

Appraise Your Antiques and Collectibles

By Kimberly Ripley

Need an antique appraised, but not sure how or where to find an appraiser? To become familiar with the basics of antiques and the qualities that make them valuable-- research the Internet. Go to www.google.com and type in the word or phrase you want to research. There will be numerous web sites listed. Pick out the site that best matches the information you want to find.

You might want to look up information about the particular item you have in your possession. Let's say you have an antique cedar chest. How old is the chest you have? Was it your great-great grandmother's? An antique is considered to be an antique when it is at least 100 years old. Once you locate pictures of antique cedar chests online, you might want to compare them to yours. What year is the one in the picture? Is it similar to yours? What is its value according to the site it is listed on? Compare the style and condition of your cedar chest to the one listed in the picture. Is there a certain year or style of cedar chest that is more valuable than any other? What type of wood is your chest made of? What condition is the finish in? Has your chest been restored or refinished? Does it have elaborate carvings on it?

Libraries have antique books you can check out for free. Find a book that specializes in the piece of antique furniture you are researching. Since I have been using a cedar chest for an example of antique furniture, find a similar chest that is listed in one of the books. Again, compare condition and qualities of yours and the one listed in the book. What year was the book published? How current is the book you are reading? New books about antiques are being published frequently. Shopping at antique malls and shops will give you first hand experience and knowledge. Talk to store owners. They are familiar with basic knowledge of what antiques are currently selling for. They have a wealth of information and knowledge.

You can get online appraisals-- although seeing the actual antique is the best method of obtaining an accurate appraisal. Many online antique web sites do online appraisals for a fee. Some provide a free appraisal. You will need to supply them with a picture of your item(s).

After performing a search and finding a web site you feel comfortable with, see if they have a "FAQs" page on their site. Many times you can find the answers to your questions. If not, find the "contact us" page and send them an email with your questions.

According to Jim Turney, licensed appraiser, state auctioneer, refinisher, and storeowner of "Alice's Past to Present Antiques," located in McCordsville, Indiana, it depends on why you want

an appraisal. "Do you want to sell an item and need the fair market price? Or do you need an appraisal for tax or insurance purposes? If you need an appraisal for insurance purposes, the price will be higher than today's price. You will need a replacement cost price."

Do your friends or family collect antiques? Word of mouth referrals are great.

Of course, our favorite place for you to find an antiques appraiser is in the paper. However, you can also look under antiques in the Yellow Pages in the phonebook. Call antique shops and auctions for information. Sometimes, auctioneers will give you an on-the-spot appraisal before an auction.

Before you hire an appraiser, contact the Better Business Bureau in your area or if they are an online business—contact the BBB in the area the business is listed in. If they have complaints listed, how or were they resolved?

If you don't trust them, don't take your do business with them or submit pictures online for an appraisal.

There are two different kinds of appraisers. The generalist and the specialist. The generalist has the ability to appraise a multitude of items. If you have antique furniture, musical instruments, paintings and dishes—a generalist would more than likely be able to meet your needs.

According to the "Antique Roadshow" (www.pbs.org/wgbh/ppages/roadshow), if you have antique jewelry you might want to seek out an antique jewelry appraiser. You will be able to locate an appraiser according to their specialty by reading directories from The American Society of Appraisers (www.appraisers.org) or The Appraisers Association of America (www.appraisersassoc.org). These directories are likely available at your local library. If not, you can request the librarian to do an "Inter-Library Loan" for you.

Free appraisals are sometimes given at an antique shop/mall if you take your antique in with you. Specialty appraisers are more apt to charge you for the time it will take to appraise your items—including any and all research they will have to do to give you an accurate appraisal.

There are different kinds of appraisals; verbal, email and written. When I went to Joshua Baer & Company's website: www.westernpictures.net/site/30-Appraisals.html#verbal, it is stated they appraise antique American Indian Art.

Their verbal appraisals are free. Their email appraisals cost \$50.00 per item. The written appraisals they perform cost \$250.00 per hour. They may be able to appraise many items within that one hour.

With the written appraisal, the customer receives a written appraisal on paper, a picture of each appraised item, the date of appraisal, the tribal attribution, the fair market value, the item's replacement value, suggestions and recommendations on how to clean it and if necessary-restoration.

They state on their web site: "Many collectors, institutions, banks, and insurance companies have used our written appraisals for loans, insurance claims, charitable donations, and IRS matters. We stand by our written appraisals, in that we can demonstrate to any bank, insurance company, or government agency that the values we assign to any item we appraise can be verified by comparable sales either at public auction or through private sales."

Yes, it is well worth the time it takes to research and become educated. Especially if your antiques are an heirloom or you expect to pass them down to your children or grandchildren. Above all, have fun. Happy antiquing!

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