

GARAGE SALES

Buying Furniture

The holidays are here and that means we may need more seating, storage and sleeping space.

Garage sales are a good place to find these items without breaking the bank, provided you know what you're looking for.

DINING CHAIRS

Garage sales, estate sales and thrift stores are great places to find the extra seating you may need around the holidays. Vintage pieces may also be of a higher quality than newer pieces, and it's definitely better for the environment to buy used pieces.

When you're shopping for used pieces, bring a tape measure. You'll want dining chairs to fit nicely under your table and be similar in height. Look over the chair carefully and check for damage, especially on the underside of the seat where the legs attach. Also check for arms, if it has them. Make sure any damage is within your ability to repair and, if it's not already taken into consideration, figured into the price.

UPHOLSTERED CHAIRS

Remember that upholstery of



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any sort can pick up the odors in the home. Ask the seller if anyone was a smoker or what pets they had. Cigarette smoke, in particular, is tough to get out and may call for a complete reupholstering. Also look for tears and holes and check the sturdiness of the frame and of the legs and arms.

If you don't have the time or budget for reupholstering and the problem is just that the chair is unsightly, not smelly, you can use a slipcover that matches the rest of your furniture until it gets recovered. Make sure you buy a cover that fits well with no sagging or dragging and that it doesn't

interfere with the functions of the chair, such as a recliner or rocker.

FUTONS AND COUCHES

See the rules of upholstery above, and also check the springs and the bottom and back of the couch for damage. Make sure any moving parts

move freely and that it's easy to fold out. If you're eyeing a futon for overnight guests, you can often buy new covers for the cushion, but it will still retain any smells that it comes with.

You'll also want to bring your measuring tape. Make sure the piece you're considering will fit in your space. Examine the cushions for damage and make sure any zippers and buttons are securely fastened and easy to move.

WHAT TO AVOID

Look for solid wood pieces and steer clear of MDF, veneers and pressed woods. Also avoid buying a used mattress. U.S. News and World Report says mattresses absorb smells and stains along with bacteria, mold, dust mites and possibly even bed bugs. The bed frame, headboard and footboard should be good to buy, however, provided you look for the same sturdiness and damage issues you would on a chair.

REFINISHING

You can give even mismatched chairs a complementary look by refinishing them. Make sure to leave plenty of time in your schedule if that's your plan. If not, consider investing in chair covers that can hide the color and style entirely.

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SELLER'S TIP

Spread the Word

If you're going to include furniture in your sale, especially around the holidays and college move-in days, advertise that. Include the type of furniture, how many pieces and, if you're using social media, include pictures and measurements.

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