

The Garage Sale For Inventory Plan

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*Enjoy this series we did a while back about using garage sales for
building inventory...*

*Enjoy!
Jenni*

Why Garage Sales Work For eBay Inventory

Last week my mom called me to let me know that she had picked up a bunch of Disney store princess dresses at a yard sale. She thought my daughter might want to wear one to Disneyland for our visit next week.

Side note: Now, if you are one of my regular readers, you know that I consider my mom to be the queen of garage sale bargains! Seriously. You can mention something that you are looking for - and she will find it for pennies on the dollar within a week or two at a yard sale.

I didn't mention that we were looking for princess dresses. Actually, we decided to just do regular shorts and top for the visit... but, my mom **couldn't pass them up at \$.50 each**. Yes - the decimal is in the right place. *That is 50 CENTS for EACH Disney Store Princess Dress... Sleeping Beauty, Belle from Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella and a couple of others.*

I am telling you garage sales are THE #1 place to find children's items for resale (actually – you can find much more than children's items at yard sales to resell)! And, if you have little ones of your own - you can make it a morning out with the kids. I've found that my three kids absolutely love to go treasure hunting with me!

There are, however, plenty of people who have tried hitting garage sales and have let their disappointment discourage them enough that they won't go again. If this is you - **I'd like to ask that you stick around for a while**. I have found that *it really helps to have a plan... a strategy... when looking for inventory at garage sales.*


These next few weeks - I'm going to share my plan and how I have made garage sales work for me as an eBay seller.

First of all, don't think it is too early or too late to get started. Garage sale season tends to pick up in the spring and through the summer... even into the early months of fall you can find a number of sales in most neighborhoods; **however, you can hit garage sales any time of the year**. We live in a society where people have a lot of stuff. Too much stuff, in fact! And, we keep getting more! Moving sales happen any time of the year -- and the good thing is that, *even though there might not be as many sales during the off-season, there are less shoppers which makes finding a good bargain easier.*

Not only are garage sales a great place to find inventory during any season of the year... *the present state of the economy provides a huge opportunity if you are looking to grow your inventory.* People are desperate to generate some sort of

income - and one way to do that is to sell your stuff. I have a feeling that this year is going to be a hot one for yard sales simply because people need to get rid of their stuff to make ends meet.

Finally, I have to say - you can find almost anything at yard sales! I'm always amazed at what kind of 'junk' people have and want to get rid of... but, more than any other thing else, I see children's items - and lots of them - at sales! Children need a new wardrobe every year and they outgrow their toys in just as much time. Parents don't have a reason to store the clothes if they don't have younger children (even so... many parents want new clothes for the next in line) **so they have a sale and sell them for pennies on the dollars... PENNIES!**



Little Tikes Activity Garden & Buzz Around Mailbox EUC


Item condition: **Used**
 Time left: 6h 8m 47s (Apr 29, 2010 18:58:03 PDT)
 Bid history: **17 bids**

Current bid: **US \$62.50**

Your max bid: US \$ **Place bid**
(Enter US \$63.50 or more)

Shipping: **\$29.99** UPS Ground | [See all details](#)
Estimated delivery within 3-8 business days.

Returns: **No Returns Accepted**

 **eBay Buyer Protection**
eBay will cover your purchase price plus original shipping.

Here is an auction for a Little Tikes Activity Garden and Buzz Mailbox that I find regularly at yard sales! You can easily pick up the activity garden for \$10-15 and the mailbox for \$5. And often, they are found at the same sale! This auction has them in a lot going for more than \$60!

Okay - you may have noticed that the date on that Little Tikes Activity Garden auction is from April 2010... This thing has been selling for years. Check out this auction from May 2011 for JUST the activity garden and sold for \$61 with 14 bids.

Bidding has ended on this item.



LITTLE TIKES~TYKES ACTIVITY GARDEN~VEGETABLES~EUC!

Item condition: **Used**
 Ended: May 15, 2011 04:33:38 PDT
 Bid history: **14 bids**

Winning bid: **US \$61.00**

Shipping: **\$35.00** Economy Shipping | [See all details](#)
 Delivery: Estimated within 3-10 business days 
 Returns: **No Returns Accepted**

 **eBay Buyer Protection**
Covers your purchase price plus original shipping.

Children's clothing, books, toys, gear -- they are all plentiful at yard sales... and can usually be found in decent condition because kids grow before things wear out.

