

## ESTATE SALE STARTER GUIDE / 01

# What to Know Before You Sort, Donate, Toss or Sell

Whether you're downsizing, preparing for a move, settling a loved one's estate or figuring out what to do with a house full of belongings, getting started can feel like the hardest part.

### **You don't have to figure it all out yourself.**

At Cowtown Liquidation, we help families make these transitions with care. This guide explains what to leave for us to evaluate, what to set aside, how the estate sale process works and what to ask before choosing a company.

### **First things first: Before you throw anything away**

One of the most common things we hear is, "We already cleaned out a bunch before we called you."

We understand the instinct to get a head start. Before you begin donating or discarding belongings, though, we recommend having an experienced estate sale professional take a look.

### **What looks like "junk" may still have value.**

Estate sale shoppers look for much more than antiques and expensive furniture. Everyday household goods can add up, and items you might overlook can appeal to collectors, hobbyists and vintage buyers.

### **Start with a conversation**

You don't need to have everything sorted before reaching out. Tell us about your situation and timeline, and we'll help you understand the next step.

## ESTATE SALE STARTER GUIDE / 02

# What to Leave for Us to Evaluate

Before donating or discarding belongings, consider these categories:

**Jewelry:** Costume jewelry, broken pieces, single earrings, watches and jewelry-making supplies.

**Clothing and accessories:** Older clothing, boots, hats, handbags, belts and scarves.

**Tools and outdoor equipment:** Automotive items, lawn equipment, fishing gear and workshop contents.

**Kitchen and household goods:** Cookware, small appliances, utensils, dishes and useful everyday items.

**Household supplies:** Usable cleaning products and unopened, unexpired pantry items, depending on their condition.

**Crafting and sewing supplies:** Fabric, patterns, yarn, sewing machines and unfinished projects.

**Collectibles and older items:** Toys, records, advertising pieces, holiday décor, military memorabilia, postcards, books and cameras.

Family photographs and personal papers should be set aside for your family. Other older photographs or paper collectibles can be left for us to review if you're unsure about them.

**If you don't know what something is or whether it's sellable, leave it for us to evaluate.**

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# What to Do Before We Begin

The most helpful preparation starts with deciding what **isn't for sale**.

Give family members time to choose the belongings they want to keep, then remove those items before setup begins whenever possible. If something cannot be moved yet, let us know so we can agree on how to keep it separate from the sale.

**Personal paperwork:** Financial documents, tax records, insurance information, medical paperwork and other private records.

**Important documents:** Titles, deeds, wills, birth certificates, passports and other legal records.

**Family memories:** Photo albums, loose family photographs, home videos, letters, handwritten recipes and children's keepsakes.

**Sentimental belongings:** Heirlooms and anything meaningful to your family.

**Items promised to others:** Belongings that a family member or friend has already been told they can have.

We know it's easy to miss things in a full home. As we sort, our team sets aside documents, photographs and belongings that appear personal or sentimental for your family to review. Still, removing the items you know you want to keep is the best way to protect them from being included in the sale.

### **You don't need to make the house perfect.**

There's no need to empty every closet, organize the garage, wash every dish, price the belongings or research everything online. We're used to full cabinets, packed boxes and homes that have been lived in for years.

### **You don't have to prepare the estate for us. Let us help with the hard work.**

## ESTATE SALE STARTER GUIDE / 04

# How Our Estate Sale Process Works

A professionally managed estate sale involves much more than putting prices on belongings and opening the front door. Our goal is to take as much of that work off your plate as possible.

### 1. Initial conversation

We start by learning about your situation, the property, your timeline and what you hope to accomplish. Tell us about moving dates, home closings or other deadlines.

### 2. In-home walkthrough

We review the contents and discuss whether an estate sale is a good fit. We'll explain proposed services, commission, scheduling and next steps before you move forward.

### 3. Sorting and staging

Once the agreement is in place and setup begins, we sort, organize and stage the belongings so items are easy for shoppers to see and purchase.

### 4. Research and pricing

We evaluate and research items as needed, then price them based on condition, demand and the current resale market. Original purchase prices and online asking prices may differ from what buyers will pay today.

