

GARAGE SALES

Early Birds Get the Goods

No matter what time you schedule your sale to start, expect some people to show up with flashlights and ready to buy.

These aggressive shoppers, commonly called early birds, can be a good or a bad thing, depending on how you see it. Here are some tips for how to use them to your advantage.

PROS

These people are in it to win it. They're not there just to browse, they're there to buy. They want the best merchandise for the best price and they've probably done this before. All good news if you want to get your sale going at a clip, but remember that it's going to happen early.

To get the most out of early bird shoppers, have your pricing done the night before and have some help as you're setting out your sale. These aggressive shoppers have been known to be so **aggressive** as to go into parts of your garage or home that are traditionally off limits, especially if they see a door open or they follow you inside. Having an extra set of hands around to help corral them is critical.

Some policies to consider if you're going to accept early birds:



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- Make them pay for the privilege. Note in your advertisements and signage that you'll take early birds, but they must pay double. Think of it as an end-of-day tactic in reverse.

- No haggling. Whether you allow haggling after a certain time or after a certain number

of shoppers is up to you. Just make sure that you time it so that people aren't waiting around just to haggle with you and get the best price.

CONS

Early birds aren't afraid to haggle, point out deficiencies

in pricing or in your items or try to buy items that aren't for sale. They're armed with flashlights and up before the sun, so they may try to crash into your sale before you've even finished your coffee.

If you don't feel like their cash is worth the hassle — and

that's fair — consider doing these things:

- Advertise that no early birds are allowed, period. The sale opens at whatever o'clock and that's that. Turn away shoppers before that time, no exceptions. Practice your speech if you need to or if confrontation is difficult for you.

- Put your no early birds policy in writing. Make a large sign, easy enough to read from the road, and point to it for backup if necessary. Here are some words you can use: No early sales. No entry to the sale before 9 a.m.

- If you have a gate or a garage door to hide behind, do it. Also consider blocking entrance to your driveway or the sale by parking cars in front. Another tip: Rope off the sale area and put out "no entry" signs.

- Don't advertise your address. Just say the name of your subdivision or a nearby landmark. Put out your final signs directing people to your house just before the sale is supposed to start.

KEEP YOUR NERVE

Dealing with early birds can be difficult, but sometimes what they buy makes up for the trouble. Remember to keep your nerve. If you said no haggling, refuse to haggle. If you said no sales, turn it down. Stick to your policies and make this sale the best you've had.

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BUYER'S TIP

It Pays Not to Haggle

Respecting a seller's policies may get you some leniency later. If you hit a sale as an early bird and don't haggle, you may get a better price if you come back to the sale later as a regular shopper.

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