Have I convinced you that yard sales are one of the top places to find inventory for children's items that you want to resell?

I have found a paper grocery bag stuffed with GI JOE action figures and accessories for \$5... a huge bin of Star Wars figures and ships for \$10 (the bin would have sold for that without any of the toys in it!)... A box full of girls costumes for \$5 - including Disney, Dorothy, etc...

You can find these kinds of deals too... You just have to know how to plan a strategy and what to look for. After going through this short series - you'll have a plan in place and be ready for the busiest yard sale season of the year.

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The Plan - Mapping Your Area

If you have lived in your neighborhood for long, you'll be a bit ahead with this step - **but, don't think that it means you get to skip it ;-)**

Everyone has limited time and planning out your garage sale day will help you use it wisely. *Planning will also help you save gas since you won't be driving around in circles all over town.* You might still drive all over town - but there will be order in the route you are taking.

The night before I hit garage sales I spend a little time on my computer. First thing I do is check out www.craigslist.com to see what garage sales are being advertised. If you are looking for something specific - the beauty of finding garage-sales on the internet is that you can search for specific items (ie., baby, children, 'pottery barn', gap, toddler, stroller, antiques, matchbox, fisher price, etc. - you get the idea). Personally, I like to just browse all of the listings because sometimes searching for specific items makes me miss out on a treasure.

There are a couple of things that I always keep in mind when I am searching through g-sale listings...

First of all, I always pay attention to the area that the g-sale is being held in. **Different types of neighborhoods will provide you with different types of inventory.** Know your market/niche... and you'll be able to pinpoint the neighborhoods you should pay close attention to on Friday and Saturday mornings. For the purposes of this series, I'm focusing on finding children's items at g-sales... and I always look at the more affluent neighborhoods for these items. Newer neighborhoods that cater to young families is also a great kind of neighborhood to scout.

If you are new to your area and don't know where the more affluent neighborhoods are - a little googling is all you need. Check out real estate sites like zillow (www.zillow.com) and search for houses close to your neighborhood that are on the higher end of the scale. Zillow provides you with a nice google map so you can plan your route more efficiently.

COOL tip: If you have a smart phone, there are loads of apps you can download that will list garage sales and map a route for you. You can run a google search and find a long list of g-sale apps. I use iGarageSale... love it.

Okay - now, as I'm looking through craigslist I also have a notepad file or blank word document open. As I find a sale that looks interesting, I just copy the entire

listing (or at least the important parts) and paste it in my blank document that I have open. If I don't know right where the sale is, I'll google the address and then add some quick directions at the end of what I pasted so I have notes to follow. I find that it helps to include the entire listing when you copy/paste because I always forget why a particular sale caught my attention in the first place if I don't.

COOL tip: You can use Google Maps - "My Maps" to create your own customized map with placemarks for the sales you are interested in checking out as well.

Once I have scoured through the craigslist garage sale section... I'll hit our local newspaper for g-sale ads. For me it is the Oregonian and they have a great search function on their website that allows me to search specific sections of the greater Portland metro area. I do the same thing as with craigslist and just copy and paste the ads I'm interested in into my document.

After I've gone through Craigslist and the Oregonian I usually have about 20 sales that I'm interested in hitting. It may not sound like much - but, that is plenty for a day of shopping.

The next step is to prioritize the sales. Usually I'll include g-sales that really catch my attention and I absolutely have to check them out... but, there are also a few sales that I'm not so sure about on my list too. I prioritize the sales by adding a number before each sale 1-20... 1 is for the absolute must hit g-sale and 20 is for the one that I care about the least.

Once the sales are prioritized, I look at addresses and move the copied ads around based on the neighborhood/area they are in. This allows me to hit all the sales I'm interested in that are in the same area at once - instead of driving all over the place. Usually what I find is that I'll have 3-4 in one area... and if most of these are a higher priority (like 1-10 on my priority list), then, I'll hit that area first. Be sure to pay attention to the time the sale opens as well...It's all about making your route the shortest and saving gas and money.

