

GARAGE SALES

Buying Furniture at Garage Sales

If you're getting a kid ready for his first college apartment or looking to update your own space, garage sales can be a great place to look for gently loved furniture.

WHAT TO BRING

It might be obvious, but you need to bring a vehicle big enough to haul your furniture away. Recruiting some muscle's not a bad idea, either. Sellers might not be willing or able to help you load your items up. You'll also want to check and double check the dimensions of the space you're trying to fill. If you're looking to furnish a whole room or home, draw out the space on grid paper and fill in the pieces as you shop.

CHECK THE NEIGHBORHOOD

You might be more likely to find upscale pieces for sale in upscale neighborhoods. Hit sales in the more affluent parts of town first and last. First, because you want to see the items before they're picked over. Last, because you might be likely to score a great deal at the end of the day.



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GET READY TO GET DIRTY

When you're looking over a piece of furniture, make sure you sit on couches and chairs, open all the drawers. Check sofa support systems and bed frames carefully for damage. Stick your nose close to the upholstery and see if there are

weird smells like pet dander or cigarette smoke. And especially be wary of a musty or damp odor — that could mean the piece has previously been wet. Not so friendly for furniture of any kind, except for outdoor pieces.

Also, don't put too much stock into what color a piece

is now. Most home stores now sell at least one line of products specifically tailored to the nonprofessional refinishing furniture. Blogs and videos abound online, and it's relatively easy to turn an eyesore into a star. Keep an open mind and look for good bones.

MATTRESSES

Prices on second-hand mattresses may be attractive, but beware. Mattresses can bring bugs, both real and germs, into your home. Look for mattresses still in the plastic, free of stains and in like-new condition. If you can't find one, consider a less expensive alternative, such as a futon or air mattress until you can save up money to buy new.

DON'T PASS ON LAMINATES

Laminate or veneered furniture can still be a great deal. Pay attention to the adhesive holding the finishing pieces on. If it's still in good shape, you could be looking at a great piece that can take a fair amount of wear and tear. If you've got your heart set on hardwood, that's great, but look for the right kind. Oak makes a sturdier piece than pine, and remember that proper care can bring a new shine to an old piece.

CHILDREN'S FURNITURE

Lastly, fitting out a kid's room with garage sale finds may seem like a good choice considering how fast children grow and how hard they can be on furniture. Just make sure the pieces you're looking at haven't been recalled and, if they have, if the fix is fairly easy or even available to a second owner.

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SELLER'S TIP

Group Furniture

Group your furniture together for your sale display and make sure it's clean. Vacuum upholstered pieces and wipe down wood with a soft cloth.

AD SPACE