

GARAGE SALES

Cleaning Jewelry for a Sale

Putting your best foot forward is key to making the most at your garage sale, and that includes making sure each item you offer for sale is presented in its best light. If you've got loads of jewelry, that can be tricky.

Some finishes, especially when it comes to costume jewelry, can be finicky, and the wrong cleaning method can do more harm than good.

SILVER

Silver is one of the more common metals used in jewelry. You likely have some of each of these three kinds of silver in your jewelry box. The most rare is pure silver, which contains 99.9% silver. Sterling silver is much more common and contains a smidge of copper, which lends itself to tarnish. Silver-plated jewelry is the most common and can tarnish, but it's more important to be gentle with it because that layer of silver can be very thin.

Check your silver jewelry for



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any identifying markings. If it's stamped 9.25, 925/1000, sterling, S/S, or sterling 9.25, it's sterling silver. If it's not, it's probably silver-plated. If you have a magnet, you can test it that way. If the magnet sticks, it's probably silver-plated.

To clean silver jewelry, start

by soaking it in warm water mixed with a few drops of dish soap. This will loosen the dirt. Scrub the piece with a soft toothbrush, paying special attention to crevices. Gently dry it with a microfiber towel. Avoid paper towels as they can scratch the silver.

Remove tarnish by making a paste with two parts baking soda and one part water. Gently rub the mixture onto the jewelry. You can use a soft toothbrush to help. Let it dry completely, then rinse with warm water and dry it with a microfiber towel.

GOLD

Most gold costume pieces are gold-plated. Just like that silver plating, the layer is very thin and can be easily damaged. Use soft brushes and microfiber cloths, and avoid harsh chemicals. You can use the same warm-water-and-soap method you used for the silver jewelry. Again, avoid using any chemicals, even mild household cleaners such as glass cleaner or vinegar. They can damage finishes and gems.

FINE JEWELRY

Take any fine jewelry or damaged pieces to a professional for cleaning and evaluation. Don't sell fine pieces through a garage sale; instead, take them to a consignment or entrust them to other pros for the best bang for your buck. An appraisal and formal sale may cost you a little more, but you'll make more and not worry about securing your valuables during the chaos of a yard sale.

DISPLAY

Once your pieces are cleaned up, it's time to show them off. Set up a jewelry display that allows each piece to shine. Hang necklaces, leaving plenty of room for browsing, and display rings against a dark-colored cloth (there's a reason jewelers use velvet).

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BUYER'S TIP

Smart Shopping

Carefully inspect any jewelry before buying. Check clasps and gems, and beware of any claims of real stones or metals without proof.

AD SPACE