Before printing, I will add notes on my list of things I'm specifically looking for. If you are a subscriber to HuntedTreasure or MyToyGuide, you'll have a weekly list of what is currently selling on eBay - you can just print it out to get a better idea of what to look for.

Finally, I print it out and get some sleep so I'm ready to go early the next day :-)

Your Budget

Okay... let's talk a little bit about budget for hitting those garage sales.

Your budget will really come down to the market you are in (and of course how much you have to spend on inventory)... and since we are focusing on children's items - that is going to be the point of reference for this weeks topic of budgeting for yard sales.

I usually bring only \$80-100 with me when I am hitting yardsales. This doesn't mean I don't stop for more (and I don't always spend all of it!) - but, I've been able to do fine with around a hundred bucks. I like to break the money down so that it isn't all \$20's... it helps the seller as well because they aren't having to give me change if I find a hot Blue's Clues notebook for twenty five cents.

Most children's items can be purchased for a buck or so... but, here is a general idea of how I gauge things. There are always exceptions - and if you are paying attention to the www.HuntedTreasure.com or www.MyToyGuide.com weekly lists, you'll know if you come across a true treasure.

Okay - let's get down to business... Here are the guidelines I usually go by when I am looking to build inventory from garage sales.

>>>Children's clothing:

I've seen such a huge range for children's clothing... every once and a while I hit a goldmine and find name brand clothing in pristine condition for a quarter a piece! **For twenty five cents - there isn't much risk and I'll buy up whatever I can.** What's even better about finding this kind of deal is that when you are looking to buy a bunch of stuff - the seller usually is excited to give you an even better deal! Unfortunately, I only find these kinds of sales a few times a year...

It is more of the norm to find a sale with children's items for a buck a piece. Still - this is a great deal for name brand clothing. And, remember, if you buy more than one piece - ask if they will take less for the bunch. Usually, if I am buying 5 things for \$1 each, I'll look for one or two pieces more and than ask if they will just take \$5 for all of it. Usually they say yes. Now, for a dollar a piece - if you make an outfit out of 3 things and resell it for even \$20-25, you've done pretty well for yourself.

Children's clothing: \$1 or less

I usually plan to only spend a dollar or less a piece.

Exceptions: If I find a top of the line dress or outfit that I've seen resell for \$40+ easy, I'll pay \$10 for it... but, I don't usually pay more than that.

>>>Children's Bedding:

I usually buy bedding for a nursery bedding set - I don't like storing things for long and finding a piece here and there, although effective, isn't something I often do.

Usually I'd be willing to pay \$20-25 for a bedding set... especially for Pottery Barn or another high end brand. Other sets like Classic Pooh or the John Lennon bedding - I'd probably pay up to \$20. It depends on what is included and the condition. Usually for a bedding set I look for the basics of a comforter and sheets, crib skirt, mobile... but, what usually makes me super interested in buying is if there are extra unique pieces... a diaper hanger, matching frames, lamps, rugs, wall hangings, nightlights, etc... the more the better.

I've found that talking people down on price for children's bedding is sometimes more difficult than clothing. For some reason, if it is the mom selling, they are a bit more sentimental and will not be so willing to come down on the price of their precious bedding.

In summary...

Children's Bedding: \$20-25 SET

Exceptions: sometimes I'll go up on super high end brands or round crib bedding.

>>>Children's Toys:

One of my favorites to shop for is toys! Usually parents are so sick of all the toys they have in their house that they will practically give them away... especially if you have kids in tow! Seriously... I've had people not even ask me and just pile a bunch of toys on my kids telling them they can have them. If only they knew the treasures they were giving away! ;-)

Toys have a huge price range for me. Many toys can be found for well under \$1... but, I've also found big playground type toys for as little as \$10. Usually when I am shopping for toys, I'll have a few items that I am specifically keeping my eye out for... and then I'll also have a few themes I'm watching for (such as Blues Clues or Little Tikes dollhouse items).

Ten dollars is usually the limit I set on an item from a garage sale... but, if there is something that I'm confident will sell well I'll buy it for more.

Children's Toys: \$1-10 depending on size of item and resell value

Exceptions: Large climb on toys or ride on cars - \$20-40 depending on value and condition.

