

GARAGE SALES

Setting a Vintage Table

Tis the season for entertaining, and shopping the tables at garage sales, thrift stores, estate sales is a great way to lay out your dream table on a budget.

TABLE LINENS

Start at the base. For a square table, measure one side and use that for all four sides. Oval or rectangle tables need all of the sides measured. For round tables, you'll just need to measure the diameter. That's the measurement from one side of the table to the other, passing through the circle's center. It should be the longest distance across the table.

The drop is how much the tablecloth drops from the surface of the table to the floor. A casual drop goes about to the top of the lap of people dining at the table. A formal drop goes all the way to the floor and can provide a more elegant look to your table setting. Measure the distance from the tabletop to the floor and add that to your sides for the total measurement. That's the size tablecloth you need.



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At sales, you're probably not going to find new tablecloths with their measurements printed neatly on the label. So bring a pocket tape measure with you while you shop to make sure you get the size that you need.

If you want to add more texture to your table, also keep an eye out for a table runner, an additional piece of linen that runs down the center of your table. If you're using the runner with a tablecloth, it should

be about a foot shorter than the tablecloth. If you're using it solo, it should hang off about six inches on both sides.

Lastly, consider using cloth napkins, particularly if you're going for a more formal look. The napkin will go the left of the plate.

SILVERWARE

A good set of stainless steel silverware can last a lifetime. If you're shopping at garage sales, you may need to replace

a few pieces, but you can easily find a set that you can use and on a budget, too.

Silverware is called that for a reason; the knives, forks, spoons and serve ware are usually silver in color, if not entirely in material. For stainless steel, chromium and nickel are usually the main ingredients and should be stamped with one of three ratios indicating the amount of each: 18/10, 18/8 or 18/0. The highest quality is 18/10, the lowest

18/0, which has a statistically irrelevant amount of nickel and is therefore more prone to rust.

DINNERWARE

Your plates, bowls and serving pieces will commonly be made of porcelain, bone china, earthenware, stoneware or melamine.

Bone china is lightweight and elegant. Unlike fine china, it's usually dishwasher- and microwave-safe.

Porcelain has a nonporous surface and is usually dishwasher-, microwave- and oven-safe.

Earthenware is heavy dinnerware that tends to look more casual. Avoid sudden temperature changes and high heat to keep these pieces looking their best.

Stoneware has a special finishing glaze that gives it a smooth appearance and impermeable finish. It's a great choice for everyday usage, but you'll still want to keep it away from sudden temperature changes and away from heat and freezing. You may have to wash pieces with hand-painted designs.

Melamine is shatterproof and break resistant. Melamine dishes are typically dishwasher safe but not for the oven or microwave.

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SELLER'S TIP

Buyer's Tip

Don't be afraid to buy an incomplete set of silverware or tableware. Replacements are easier than ever to find online. Try sites such as eBay or Replacements.com, or even hit up more garage sales for some of the more popular patterns.

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