

A message from Liberty Mutual Insurance

From Dennis Goebel, Vice President, Liberty Mutual Insurance

Trash or Treasure: Advice from *Antiques Roadshow* Experts

Everyone has that spot in their house, whether it's the attic, a closet, or the garage, where they've piled up old items that gather dust. We asked the expert appraisers from *Antiques Roadshow* to help identify the things that are worth keeping, and what's okay to clean out.

"Unfortunately there is a long list of items that people hold onto in basements or attics that do not retain much value," says [Sebastian Clarke](#), Specialist and Director of Estate Services at Rago Arts & Auction Center, and a featured expert on *Antiques Roadshow*.

Silver, Carpets, and Toys

Often things that are difficult to maintain in good condition are the pieces that lose value. For instance, silverplate items will tarnish and deteriorate over time. Another thing that people save but can quickly lose value is carpets. If you are putting a carpet in storage, you should have it cleaned and professionally wrapped beforehand to prevent moisture damage. Lace and linens are also no longer as valuable as they once were, and quickly deteriorate if not preserved properly.

When it comes to old toys and collectibles, *Antiques Roadshow* expert [Phil Weiss](#) says their value can vary greatly. "In all cases, the value of common things that are saved is based on the time period they are from and the condition they're in; the same type of item can have widely varying prices. For example, if you find a mint-condition Barbie doll in the basement from the 1980s or 90s it might be worth under \$10, yet if you find a Barbie in the box from the 1950s it could be worth thousands. The same can be said for comic books and sports cards."

Unexpected Treasures

Some items, though, can have an unexpected value and should be looked into before you throw or give them away. "I think it is fair to say that fine art (paintings, prints, posters, woodcuts, etc.) can have great potential for hidden value," says Clarke. Another item that typically retains value: sterling silver. "With the increased value of sterling silver on the commodities market, you may find that your not-so-attractive sterling silver flatware service from Grandma can be worth upwards of \$1,000!"

Determining Its Value

So, how do you determine the value of a collectible or antique? The Internet is a wealth of knowledge to help determine value, but speaking to professional appraisers is the best way to do this.

If you think you have something of value, start by preserving its present condition. For example, if you have silver, do not wrap it in plastic, as the plastic will deteriorate and bond with the surface of the silver.

Most importantly, take the time to check each item before discarding it. Weiss explains, "I get a call every day from someone who describes a great item only to end the sentence with 'I did not know what it was worth so we threw it out.'"

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