

GARAGE SALES

Garage Sales & The Environment

Garage sales are a great way to clear out clutter but they're also a great way to save the planet.

With every used item someone uses instead of buying new, the world saves resources for another generation and saves room in the nation's landfills. Americans generated 292.4 million tons of municipal solid waste in 2018, or nearly five pounds per person, per day. Buying used goods and giving them new life keeps them out of the landfill.

BENEFITS OF CLEARING OUT CLUTTER

Cleaning up your home, whether it's through a garage sale or other means, can be more healthful for you and your family both mentally and physically. Tidying up via garage sales can also make your bank account more healthy, too. While you're unlikely to recoup the full amount you invested in your stuff (the rule of thumb is never to charge more than 10-20% of retail), you did get some use out of those items and you get them out of your way. The return on that investment could be way more than



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you spent.

AUSTRALIA'S EXPERIMENT

According to a 2019 study from Gretchen M. Herrmann at the State University of New York College at Cortland,

Australians have enthusiastically embraced the garage sale as a means of caring for the planet. The annual Garage Sale Trail weekend began as a nonprofit sale in 2010. Its aim is to promote reuse, reduce waste to landfill, create aware-

ness of illegal dumping, unite communities and stimulate local economies. In 2014, Herrmann says the GST has more than 8,000 registered sales with more than 300,000 participants listing 3 million items for reuse. The GST gen-

erated more than \$3 million Australian that year.

RECYCLE RESPONSIBLY

If you have items left at the end of your sale, particularly ones that shouldn't go into landfills, recycle them responsibly. Electronics, for instance, should be taken to a certified e-stewards recycler, Green America says. These companies are certified by the Basel Action Network to ensure waste isn't exported to developing nations, disposed into landfills or recycled using forced or child labor. You can find e-stewards recyclers at e-stewards.org. Some of these sites also include data destruction, sustainability consulting, data recovery and IT services.

You may also be able to recycle textiles. Check with your local authority to see if they collect textiles for recycling. If not, you can drop them off in donation bins. Secondhand stores often recycle the textiles that they cannot or will not sell in their stores. Some brands may also offer recycling services. The Patagonia Worn Wear program accepts old, Patagonia-brand outdoor clothing, backpacks and other gear and gives you in-store credit in return. The brand uses some of the recycled textiles to make new Patagonia items.

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BUYER'S TIP

Secondhand Clothing Spares the Environment

Discarded clothing is the main source of textiles in landfills, the Environmental Protection Agency says. In 2018, the agency says Americans tossed 17 million tons of textiles and only recycled about 2.5 million tons. Not only will buying secondhand clothing save landfill space, but it also saves huge amounts of water (in 2020, the fashion industry consumed more than 79 trillion liters of water every year) and can save you big bucks. Secondhand clothing typically sells for a fraction of its new counterparts and can last you just as long with the proper care.

AD SPACE