

Annie Laurie's Estate Sale Overview

Before You Even Begin to Consider an Estate Sale Company

DO NOT THROW AWAY ANYTHING. Throwing away items before meeting with an estate sale company is one of the most common mistakes an individual can make. Every company will tell you this and there is a reason. That "pile of junk" or "that trash" might be worth big money. In many instances, we at Annie Laurie's have seen more value ruined in an estate's dumpster than items left in a home.

What is an Estate Sale and How Does It Work?

An Estate Sale, also called a Tag Sale in some parts of the country, is a way of liquidating the belongings of a family or estate. These are usually much more than garage or yard sales. They are used when someone is in need of a way to sell items due to downsizing, moving, divorce, bankruptcy, or death. The public is invited into the home and given the opportunity to purchase any item that is priced for sale. At times there are items that are not for sale because the family has decided to keep them or new owners of the house have made them part of a contract to buy the house.

There are several ways that Estate Sales are run. Items are marked with a selling price, and customers typically carry it with them until they are ready to check out. Often times, customers will also have a variety of items, and they can be held in an area designated as a "sold" space. If an item is too large to carry, customers can also have it marked sold by a member of staff.

Many companies, including ours, price items on a sliding discount scale, in which items are discounted by a larger percentage depending on the days since the start of the sale. However, customers are taking a chance that someone else might be willing to pay the marked price before the discounted days begin.

For lining up and entering the sale, most companies use the first come first served policy. This is when a line is formed at the door of the home where the sale is taking place. Lines may start several hours before the sale opens.

What Do Estate Sale Companies Charge for this Service, and How Am I Paid?

When discussing an estate sale contract, the company interviewed will state their commission fee in which they are to receive for the conduct of the sale. This number varies from company to company, but it is typically a percentage of the overall sales amount. The resulting amount, minus agreed upon expenses, is typically paid to the client within 2-3 business days of the close of the sale.

Below we will outline a hypothetical sales result with a commission fee of 40%, \$10,000 in total sales, and \$400 of mutually agreed upon expenses to be paid by the client.

$\$10,000$ (overall sales) x 40% (company commission) = \$4,000 commission to be paid to the estate sale company.

$\$10,000 - \$4,000 = \$6,000$. $\$6,000 - \400 (expenses) = \$5,600 to be paid to client.

It is important to note however, that the percentage amount charged should not be your only criteria when choosing a company. You may find a company with lower rates, but it is important to note that experienced companies, such as Annie Laurie's, can likely make you more money even while charging a possibly higher percentage, because of a large network of customers, dealers, and advertising avenues.

What If I Don't Think I Have Enough Items for a Large Multiple Day Sale?

Annie Laurie's is quite unique in the fact that, unlike most other estate sale companies, we have a physical retail location in which to sell items. In the event that you may not have enough items to warrant a full estate sale at your location, we are more than happy to discuss the option of consigning your items. Consignment of your items in our retail location works very much like our estate sales in regards to commission fees. After a consignment contract is signed, your items are given a code unique to you, and tagged and priced. Consignment checks are sent on a monthly basis, 2-5 business days from the first of the month.

Before the Estate Sale Contract is Signed

It is very important for you to ask any questions you have regarding the conduct of the sale, to work out scheduling, and to discuss any fees other than the commission before the contract is signed.

This is also the time in which you will agree as to what items will be for sale and any items excluded from the sale that are on the premises. If other members of a family or estate have permission to go through an estate for personal or monetary gains, this is the time in which they should be taking items. This is very important to all estate sale companies, as the commission paid and the decision to accept a sale is based on the items discussed at this time. If items are removed after the contract is signed, this can likely result in contractual penalties, and the possible cancellation of the sale.

There are also a few things you can do to prepare the home for the sale. It is important for you to go through the home or estate prior to the estate company set up to “clean” the home of personal records, family photos, and other personal information. If these items are left on the premises, they could possibly end up being seen or even inadvertently purchased by customers. This is also a good time to clean the house of all food items, if the house is to sit empty.

We always recommend that you take this time to also visit an estate sale so that you can see how the process works, and to make sure that you are comfortable with the nature of how they are to be conducted at your private premises.

After the Estate Sale Contract is Signed

The estate sale company will likely request keys to the premises to begin set up and pricing on their own scheduled timeline. The amount of time this will take is totally dependent on the amount of items on the premises.

All estate sale companies likely have differing methods of pricing items, but at Annie Laurie’s, the estate sale staff will assess the value of items based on decades of experience in the field, outside consultation if needed, and rigorous internet research methods.

During this time as well, various methods of advertising are typically employed to begin the marketing for the sale.

After the Sale

After the sale has concluded, there are always items that do not sell. Many estate sale companies, including Annie Laurie’s, offer several options for the disposal of these items if that is the clients wish.

At Annie Laurie’s, we have the option of taking select items on the previously mentioned consignment, and/or working with an outside contractor for disposal of the remainder. Typically this contractor will come into the estate following the conclusion of the sale, and present one of two options. The first option is offering the estate a flat price to purchase the remainder of all items (including all trash) if they are deemed of “value” to the company. The second option is requesting a flat fee to take the remainder of all items and trash. These options are all on a case by case basis with the client, and can be discussed upon the conclusion of the sale.

Important Points to Remember

Many items are likely worth a fraction of what you imagine. Television programs that focus on antiques and collectables have greatly misinformed the public into thinking that many items are much more valuable than they are in reality. This is especially true when it comes to collectible type items such as sports cards, figurines, and other items that follow the up and down trends of the industry. Once again, it is important to not dispose of anything, as the items you may perceive as trash may be worth more than what you perceive to be the most valuable.

In addition to this, it is important to realize that just because a large amount was paid for something such as furnishings in the past, they may not retain that value based on the very fickle nature of ever changing consumer trends on what is fashionable.

In the event of the discovery of an exceptionally valuable item by the estate sale company, most often this item will not be sold at the estate sale. These items are typically sent to an auction or private individual for purchase, as the premium value is not often realized on the average sale customer.

Some estate liquidators, including Annie Laurie’s, ask that no family members are on the premises during a sale. This is only because families often find it difficult to see a loved one’s belongings being sold to strangers, and more importantly to negate the micromanaging of a sale which was entrusted to the estate sale company.