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## FRUGAL DUCHESS

### Super shoppers share garage-sale strategies

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A successful yard sale outing depends more on planning and less on shopping, according to the folks at Fire Finance ([www.firefinance.blogspot.com](http://www.firefinance.blogspot.com)), a top-rated personal finance blog written by Amalendu Haldar and his wife, Haimonti Basu, a pair of engineers from Boston. Using maps, power tools, paper towels and ropes, they hunt down yard sale deals for their home. Here are some of their tips:

**Create a wish list.** The Fire Finance team maintains a list of items needed around their home. "We keep a simple notebook and pen on our kitchen counter. When we need something, we write it in this notebook," they told me during a recent online interview.

**Establish priorities.** Not every item on their wish list falls into the must-have/must-buy category. After a one-week cooling-off period, the engineers evaluate each item on the basis of need vs. want. "We wait and see if we can really do without it," they said.

**Get out the maps.** After sorting through the weekly list of yard sales, the husband-and-wife team spends time mapping out the shortest route, with the help of Google, Yahoo! and AAA.com. This step saves time and gas, they say. They use the mileage estimate provided by the online trip-planning services to eliminate sales that are too far. (They will, however, travel 50 to 75 miles if a garage sale advertises a big-ticket item from their wish list.)

**Pack your bags.** The duo packs power tools, a rope, paper towels and a measuring tape. These items are used for disassembling, cleaning up, carting away or measuring purchases.

And you might want to pack food: Well-fed shoppers make smarter decisions.

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