

# GARAGE SALES

## Garage Sales and Sustainability

We Americans generate about five pounds of trash per person, per day, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

That's about 300 million tons a year, or a whole lot of garbage. We recycle a lot, too, not as much as we should, but it's still substantial. The EPA says we recycle around 70 million tons a year, the bulk of that being paper and paperboard.

But did you know you can recycle consumer goods, too, keeping them out of landfills? An Australian study found that each garage sale held saved about three cubic meters of trash from the landfill.

Shopping at garage sales and second-hand shops isn't just good for your wallet, it's good for the planet. Extending the life of consumer goods such as furniture, clothing and tools is great way to be green.

### USING LESS ENERGY

Those in Australia (and it's true everywhere) say that the bulk of the resources used for a consumer product are used in extracting raw materials and producing the item, including transportation to



the point of sale. So if you choose to buy a second- or third- or even fourth-hand

item instead of a new product, you're cutting down on the object's impact to the

environment by reducing the need to spend the resources to produce a new item for

you. You also don't need to pay for all those processes with a second-hand item, so you're more apt to get a bargain at a garage sale or second-hand store than if you bought the item new.

### REUSING VERSUS RECYCLING

In the adage reduce, reuse, recycle, the first two items are more preferable to the last one. You can reduce your impact on the environment, including energy usage by shopping second-hand in the first place. You can also sell reusable items you no longer need. Finally, when an item has completely reached the end of its useful life, it's time to recycle it.

Recycling has its own set of rules, though, or it's just putting out the garbage in a different can. If your community offers curbside recycling, use their rules for separating out things for proper recycling. This can mean things like rinsing out glass jars, flattening cardboard boxes and disconnecting cords. Curbside recycling programs may not take things such as clothes hangers, pots and pans, anything with an electric motor or electronics. However, your area may have other recycling centers that can take those items. If you have enough things, you may even get paid for it.

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### BUYER'S TIP

#### Buying to Resell Online

Some people out there have made a career out of buying things from garage sales and reselling them online. If you decide to do this, follow your state's rules for reporting taxes and profits to avoid running afoul of the law. You'll also need to read up on each site you use's policies and procedures for disputing sales and your bank's rules on online transactions.

### SELLER'S TIP

#### Plan to Recycle

Before you even hold your sale, have a donation center and a recycling center lined up to take your sale leftovers. Some of these places will even pick up the items for free.

## AD SPACE