

**\*\*Businesses are not regulated in this industry, so make sure you ask the right questions so you and your assets are protected!\*\***

**QUESTIONS TO ASK EVERY ESTATE SALE COMPANY**

**Questions About The Estate Sale Company Itself**

**1. How many estate sales have you conducted?**

Hire a company with experience, but be leary of companies that tell you that they have had thousands of sales. There is no company currently in Atlanta that has done over 1,000 sales. If they tell you that they have had 5,000 sales, they might be counting the individual “sales” at a sale. This is dishonesty.

Check how many likes the company has on FB, this will tell you how long they have been in business. With 100 likes, a company hasn’t been in business for 25 years, unless they are not internet savvy at all, which is important in this day and age!

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**2.What kind of experience do you have? Are you an appraiser?**

This is a great question to ask! Be leary of companies with certain names that refer to them being qualified, as many use it as a ploy to get business. Ask if they are licensed, certified, etc and if so, in what. Do not assume that a company that you are hiring is licensed, certified, or has the qualifications to conduct your estate sale.

Licenses and Credentials should be shown.

**3. Are your employees W-2 employees?**

Why does this matter? If someone does not have W-2 employees, YOU or the estate can be liable for any injuries on your property. Liability insurance does not cover a company that employs subcontractors, independent contractors, or day laborers. Ask to see a paycheck from the company, which will list that this is a W-2 employee. There is currently a case pending where a subcontractor is sewing the homeowner for an injury that occurred on the property.

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**4. Do you have Worker’s Compensation?**

If the estate sale company does not have W/C, which is required in the State of GA for any company that has more than 3 employees (This number includes owners), you will be liable for any injury that occurs on the property. Worker’s have been hurt and have sued home owners for damages. Ask to see their policies.

**5. Do you have liability insurance?**

Do you want to be liable if a customer trips and falls, or for an accident that occurs in your home based on negligence of the estate sale company? Make sure your estate sale company has at least a $1 million dollar policy. Ask to see their policy.

**6. Do you collect sales tax?**

This is required of all estate sale companies in Georgia. You can be responsible for paying the sales tax if they are not collected by an estate sale company. Ask if they collect sales tax! Make sure they are collecting tax on ALL items sold, not just on credit cards. There are companies that only collect on credit cards, as they are running the cash under the table.

**7. Do you own a store or have a booth that you sell things out of? Will you move remaining items there?**

 We are in the estate sale business only and if needed, we have a relationship with one of the best consignment stores in Atlanta and can get items approved from consignment and moved there. However, we rarely have anything remaining at our sales that would meet the required quality for most consignment stores. Consignment stores only take high quality, newer, and updated items in excellent condition. We will always have your best interest at heart.

**8. Do you have 3 recent references, in the last 3 months, that you conducted a sale for, that I can talk to?**

**​**Ask for references.

**9. Do you have a contract?**

Every company should have a legal binding contract. Make sure you sign a contract with a company and obtain a copy for your records after they have signed it.

Links to help you assess the company:

<https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch>

(All companies should be located in here. Look at dates and make sure that they **are not a dissolved company or are uncompliant**)

This is ours and what the record should look like. <https://ecorp.sos.ga.gov/BusinessSearch/BusinessInformation?businessId=2071177&businessType=Domestic%20Limited%20Liability%20Company>

**The Set Up & The Sale**

1. **Talk about dates first.**

Estate Sale Companies typically book 3-6 weeks out, and sometimes longer. Make sure that if you have a specific date that you need for a home closing, to discuss this first in the call to an estate sale company.

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**2. Please explain your process to me.**

The company needs to explain how they operate and what the procedures will be going forward if you hire them.

**3. Do you do a complete set up?**

Will you take everything out of closets, cabinets, etc. and set everything up on tables or will you leave it in its place. **This is important.** You are hiring someone for a service. They need to provide that service for you. “Set Up” is VERY important in this business. When companies don’t set up, who knows what items that they will miss, not advertise, and misprice! **This is the 2nd MOST important thing for an Estate Sale Company to do!**

**4. Do you price everything?**

Imagine what it would be like on Black Friday going into a store with nothing priced. Again, you are hiring a business and **that service is a must.** Everything should be priced, and there should not be signed throughout the house, or even in the garage, saying “Bring to the front for a price”. No shopper wants to do this. They want to know the price when they are looking at the item.

