

# Items of Value, Inc.

A Full-Service Appraisal and Estate Sale Firm

Phone: 703-660-9380 Fax: 703-660-9384 Email: itemsofvalue@yahoo.com Web: iovinc.com

---

## Compiling an Inventory List and Recording Details in an Appraisal for Insurance Coverage

Three basic considerations should be made in writing an inventory list for appraisals: (1) The list should be easy to refer back to once it is done. (2) The description of each item on the list should be well chosen. (3) The description of each item should be detailed enough to uniquely identify the item. Let's review each of these three considerations more closely.

### (1) EASE OF REFERENCE

It should be easy to locate an item in an inventory list. For this reason, there are several things you can do to help organize the inventory. Before you begin your inventory, write a list of logical groupings of items you wish to include. These categories may be: furniture, glassware, sterling silver, silver plate, statuary, ceramics, framed items (pictures, paintings), clocks, lamps, and books. Then do the inventory for one category completely before going on to the next. As you write the inventory, assign a number to each item. This way, every item will have its own reference number. Under the general category of "furniture", for example, you may have several tables, chairs, chests of drawers, a desk, and bookcase. If you know the type of table or chair, you can specify this, too. If you are compiling the list on computer, you can make a list of items room-by-room, and later sort and number each item by category.

### (2) APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTIONS

Several types of information are valuable to list for each item or group of items on an inventory. These include place of origin (country or state where the item was made), approximate age, dimensions, and material composition (what materials the item is made of). You may not know the place of origin or the age, so just write down "origin: \_\_\_\_\_" and "date: \_\_\_\_\_" in the description and leave these blank for the appraiser to supply.

Next, measure the most obvious dimensions of the item. Two to three of the most obvious dimensions are enough. Most furniture pieces have three obvious dimensions: height, width, and depth. Candlesticks, vases, and glassware have two obvious dimensions: height and diameter (at base and at top). Measure large items to the nearest half an inch. Measure smaller items to the nearest eighth of an inch. You can use a shorthand form in writing down dimensions such as the following: 38"l x 29-1/2"d, or 7-3/8"h x 4-1/8"d at base and 2-1/4"d at top.

Another important piece of information for the description is the material the item is made of. You may have already noted this in the general item category. That is fine. If not, write down your best guess of materials in the description. Furniture is usually made of different kinds of wood. Plates may be made of porcelain, pewter, clay, or glass. If you have doubts, just write "material: \_\_\_\_\_" and leave this for the appraiser to determine.

Other important descriptive information is design patterns and predominant colors. These are especially important for paintings, carpets, colored lithographs, quilts, plates, and glassware. Use your best judgment here to decide how much detail you should write down.

### (3) UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS

A description should be sufficiently detailed to uniquely identify each item. That is, the description should enable the reader to match the description with the item itself and also to be able to find the item if it were mixed in with other similar items. So, you should record peculiar details you notice such as carvings, inlay, a more detailed description of the shape or subject matter. Photographs will do a much better job of recording this information, which is difficult to describe in words. Photographs are an invaluable identification aid in addition to a written appraisal. Often, only photographs can uniquely identify an item. So, you might plan on having photographs taken of your appraisal items.

You should also note anything that detracts from the otherwise excellent original condition of the item because condition affects value. Write down any repairs you see as well as cracks, chips, missing pieces, or replaced parts. Record the general size and location of these, for example: two chips on rim, crack in handle, 12" crack on left side, replaced handles, repaired spine, two new feet, three small holes in top left corner, two replaced glass panes.

Below are examples of how you might organize your inventory and write down the descriptions. Follow this simple checklist in completing your description of each item:

origin, date, materials, design, colors, dimensions, condition

You may decide to spend two hours a day working on the inventory or assign yourself one category a week to work until you get it done. Then you will have saved yourself a lot of the appraiser's time and cost. What remains to be done is for the appraiser to verify your information, fill in missing details, and assign a valuation to each item.

#### ITEM

#### DESCRIPTION

##### Furniture

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Table, Drop Leaf | American, 1820s, Sheraton style, cherry, single drawer, 29"h x 52"l x 48" w; refinished top, ring stain in one corner. |
| 2. Armchair         | American, 1970s, wide seat, red upholstery, 38"h x 22"w x 24"d.  |
| 3. Chest of Drawers | Korean, late 19th century, materials:_____, 49"h x 32"w x 14-1/2"d; replaced foot on frame.                            |

##### Sterling Silver

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| 4. Knives        | Set of 12, American, 1960s-1980s, floral repouse pattern by Kirk, 7-1/2" l. |
| 5. Serving Spoon | English, date:_____, maker:_____, 12-1/8"l, 1-7/8" dia., bowl portion.      |

##### Framed Items

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 6. Engraving | German, late 19th century, depicting village street with shops on right and clock tower on left; colored in red, blue, green tints; 14"h x 22"w, in walnut frame 18-1/2"h x 25-1/2"w. |
|--------------|---|

## Compiling an Inventory List for Insurance Coverage -(page 3 of 3)

7. Painting American, Massachusetts, signed/dated lower right "B. Barnes 1986", depicting fisherman with lobster pots on boats, 18"h x 22" w, in molded wood frame, 22"h, x 26"w. Purchased in Nantucket 1987.

### Books

8. Harris Joel Chandler, "Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings; Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation", New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1880, first edition.

### Textiles

9. Quilt American, reportedly made 1890s by Violet Crocker of Franklin, Ohio, crazy quilt style of printed fabrics with black seam handstitching, 84" x 82".

### Ceramics

10. Teapot English, 1830s-1840s, lustreware, purple scene of building and trees on white, purple bands on top and lid, 8-1/2" h x 10-1/4 w x 6-1/2"d.

Author: Dr. Jerome C. Ford  
Date: January 1997  
Copyright: 1997