

How to Write a Craigslist Ad that Gets Results:

1) PHOTOS

Include at least one medium-resolution, clear picture of the item.

Avoid ultra-high resolution photos. (They load too slowly. People will click away from your ad)

Many people won't even read an ad unless there's a photo -- so, even a poor photo is better than none.

Photos answer questions and will save you time in the long run.

Even if people are somewhat interested, most won't bother sending an email for more information or to request a photo!

You may not know the age, style, manufacturer, or type of wood, but buyers may be able to deduce some of that information from the photos. Photos give an indication of condition, color, proportions.

For furniture, shoot the photos in a simple setting, rather than in a crowded basement or garage. If that is not practical, cover items not for sale with a tarp or a solid color blanket.

Craigslist allows UP to FOUR photos per ad.

One photo should show the entire piece and the others could show details (carvings, drawer construction, manufacturer's label, any damage, etc.) Use your camera settings so the colors will be as true as possible.

2) TITLE for the ad

Be as descriptive as possible. Many people search by title only, especially in a popular category.

Even when people search by browsing, they usually won't read an ad unless the title is close to their need.

Don't use vague/subjective words (like "gorgeous" or "to-die-for") because people do not search that way!

You might gain an extra eyeball from the category browsers, but if you use subjective words *in place of objective terms*, you'll lose the keyword searchers who tend to be the serious buyers.

3) DESCRIPTION of item in body of ad

Provide as much information as possible:

type of furniture, style, color, age, manufacturer, size, place of manufacture, condition, any known repairs.

Include all 3 dimensions (height, width or length, depth) using words or letters to indicate which is which!

For a chair or sofa, give both the height of the seat and the height of the back.

List any flaws. State that you took them into consideration when setting the price.

For type of furniture, use as many synonyms as fit:

for a dresser...bureau, chest of drawers, and highboy, tallboy or lowboy if appropriate, etc.

For compound words (washstand, footstool, etc.), write them as one word and as two words to maximize search success.

For type of wood, know that, to many people, any dark wood is mahogany, and any reddish wood (even mahogany) is cherry. In some cases, it might be wise to say "mahogany or walnut" or "I believe it's chestnut, but it could be oak."

Use common-language equivalents for fancy color names in paint, fabric, etc.

If you know the furniture manufacturer, list it with the model name and number. If you don't know the manufacturer, etc., say, "similar to xxx by so and so."

Provide as much information as you can ("original upholstery," "reupholstered 1 year ago with child-proof fabric," "solid brass toecaps," etc.).

If from a non-smoking home, state that.

If from a non-pet home, state that.

If your price is firm, say so in your ad. It will save time for everyone.

If your item is large and you can deliver it, say something like, "Delivery within 10 miles for an additional (State your fee or if it's included)".

4) Keywords

CL allows you to add keywords, so add names of nearby towns or other search terms.

5) Category

Pay attention to what category you post in. In the Boston area, people are more likely to advertise antique furniture in the "Furniture" category than in the "Antiques" category, but there's no reason why an antique couldn't be listed in both.

6) Timing

Ads are listed by day, so it's best to wait until the actual day you want the ad to appear. Otherwise, it might get buried. CL has rules about how frequently you can repost.

For furniture, try to list it on a Friday, because a lot of people don't have time to shop during the week.

7) Multiple items

Don't combine multiple items in one ad, unless they are clearly related (a dining or bedroom set, for example).

If you're willing to break up a set, say so.

If you have multiple ads running, add a note at the bottom of each stating how to find your other ads. "See my ad for two matching chairs in a fabric that goes perfectly with this sofa. Search on xxx."

8) Miscellaneous

It's wise to say something like, "This ad will be removed when the item is sold," and then do that.

For furniture especially, it is wise to include information about how difficult or easy it will be to move it. If it's on a first floor with no steps, say so. If it's on a third floor walk-up, it's better to warn people ahead of time!

For a heavy or awkward item, state that it, "Will require two strong people to move." Conversely, if an item is light and easy to move, definitely point that out!

What surplus items do YOU have that you might want to sell on Craigslist?