

Step-by-step: car boot sale

Great for: Everyone **Fun factor:** ★★★★★ **Effort:** ★★★★★ **£ potential:** ★★★★★

If your aiming to engage with the local community more this year, then look no further than a car boot sale!

Step-by-step

1. **Two to three months before:** Once you have a date in mind, contact your local authority to see whether you need a permit and to check costs. Calculate how many cars you can fit on the premises, allowing space between vehicles. Identify access points, and discuss how, where and when sellers and buyers will arrive and depart - using separate gates if possible. Assemble your team and delegate tasks accordingly. Agree what to charge - usually around £5-10 per pitch.
2. **One to two months before:** Send a letter to parents with a tear-off booking form, asking for the seller's name, address and car registration number. Spread the word with flyers, posters, banners and via social media. Provide sellers with an advice sheet when they register and make it clear that they bring their cars onto the premises at their own risk. Include guidelines on trademarks, copyright and trade descriptions (see below). Confirm that any commercial traders have their own public liability insurance.
3. **Two weeks before:** Contact sellers with an outline of arrival points and times. Draw up a rota, appointing stewards, litter pickers, and volunteers to collect entry fees and serve refreshments. Purchase walkie-talkies so team members can communicate with each other during the event.
4. **On the day:** Set up early, and check that everyone knows what they are doing and where they should be. Hand out walkie-talkies, hi-vis jackets and copies of your floorplan to stewards. Welcome sellers as they arrive and distribute a brief reminder of any rules - such as 'no smoking', 'no dogs', 'no knives', etc. Hand out guidance notes to buyers on arrival, advising them to inspect what they are purchasing, and if buying expensive goods, to take contact details of the seller.
5. **After the event:** You might come across a few problems prior to or during the event - take a note of these for next time to ensure mistakes aren't repeated. Have a post-event debrief with your team to discuss what worked well and what didn't. Be sure to thank your sellers for taking part, and ask for feedback. Cultivate relationships with sponsors by sending thank you letters detailing how much the event raised and how this has contributed to your fundraising goal.

Visit pta.co.uk for more articles, downloads and templates.

Tips & advice

Licences: Contact your local authority to see whether a licence is required - this varies from authority to authority. Where a licence is required, the process is simple but fees vary considerably. The average notice required is 28 days, but it's worth checking. Some local authorities have other stipulations.

Trading Standards: As the organiser, it is your responsibility to ensure nobody is breaking the law. Speak to your local Trading Standards office or Consumer Direct for guidance on trademarks, copyright and trade descriptions. Electrical goods, furniture, bicycles, prams and pushchairs all have specific legislation. Customers have the same consumer rights when purchasing second-hand goods as they do for new, though factors, such as age, should be taken into account in the price.

Insurance: Commercial stallholders won't be covered by your school or PTA insurance, so will need their own public liability insurance. Contact your insurance provider to check what and who is covered and to verify any other stipulations.

Wet weather: Hopefully you'll have a dry and sunny day, but work on the assumption that the weather will be poor! Decide whether you will postpone the event and set an alternative date, or go ahead whatever the weather. Consider asking sellers to pay in advance, so even if the weather turns bad at the last minute they won't pull out.

Dealers: Because of the informal nature of car boot sales, professional dealers can sometimes attempt to get involved and use aggressive sales techniques. Ensure that you have some assertive volunteers who will act as security if necessary.

Facilities: Sellers will appreciate having access to some facilities. Wherever possible, make the pitches within easy walking distance of the toilets. If you plan to use the school's facilities, consider security issues (and mud being walked through) within your pre-event risk assessment.

Boost profits: Set up some PTA stalls selling second-hand games, books or toys. If you haven't hired a caterer, sell hot drinks, bacon butties and hot dogs. Bear in mind that sellers may not want to leave their pitches, so have a mobile tea and coffee cart if possible, providing refreshments to thirsty sellers!