Use these 10 strategies to help you find hidden treasures among the castoffs.

1. Focus on moving sales or older homes

Not sure which yard sales to hit first? For practical goods, moving sales are better than run-of-the-mill garage sales, since people are more likely to be unloading goods that are fairly new and don't have a lot of wear and tear, says Cristin Frank, who blogs about reducing waste.

Hunting for antiques or collectibles? Stick to neighborhoods that have older homes, says Reyne Hirsch, an expert in 20th-century decorative arts and former appraiser for Antiques Roadshow.

If you're packing a bunch of sales into a single day, YardSaleSearch.com or the Garage Sale Rover app will map out the most time-efficient route.

2. Know your sizes

You don't want to discover after you get it home that your terrific new end table is three inches too wide for the spot you had in mind.

Assess your spaces beforehand and carry a small tape measure in your bag to use while browsing, says blogger Cristin Frank.

[Related: Things Your Thrift Store Owner Won't Tell You]

3. Think frames, not art

The chances you'll spot an original Whistler in your neighbor's yard? Not good. Frames, on the other hand, can often be worth more than sellers think.

"I have found some that were 150 years old selling for chump change," says artist, designer, and garage sale enthusiast Pablo Solomon. Look for intricate frames made from solid material.

For more on what makes frames, art, and other antiques valuable, see the guides at eBay.com.

4. Scout out old china

Yard sales are great for nabbing just-out-of-the-box kitchenware. But bowls and cups from the 1920s and '30s may be a better deal than newer items.

"A lot of it is vintage stuff that didn't cost much but is better quality than what you could buy new today," says decorative-arts expert Reyne Hirsch.

Like a lot of stuff? Ask for a bulk discount; sellers are often willing to cut a deal to clear out a bunch of wares at once.

5. For resale, try retro

Yard-hopping for profit? Many traditional antiques are selling for half what they used to because downsizing baby boomers are flooding the market and younger buyers have a different aesthetic, says Patrick van der Vorst, a Sotheby's veteran and co-founder of ValueMyStuff.com.

Today's hot items are appliances, functional objects, and novelties — such as movie posters or advertisements — from the 1950s, `60s, and `70s.

Use your smartphone to check how much similar items have recently sold for on eBay before you negotiate.

6. Get goods appraised

Think you've found a garage sale gem? Get a detailed virtual appraisal on ValueMyStuff.com (cost: $8.50).

Just submit a photo, and within 48 hours you'll have an estimate as well as details about the item's provenance and insight about why something is or isn't valuable.

That's knowledge you can use to score even bigger on your next scavenger hunt.

[Related: Tips from the Garage Sale Millionaire]

7. Test the electronics

Those new-looking portable iPod speakers are a great deal — or are they?

Pack an assortment of batteries to test electronic goods, along with a high-powered flashlight or black light to check for cracks or chips on housewares or furniture that may not be visible to the naked eye.

8. Look carefully at costume jewelry

Sellers often think that old costume jewelry made with fake stones and plated with silver or gold isn't worth anything. Yet "vintage costume jewelry can sell for big bucks," says Reyne Hirsch.

Look for sturdy settings and clasps; avoid pieces that have chipped or worn enamel.

9. Go for heavy items

Gardening tools, kids' bikes, fitness equipment, and furniture — all may be cheaper at a yard sale than on eBay, since many sellers don't want to go through the trouble or expense of shipping awkward or heavy pieces.

To snag the best price on something mentioned in a listing, try calling the seller the day before, says Cristin Frank; aficionados often circle the block hours before the official sale starts.

10. Know when to steer clear

Mattresses, upholstered furniture — forget 'em. The risk of bedbugs is too high. Also be careful with baby gear such as car seats and cribs, since safety standards often change.

Check the latest safety info on baby items at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's website, or download the free app (for Android only).