**5. Ask them to explain the Sale Days, Times, Discounts, Etc. .**

**6. Will I receive an inventory of transactions from the sale?**

We conduct electronic sales and therefore all sales will be presented to you on an excel spreadsheet directly from our POS system based on categories of items sold. Every client should be given a list of transactions of sales.

**7. How do you advertise? Is there a charge for marketing?**

This **is the #1....NUMBER ONE** most important thing for an Estate Sale Company to do, and to do very well. If your company does not market your sale, no one will come. Look at their marketing. Once they advertise the sale once, does the marketing continue?

Many estate sale companies stop the marketing once the first listing or first email has gone out. The marketing should continue throughout the sale. (Example: An email should go out announcing the sale, and another should go out before the discount day and all websites should be updated for the discount day as well. Estate sale websites, etc. should be updated letting customers know that there will be a discount and there is a reason to come back for something that they were thinking about when they visited the sale.)

**8. Do you have a website?**

Every company in today's business world should have a website.

**9. Do you have professional photography?**

Professional Photography is part of marketing. Photos are SO IMPORTANT for your estate sale. Look at some estate sale companies and their photos and you will see the importance.

**10. When are the items picked up by buyers? Do you add an additional day for buyers to pick up items?**

Allowing an additional pick up day for buyers is very important. If an estate sale company is not flexible with this policy, you will not sell as many things at your estate sale, especially larger items that require movers and or rental trucks, etc. Read their policies on their [estatesales.net](http://www.estatesales.net), [estatesale.com](http://www.estatesale.com), or [estatesales.org](http://www.estatesales.org) pages to learn more about the company’s individual policies. This is very important.

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**11. Do you accept credit cards?**

This is VERY IMPORTANT. Any estate sale company that you hire needs to accept credit cards. We conduct over 34% credit sales and if we did not collect them, we would have a drastic decrease in sales. Do you want your large, more expensive items to sell.....Make SURE they accept credit cards.

**After The Sale**

**1. What services do you provide after the sale?**

Do you coordinate a charity pick up, a trash service, and cleaning of the home?

This is not a conflict of interest, as some companies will tell you. They will tell you this, because they are not interested in doing the hard work or going the extra mile.

Do you want to be left with a mess, things to donate, trash to haul off, and a house to clean, or would you like these done for you at an additional cost.

**2.What paperwork will I receive after the sale?**

You should receive documentation of what was sold (many companies provide lists based on categories, as there is currently no POS system that can input every individual item), how much was made each day, taxes collected, etc.

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**3. When will I receive payment from the Estate Sale?**

A company should pay you in no more than 30 days. Most companies pay in 7-10 business days, allowing for credit cards to process, and additional items to sell.

**Commissions/Costs**

**1. Do you charge for Labor?**

Some companies charge for labor on all sales, on only certain sales (hoarder situations, sales that have set up time over 100 hours, etc), while others will not charge for labor, but will have a minimum guarantee.

**2. Do you have a minimum?**

When asking if companies have a minimum, ask if they have a gross sale minimum and/or a guaranteed minimum. For a Gross Sales Minimum, this means that the gross sales, for example has to be $15,000. Therefore they are only going to take sales that they believe will gross over $15,000, so that the company will be able to pay their payroll, etc based on this number.

Some companies have a minimum guarantee, instead of a Gross Sales Minimum. This means that if they take a sale, they will have to make a minimum. The minimum is deducted from the gross proceeds and then the commission is taking out of the remaining proceeds.

Many companies, that stage and do a set up and price items, will not take small sales unless there is a guaranteed minimum so that they will cover their costs to conduct the sale.

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Ex. You hire a company that has a $3,000 minimum guarantee. This is an average minimum for a company that does a complete set up, marketing, photography, and provides labor for the sale.