>>>Movies

Okay, I know I said toys are my favorite... but, I love to score on movies too! Many people are getting rid of their VHS and even their DVD's to upgrade to Blue-Ray... and you can get amazing deals on what they are getting rid of. I use to expect to pay \$1 for VHS; however, these days I stick to 50 cents as a limit per VHS (unless I know it will resell well!) I will pay up to \$3-4 for DVD's. Don't forget when you purchase more than just one from a seller to barter a bit. If they are \$1 each and you are buying 5 - see if they'll take \$3... It never hurts to ask.

It is important to know what resells well before buying a bunch of movies. You can research this yourself on eBay or watch for the movie category usually included in the www.HuntedTreasure.com weekly report.

Movies: \$1-4 each

Exceptions: Every once and a while I'll come across a movie series for \$5-7. Once we had a WWII (I think it was WWII) mini series on VHS - it had never been watched and was \$5. There was a list of over 70 people waiting for it on amazon! We just named our price of \$120 or something and it sold in seconds! :-)

>>>Gear

Baby gear is usually plentiful at garage sales... but, it isn't cheap. I usually just keep an eye out for a few things and expect to pay more for them.

What I look for is pretty limited:

Bob Jogging Stroller - \$20-40
Sit and Stand Stroller - \$10-15
Kelty Backpack Stroller - \$30-40
Medela Pump In Style - \$30-40

Gear: \$20-40

Exceptions: I have to be confident that an item is going to resell well for me before I'll consider more.

How Much Will \$80-100 buy?

So, let's take a look at a typical day for me and how far \$80-100 goes...

Clothing - I'll often spend **\$30 total** on children's clothing and plan to have at least 30-40 pieces from that much. If I get 40 pieces and can pull 13 outfits out of it (about 3 pieces an outfit), I'm pretty happy for a few hours of shopping. If each outfit can bring in \$10 profit - that's \$130 made just from clothing.

Bedding/Gear - I'm going to skip over this one for now because I don't usually

include bigger purchased like bedding and gear to be a part of the \$80-100 that I plan to spend. If I end up buying a larger piece, I might head to the bank for a little more.

Toys - Usually, I only spend **\$30-40 on toys** and have more than enough to resell. Many toys can be bought for 25-50 cents - that is a lot of toys! Even if I pay a buck for each toy and turn it around for \$15 for about \$10 return, I could make \$300 from just one morning on shopping.

Videos - I don't usually spend more than **\$10 on videos**... I don't pay more than \$1-4 a movie - and, again, if I can sell them for \$15-20 each, that's about 10 made on each one... or a hundred bucks from movies.

So - how did we do...

With the above scenario **we spent \$70-80** and the return looks like it could be well **over 500 dollars in profit.**

The Risk...

Before we close up, I wanted to say something about the risk with garage sales. I think this is one thing that keeps eBay sellers from finding inventory this way... but, I really think that the **risk is minimal if you know what you are looking for** - and you budget it right.

Look at it this way... if you buy something thinking that it will sell - and then, it doesn't... or you end up having second thoughts and decide not to sell it... take it to consignment! I bet someone could build an entire business on buying items at garage sales and then taking the items to consignment for resell... talk about easy! Another strategy that I've used before is to upgrade at consignment shops. I have an entire article about this - but, the short of it is that you can take in lower brand items... or items that won't necessarily sell well on eBay and turn them around at consignment shops for higher end brands. Many stores will sell your items for you and give you 50% of whatever the item sells for. Considering that you aren't doing any of the picture taking, listing or shipping - it's not a bad deal! :-)

Alright...

Next we are going to be talking about the big shopping day!

The Big Day

It's time!

Today we are going to focus on the big garage sale day. Now, before you even get up in the morning to hit the road - you should already have a plan and a budget. We already covered mapping out your route... and we have discussed budgeting for the sale day... Now, it's all about game day!

