

## Wise shoppers seek out holiday gifts



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Ah, there's nothing like the holiday season. We bake cookies, warm our tootsies by the fire, listen to Bing crooning out the classics and we shop for gifts . . . at garage sales.

What?!

That's right. A lot of us purchase gifts at garage sales. And why not? At a time when many of us have to buy presents for our husbands, great-aunts, cousin's daughter's mail carrier - and many others - it makes sense. We save money and often find new items, unused in original packaging at bargain prices.

Brad Huss is a tax accountant and certified financial planner in Scottsdale and he says it's easy to get out of touch with our finances around the holidays.

"Then in January you've got to deal with the bills. Usually, people need their tax refunds fast to pay off their bills from all the spending they've done," he said.

Brad agrees you can't beat garage sales for getting good deals and staying out of debt. And take it from me, a seasoned garage saler who often finds gifts at great deals, garage sales are rife with new items, still in the box for smokin' prices.

Why? Well, folks receive gifts that aren't quite right, which sit in their closets unopened and end up at a garage sale priced at a buck or two. I once bought a large, Lenox bowl for \$1 at a sale. The lady told me it was a wedding present she never even took out the box. Linda Kastberg knows you can get good gifts at garage sales, too. She shops for folks at sales but also sells at garage sales gifts that she has received. At a sale in Gilbert she recently sold two sets of red martini glasses by Mikasa for \$10 each. Each set of four came in its original boxes and were never used.

"Yeah, they are pretty and there's nothing wrong with them. I've never even used these," she said.

Linda says she prefers breaking out her set of Waterford, clear crystal glasses on martini night. She also sold a set of Lenox dishes - a service for eight - for only \$75. They were also a gift for her, new with the original price tag at \$900 Linda lives in Gilbert part of the year and in Toms River, N.J., the rest of the time. When we talked on the phone she was in Jersey. Just the day before she'd grabbed a gift at a garage sale there. She bought a new set of Rogers silverware for 12 for \$25. She estimated the wooden storage box alone was worth \$100. She plans to give the set to her daughter, Tammy, of Gilbert. "I guess we're in a generation right now where people don't want to hold onto this stuff so folks just pass it on instead of keeping it in their closet."



### **Tips for buying garage sale gifts**

1. Make sure it's really new. Sometimes I've bought items assuming they were new only to find out they'd been used. Oops!
2. Make sure the box is in good shape. If the item is new but the box is torn or stained, try to find a new box or keep it as a gift to yourself.
3. Don't feel guilty about buying gifts at garage sales. We're recycling and it's good for the pocketbook.

**Lynda Hammond is a former television anchor who runs [www.GarageSaleGal.com](http://www.GarageSaleGal.com), where you can list and look for garage sales online. Contact her at [Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com](mailto:Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com). Lynda also does garage-sale segments on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.**