

General Yard Sale Tips

Good signage: (Good signage will pull almost as many shoppers as a newspaper ad — so it's very important)

- Clear & easy to read. **Thick** black letters, a few simple words (“Yard Sale, Fri/Sat 9-3”) and an arrow against a bright contrasting background. Don't get wordy, no time to read it at 30mph. Black on brown cardboard is harder to read than black on white or yellow. Duct tape now comes in black and makes very nice huge black arrows on signs.
- Arrows point the way for people who do not know your neighborhood
- If you plan to have a sale again in the same year (limited by city to two per year) or again next year, make your signs generic without dates to reuse... Yard Sale, Fri & Sat 8-4, 123 Smith Dr, (with arrow).
- Just when they may think they passed the turn off, place another sign to coax them further
- Keep signs same color for recognition/consistency (“Oh, I see, follow the *yellow* signs that all look alike!”)
- Streamers and balloons provide movement to draw driver's attention. (Crepe paper is NOT waterproof and the color runs.)
- Keep signs off private property (unless you have permission). Make them self-standing — put 2 or 3 large rocks (for weight) in a 4-sided box (sign on each of 4 sides — with arrows) or put sign on own stake (recycle election signs!) when possible.
- Avoid gunking up (tape, staples, nails, etc.) city-owned signposts or poles when possible. Be aware that putting signs on city-owned poles, signs and right-of-ways is illegal. If someone complains, you could be fined.
- Take your signs down when finished. Clean up after yourself. Do not annoy your neighbors and next week's shoppers with outdated signs. Don't litter.
- For a large neighborhood, cul-de-sac or block sale, a large sign for hanging over a chain link fence can be made from an old (light-color) sheet and black spray paint. Lay the sheet out where the paint bleeding through won't hurt anything. Spray the lettering on with the black paint. Add grommets for tie-downs with cording. Hang it over the fence, tie it down. These work great on a corner lot — with owner permission. Take it down and fold it up for next year's sale (you made it generic, right?).
- The more sales bunched together, the better. People attract people. A neighborhood, cul-de-sac or block sale will attract far more people than an individual sale. And with the price of gas, it's more economical for shoppers. The number of sales split the costs of sign materials and newspaper ads — no matter who had how much to sell.
- Visit with your shoppers. People will stay longer and buy more if they feel welcome. Always thank everyone for stopping by. Shade and a seat for the weary are always welcome.
- Price your goods, don't make people ask how much something is, they won't — they'll walk away.
- Put your “Free” box out front to attract and pull in “looker loos.”
- Small/inexpensive kid toys for sale (for small change) keep kids busy and happy while their parents shop. They can play, then spend their quarter on something that caught their eye.
- If you don't put your sale out front, put out colored flags, balloons, signs or streamers (above parked car height) to *make your house stand out*. If your sale is in the back or other than obvious, make signs or streamers to guide shoppers to where it is.
- Keep pets penned up or on a leash from fearful shoppers (no matter how nice your pet is).
- Put big or unique items like furniture, power tools and appliances in front to draw people from the curb to actually stop and park. If you have a large piece indoors for sale, be sure to have a large easy-to-read/notice sign in your yard to indicate so.
- Clean up and/or dust your items for sale. If they look better, they will sell faster and easier.
- Keep your “bank” in a fanny pack on your body. You are more free to walk around and not lose sight of the money.
- Have the kids sell cold lemonade or soda pop. They make money, people get their thirst quenched. Don't forget decaffeinated soda and bottled water for those who don't like or want carbonation or the jitters (sugar-free for diabetics also). Keep a trash/recycle box nearby for spent cups or cans.
- If you feel you don't have enough to do your own sale, combine with a neighbor or two to make a good-sized sale. Colored labels separate whose stuff is whose (Mary/blue, Sue/pink, Betty/yellow).
- Tell everyone at work about the sale — and people you run into at the beauty shop, church, daycare, grocery store, local diner, doctor's office and anyone else you run into. Distribute small flyers, for community, church, daycare and grocery store bulletin boards. Word-of-Mouth!
- You will sell far more on Friday than Saturday or Sunday. Friday shoppers are BUYERS! “Professional” dealers for Flea Markets and such are out scooping up merchandise.

