone in your area who knows about state and local ordinances. Other important considerations are: how will your bargain hunter's paradise affect the neighborhood; how will it affect local organizations that depend on receiving used items.

Garage sales are not always held in garages. You can hold them in a carport, a basement, on the porch, or in a barn. The place you select should be a safe, accessible area. You don't want to risk having a customer tumble down hazardous stairs. Make sure that traffic paths are clear and well lighted.

Schedule your sale when good weather is predicted, and soon after the first of the month when people are more solvent. Saturday and Sunday are the best days. Suggested hours are 10:00 am. to 6:00 pm.

How do you advertise a garage sale?

Notices posted on bulletin boards in supermarkets, libraries, self-service laundries, schools, community centers, business firms and specialty stores are the most economical form of advertising. Don't overlook club newsletters and employee publications. In some areas it is against the law to attach a "garage sale" sign to a utility pole or a traffic control post. You had best use stakes

to be on the safe side. Mimeographed flyers can be distributed in the neighborhood. On the day of the sale, strategically placed arrows and an easy-to-read sign in front of your house helps customers find the right address. Clearly mark the entrance.

Clothing sells best if it's clean, pressed, and size marked, and if it's offered during the usable season. However, used clothing should be priced realistically low. In some cases, fads will move the price up. Preshop other garage sales to see what's considered salable and to learn the "asking" price. It will provide you with a good idea in assessing the value of your own things. This is especially important if you are holding your first garage sale.

How should items be displayed to attract a buyer? Place items on tables or racks. People don't want to bend over. Group things together. Grouping may consist of like items--handbags, coats, shoes--or items for a particular person--men's, women's, children's clothing. Size and price of clothing should be clearly indicated. Be consistent in where you put this information on similar items. To prevent a mix-up, staple price and size information to the garment if a staple will not damage the garment.

Keep shoppers looking by placing very low-cost items between higher priced items. It might hold the interest of those who are looking for good things as well as those who want less expensive items.

Since a large display attracts more people, you may want to pool your cast-offs with those of a neighbor. Be sure to agree on a price range for similar items. If one person tags a suit at \$5, another may have difficulty selling his for \$10. If several people participate in the sale, identify each person's items by an initial or other insignia, in addition to the price. Have separate cash boxes for each participant so there will be no problem when it comes to division of profits.

Money matters are important! Experienced garage sale holders advise, "Do not accept checks." To keep things moving briskly, have at least \$20 in change available. Keep the money box in a safe place. Make sure that someone keeps an eye out for potential shoplifters, and keep track of purchases.

Some practical suggestions to make the garage sale pleasant for both buyer and seller are:

- . Enlist the children's help. If you get them involved in your project, they're less likely to resent or interfere with it. They can be very helpful at doing everything from pressing out wrinkles to distributing advertising circulars.

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- . Assemble a "miscellaneous" table for small objects such as buttons, jewelry, and belts. Some of these items may be prize additions to a collection. A table of 5¢ and 10¢ items for children to buy will keep little ones entertained.
- . Don't rule out anything as too trivial. Remember, "one man's trash may be another man's treasure."
- . Don't include your telephone number in the advertisement unless you have help answering the phone.
- . A garage sale calls for careful planning. You may be collecting things for months. Plan for storage space and boxes. Put different items in separate boxes.
- . Clothing left after garage sales can be disposed of in two ways. Offer salable items to the Salvation Army or Good Will Industries. Some items can be sold to rag merchants.

Garage sales are different things to different people. They are a pleasant way to dispose of discarded clothing. The buyer leaves with something that he can use and considers a bargain; the seller has the bonus of empty closets, drawers, and storage space as well as an additional penny or two.