### 5. Photography and advertising

We photograph the contents and promote the sale through our marketing channels and established customer base to generate interest before the doors open.

### 6. Sale days

We staff and manage the sale, including assisting shoppers, overseeing customer flow, handling checkout and managing daily operations.

### 7. After the sale

We discuss options for remaining belongings, including optional donation assistance and post-sale cleanout services. We also explain how and when you'll receive your proceeds, according to your agreement.

## ESTATE SALE STARTER GUIDE / 05

# Questions Families Often Ask

### **Do we need to clean before you come?**

No. Please don't feel embarrassed by clutter, full closets, boxes or a packed garage. We'd rather see the contents as they are than have potentially sellable belongings removed. Let us know ahead of time about safety concerns or areas that are difficult to access.

### **Do we need to price anything?**

No. Researching and pricing the belongings is part of our service.

### **What if we don't know what's valuable?**

That's completely normal. You don't need to recognize every collectible or know what your belongings are worth. Leave unfamiliar or questionable items for us to review.

### **Will everything sell?**

Usually not. Condition, demand, location, timing and current buying trends affect what shoppers purchase. We can discuss donation and cleanout options for remaining belongings.

### **What if we have a deadline?**

Tell us as early as possible. Moving dates and home closings affect the time available for preparation, advertising, the sale and any services afterward.

### **Can we stay at the house during the sale?**

We generally recommend being away during sale hours. Watching shoppers purchase sentimental belongings can be emotional, and giving our team space helps the sale run smoothly. We'll discuss access and communication beforehand.

### **What about cars or other vehicles?**

Let us know during our initial conversation. Vehicles may use a different sales process and can often carry a lower commission. We'll explain the options, discuss ownership documents and help coordinate applicable sale paperwork and buyer information.

## ESTATE SALE STARTER GUIDE / 06

# What to Ask Before Hiring a Company

Choosing an estate sale company means trusting a team with access to a home and its belongings. You should feel comfortable asking questions and expect clear answers.

### **How does your commission work?**

Ask how the company is paid, how the commission is calculated and whether minimums or additional charges apply. The written agreement should explain the terms.

### **What services are included?**

Find out who handles sorting, staging, research, pricing, photography, advertising, staffing and checkout. Ask which services are optional or charged separately.

### **How will you advertise the sale?**

Ask how the company reaches shoppers and promotes sales. Good photographs, clear descriptions and an established customer base can help generate interest.

### **How do you handle valuable belongings?**

Ask how jewelry, precious metals, coins and specialty collectibles will be evaluated, displayed and managed.

### **Are you insured?**

Ask about insurance coverage and how the company handles security and property access.

### **What happens to items that don't sell?**

Understand your options and any costs beforehand. Donation and cleanout services should be discussed rather than assumed.

### **When and how will we receive the proceeds?**

Ask about the settlement timeline, payment method and sales information you'll receive.

### **Can we read reviews or speak with a reference?**

Client feedback can help you understand how a company communicates, treats belongings and manages the process.

### **Above all, choose people you trust.**

## ESTATE SALE STARTER GUIDE / 07

# You Don't Have to Do This Alone

### A quick checklist before you begin

- Pause before donating or discarding potentially sellable belongings.
- Decide what your family wants to keep.
- Remove personal documents, photographs and sentimental items.
- Tell us about belongings promised to family members.
- Leave unfamiliar or questionable items for us to evaluate.
- Share your deadlines and any property access concerns.
- Discuss a plan for belongings that remain after the sale.
- Leave the sorting, staging, research and pricing to us.

You don't need to complete every task before reaching out. If you're unsure where to begin, we can help you work through the next steps.

### Moving forward with care

Sometimes an estate sale comes with an exciting new chapter. Other times, it follows a loss or a difficult change. Whatever brings you to this point, we understand that the belongings inside a home represent more than their resale value.

There may be decades of memories and items that are harder to part with than you expected. It's okay to need time. Our role is to listen, explain your options and make the next step more manageable.

**You don't have to know where to start. That's what we're here for.**

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**"Let all that you do be done in love."**

**- 1 Corinthians 16:14**