The night before you plan to go to yard-sales, be sure to print out your route (and include any maps if necessary)... If you are a subscriber to www.MyToyGuide.com or www.HuntedTreasure.com, you'll want to have that printed out as well - or at least a list of inventory you are looking for. Obviously, you don't have to keep to this list - but, I can't tell you how many times I've seen something at a sale and couldn't remember if it was an item that I saw doing well or very poorly on eBay. *It's just nice to have that reference...* You also want to have hit the bank already. Remember - you want smaller bills so that it is easier to negotiate and buy those twenty five cent toys. There is nothing like talking the seller down from \$20 to \$5 on something and then asking for change from the only twenty dollar bill you have. ;-)

Alright... there are a couple of major questions that I hear regularly about garage sale day. First of all - **When should you hit the sales... early or late?**

There is a strategy to both... and I usually just play it by ear with the understanding that I just can't be at all the garage sales I want to be at when they open. I also can't be at all the sales when they are closing for the day either. Thankfully, **both have their benefits.**

Going to garage sales early gives you more options for inventory. There is just more available at 8am than at 3pm. BUT, I have found that usually the sellers are not as likely to negotiate first thing in the morning. They are still holding hope that they will have a very successful sale and things will sell for their asking price at this point. Which brings me to the benefit for going late in the day. Almost everytime I have gone to a sale at the end of the day... even as they are closing up... they are practically paying me to take their stuff. The sellers have been in the sun all day and are looking at everything that didn't sell. It doesn't hold the same sentiment as it did in the morning when they were putting it out for all to see... At the end of the day - all they see is STUFF that they have to figure out what to do with. Usually this means that **you can make some incredible negotiations at the end of the day!** In fact, I think I've almost done better, as far as price is concerned, at the end of the day of sales than first thing in the morning.

I remember one time we went to this sale that had all boy stuff... and the clothes were exactly my son's size - all of it! I couldn't believe how much this lady had... and she said that she had actually sold a bunch of it already! I bought a HUGE amount of clothes - like 2 big bins full for \$50. There were 80-100 pieces in these two bins!!

Another time I brought my husband with me to a neighborhood sale. This one house was selling every Star Wars action figure, ship, whatever - you name it - they had it... for a buck each. We went back at the end of the day and he still had a huge bin of stuff that hadn't sold. We were able to get the entire bin for \$10! Talk about a treasure chest for my boys! (And when they are done playing with all of it we will have an amazing Star Wars lot to list!).

The second question that I get asked frequently is about negotiating. This is a tough one... but, even though I tend to get intimidated with stuff like this - I know that **usually garage sale sellers are expecting to be talked down.** It is just what you do. The key is to be reasonable and not offensive. The hardest thing for me is when there aren't prices on their items and they ask people to make an offer. I always, ALWAYS push for them to give me a price first -- and then I'll talk them down a bit from there. I will usually offer 75% of the price they are asking for - but, that is just a general rule and it doesn't always apply.

If I don't feel comfortable negotiating on a single item, then I'll find a few things that I would like to get and offer them a dollar or two under the total when I go to pay. This happens frequently with clothing. **If the clothes are \$1 a piece - I'll try to find 7 pieces and then offer \$5 for all of them.**

Side Note: Finally, I wanted to address the way I bring my kids along with me on these garage sale adventures. I know that many of you have little ones in tow and that is why you sell on eBay - so you can stay home with the kids. I have three kids and they all love to go to garage sales with me. I will usually give them \$1-5 each for the day and they are quite happy. They get new toys to keep them busy while I keep shopping... and they are also learning some great sales skills in the mean time. Last year my 8 year old son negotiated an Incredibles pin ball game from \$5 down to 2 bucks! He was pretty happy with himself and it kept him busy the rest of the day!

All right - the time is now guys! The weather is changing and garage sales are going to start popping up all over. I really believe that this year we will see even more as people are trying to get a little extra because of the economy.

I'm excited to hear about your finds this summer... please share! And, if you have any questions, be sure to send them my way. I'm here to help you succeed.

Garage Sale Mapping Tools and More...

I stumbled on this website that lists resources for garage sales. Some of it is focusing on having a garage sale yourself to get rid of stuff... but, there is also a good amount that is about being a buyer.

<http://www.weekendtreasure.com/links.php>

Be sure to check out the section on the bottom for Garage Sale Mapping tools – there are some really great tools there to make getting organized so much better!

Also – Julia Wilkinson and Lynn Dralle are garage sale experts for eBay... They are both experts at <http://www.My-Silent-Team.com> – you can learn more about the resources they have to offer by visiting www.My-Silent-Team.com and clicking on their names on the left side.