

GARAGE SALES

Donating to Charity

Decluttering has become a science of late, with a score of methods, techniques and step-by-step processes taking the Internet and self-help shelves by storm. Many of these include a step for donating to charity.

However, not everything has a home in a second-hand shop, and some donations make more work for the charity than the giver ever intended.

Don't consider donating to the local resale shop as a way to get rid of your garage sale leftovers that should really be bound for the trash bin. Here's how to thoughtfully donate and make the best of your giving.

IS IT USEFUL?

Go through the items you're wanting to donate. Remember that many charities can only make use of things that are new or nearly new. Your ripped shirts, broken couch and ancient stereo won't make them any money. In



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fact, if the charity has to spend manpower sorting through it and disposing of it safely, it could even cost them money. Only donate to the thrift shops things you yourself would consider purchasing. Even better, if you can sell your garage sale leftovers as a lot, take that cash and donate it to the charity

instead. That money can go directly to fulfilling the charity's mission instead of overhead on shops and retail workers.

LOOK LOCAL

To cut transportation costs, especially in this era of astronomical fuel prices, choose charities that are physically

close to your home. Before you set up a pick-up, make sure that charity takes the items you plan to donate. Some charities may not take items that have been in a home with pets, for example, or certain types of appliances. Don't make them waste a trip to your home to leave empty-handed.

ITEMS CHARITIES CAN USE

Not all charity donations go into a resale shop. Sometimes, charities will take donations of items they can use themselves. Consider taking children's clothes and toys to a women's shelter instead of a resale shop. Some afterschool programs are in desperate need of furniture for kids to do homework at or lounge on. Pet shelters often need washing machines and dryers, as well as old towels, blankets and anything else that may make pets more comfortable while they await their new homes. Do your research and think outside of the box when it comes to your donations.

CAN YOU DEDUCT IT FROM YOUR TAXES?

That depends on the charity. Personal possessions donated to a charity are often eligible for a fair market value deduction, Charity Navigator says. Ask for an itemized receipt for all the items you donate and, if possible, have it noted that the items were in good used condition are better. The IRS requires a qualified appraisal for any single item that you deduct more than \$500 for. You must attach that appraisal to your tax form.

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BUYER'S TIP

Donate Only What a Charity Can Use

If you're working out a great deal by buying a heap of items with the plan of keeping only what you want and donating the rest for a tax write-off, these same rules apply. Don't make more work for your local charities and plan to donate only what they can actually use, even if you have to split up your haul between more than one organization. Otherwise, make plans to have a garbage service or recycling center pick it up instead.

AD SPACE