- Remember that attendee cars parked out front will block the view of items placed too near the ground or curb. Get your signs or goods up higher for viewing from the street (and through crowds of people gathered in your yard).
- Yard Sale shoppers are usually cheap shoppers. Rarely will you get any buyers if you also try to sell your more valuable crafted projects (provided you are a crafter). You may not want to bother to set them out, or better yet, have a little business card or flyer of your work and where/how it may be seen at upcoming craft sales. Craft sales and Estate sales can get by with charging more for their goods. Shoppers expect to pay more at those sales for crafted or antique items. Yard sales are for cheap “just get it out of my house” goods. Shoppers know you do not want to deal with packing it all back up again.

Neighborhood, Community & Block Sales:

- Split the costs of expenses... Sign materials like poster board, fat marker, clear packaging tape, clear contact paper (water-proof) and so on; Photocopying costs for flyers to the neighbors “call to participate” and more; and ad placement costs. Our sale charges \$5/sale to cover all expenses. While this seems to look like a profit enterprise on the manager’s part, it barely covers expenses. When sellers are made to realize they get signs made (and put up) plus ads and more for that cost, nobody complains. You can’t even get a Gazette ad for less than \$15. Five dollars isn’t a lot to ask.
- Place an ad in the Thrifty Nickel as well as the Gazette. Make sure one of the following appear on your ads and signs: Neighborhood Sale, Block Sale, Cul-de-sac Sale, Community Sale, Yard Sales, Multiple Sales, or the like... A “multifamily” sale is usually the term for one sale with multiple contributors. The term usually doesn’t mean much more than a normal one family sale. The terms “huge” and “gigantic” are relative. One person’s “huge” sale may be the next person’s “same old, same old” sale. Shoppers know that multiple sales in one area mean more goods to look through. In days of costly gas, visiting one area for multiple sales becomes more and more attractive than visiting your one “huge sale” no matter how “big” you think it might be. “At least ## sales!” also coaxes shoppers. If you can get five or more homes to commit to selling, list that as an “at least” or “over” or “more than” in your ads.
- If you are organizing a neighborhood sale, log on to www.kassj.com/etcetera/yardsaletips.html to find more tips to organize and plan your event. This site includes the sample “let’s have a sale” flyers to announce the plans to your neighbors and the final list of “who is featuring what” at their sales and last minute info.
- I always provide a list of charitable places to call for sale leftovers to be picked up. This allows each seller to pick their charity of choice. Remember such places as dog or other animal rescues (pet supplies and/or bedding and pillows for pet bedding). Remember Bob Telmossé’s Christmas Eve Giveaway for decent-condition goods (especially working bicycles).
- Use the neighborhood sale to get acquainted or re-acquainted with your neighbors. It can be a great step to the friendly sort of neighborhood watch further down the line. The more you visit with your neighbors, the more likely they are to watch out for you and yours. Personally, I like the camaraderie of the neighborhood sale to visit with neighbors and shoppers alike. It reminds me of days gone by where the front porch visit and a stroll was the way of life. Wouldn’t you like to help bring that to your neighborhood?
- Get your neighborhood churches involved. They are part of the community also. They can offer a rummage sale, bake sale, selling lunch or youth group car wash to raise money for their church. How about a kid’s carnival or other children’s event? How about the Boy or Girl Scout troop in your neighborhood? School Fundraiser? Do they want to get involved? The church can also allow the shopping public to use their restrooms. The church should “talk up” the upcoming neighborhood event to their congregation at functions and services prior to the sale. The congregation (as well as neighborhood residents) can then spread the news of the big sale — word-of-mouth — the best (and cheapest) advertising! ...For the record, I never charge a legitimate neighborhood non-profit church the participation fee.



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The author of this document (Kass Johns) is the organizer of one of the oldest and largest neighborhood yard sales in Colorado Springs — The Venetian Village Neighborhood Yard Sale. This event began in 1988. Under Kass’s management, the sale has grown from 20 sales and a few hundred attendees to seeing the July 2000 sale with 75 separate sales and over 5,000 shoppers in attendance.

The Venetian Village Neighborhood Yard Sale is located one block North of “The Barn Mural” (and donkeys) at Templeton Gap Road at Fillmore.

This sale is always held the last weekend (Friday & Saturday) of July every year. Follow the pink signs...

Visit the sale details and map at: www.kassj.com/yardsale/