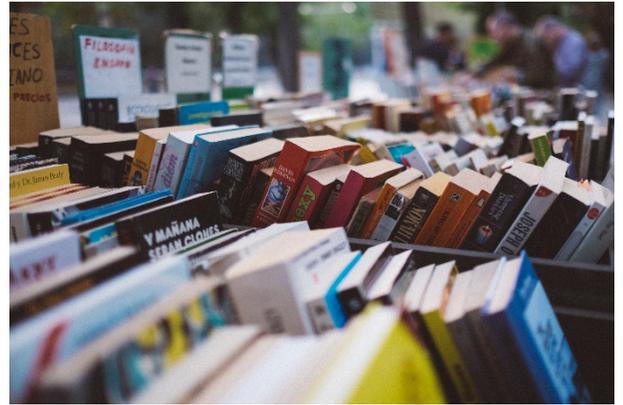


5 Tips for Garage Sale Shopping

Summer is in full swing, and many consumers take advantage of the nice weather to either host or shop at a garage sale. Whether you call them yard sales, garage sales or rummage sales, they're a great opportunity for shoppers to save money and sellers to get rid of unwanted items without accepting a complete financial loss. Before you hit the sales this weekend, consider the following tips for garage sale shopping:



Plan where and when to shop. It may seem like common sense, but where and when you go shopping should depend on what you're shopping for. For example, if you want higher-quality items, you're more likely to find them in more affluent neighborhoods. If you're looking for a big ticket item - furniture, TVs, etc. - get to the sale early because these items typically sell quickly. If you're looking for the absolute lowest prices, get there just before the sale closes because the seller will be more willing to discount items that haven't been sold yet.

Have your money ready. Remember to bring along small bills. Often the seller will not accept personal checks. If you've purchased a large item that you need to pick up later in a different vehicle, obtain a receipt or pay with a check to prevent confusion later.

Try before you buy. Especially with electronics and mechanical items, be sure to plug them in and test them before purchasing. When buying anything battery-operated, be sure to check the battery compartment for corrosion, too.

Talk to the seller. If you're looking for a specific item, ask the seller directly if they have it. You'll avoid wasting time and potentially buying items you don't need. Once you've selected an item to purchase, don't be afraid to haggle or name a price for a group of items.

Know what not to buy. There are certain items you should never buy at a garage sale, no matter how much you might save. Bike/motorcycle helmets, child car seats and infant cribs should all be bought new. There's no way of knowing if they've been damaged and poorly repaired or if they no longer meet safety standards. Shoppers should also avoid used shoes, because the sole will be molded to a differently shaped foot, which can cause discomfort when walking.

Shopping at garage sales is a great way to save money on clothing, books and other items. Remember to carefully inspect each item before you buy, and don't forget to tip the kid at the lemonade stand on your way out!