An estate sale conducted makes $5,200. This would mean that the estate sale company would keep $3,000 and the estate/the family would get $2,200. Estate sale companies must do this, that do not charge labor, in order to cover their fees and labor.

If a company has a gross minimum over $25,000, normally they will not have a minimum guarantee, as they will only take very large sales.

Many contracts state the minimum OR their percentage, whichever is greater.

Ex. …… Company’s Commission is $3000 or 35%, whichever is greater.

**What is your commission?**

An average commission for an experienced company in Atlanta, for a full house sale is 35%-50% currently. Commissions are based on the **quality and the quantity** of the items for sale in the home.

**Extra Service Costs?**

What are your costs for coordinating a charity pick up, a trash pick up, and cleaning the home if these services are offered.

**What to look for when you attend an estate sale to hire a company:**

**Is the signage professional and very visible?**

**How is the parking being handled?**

**How are they checking people out? Is it going smoothly? Is it so slow, people are putting down items and walking out. Imagine that there are 20 people in line, can they handle this quickly?**

**Is the home staged and fully set up?**

**Is everything priced?**

**Is there anyone walking around helping customers or are they reading a book on a sofa not paying any attention to you?**

**Is the home being restaged during the sale to continue to make it presentable? Does it look like a lot less tables than in the photos on line? This means that they are condensing items and restaging.**

**Are there a lot of things marked sold or based on the initial photos, are there many things removed already…meaning already sold?**

**Are their rugs/mats down/ etc? Are they attempting to protect the property?**

**Can you tell who is working at the sale? Are they visible for security, help, etc.?**

**Are the estate sale associates working the sale helping the customers and trying to sell items?**

**Is the business collecting sales tax?**

**Is there appropriate signage in the house?**

**Are there enough estate sale associates working in the home? A sale should have 3 employees MINIMUM for a full home.**

**Are they friendly and inviting? Would you want to come back to another sale of this company’s?**

\*\*Don’t have time to go to a sale? While, we think that this is extremely important, some of the above can be addressed online, if you absolutely cannot go to some estate sales. Go to their websites, and the following websites listed below, and ask these questions:

**What is their marketing like? Did they list items for sale or is it just general categories or, just an address and no listing of what is being sold at all?**

(No listing at all?) Let me tell you why this is important. …

When someone goes on Estatesales.net or Craigslist, and types in “Recliner, Pool Table, Kitchen Table, Etc”, when there is no listing of the items that are for sale, that sale will not come up, therefore, no one will know about it, unless they look at every single picture. Shoppers do not look at every single picture unless they have a reason to do so.

The more listed, the more photos, the more effort, the more people will come to the sales! If there is no listing, this is a company that is again, not providing a good service for the commission that they are getting, no matter how low it is. This is still a service and you have to ask yourself, what am I paying for?)

**How many photos do they have? Is the photography good? Would it make you want to go to the sale?**

**Are they listed on Estatesales.net?**

**Are they listed on Estatesales.org?**

**Are they listed on Estatesales.com?**

**Do they have a website?**

**Do they have a Facebook Page?**

If so, are they active and have over 1,000 likes, this will tell you something about their business. I do not know many businesses that do not have a FB page. Social Media is very popular and it is needed in this business.

AESC has over 5,000 active followers.

**When you look at their photos from one of their sales, do they have multiple tables set up throughout the house, or can you only count 1 or 2.**

They should not be using your furniture as tables, as it will not sell. Companies should have a minimum of 10 tables per home. (We have 22 per enclosed trailer that is brought to your home)

Or does it look like someone walked out the door and an estate sale company came in and put a sign in the yard and are having a sale with no prep work? (I cannot stress how important prep work, research, and pricing are in this business!!)

**Are they updating their websites every day after the sales to let people know of a discount the next day, so they have a reason to come back?**

**Do they have an email list? Sign up for it!! Does it look appealing? Again, do they give appropriate information and does it look inviting?**

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**We hope this helps you in the estate sale process & we hope to meet you soon!**

**Atlanta Estate Sale Companies, LLC**

**The Vintage Girls/Ashley Glass Luxury Estate Sales/Farm, Ranch, & Land Estate Sales**