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Auction Item Ideas

Plus:

- 7 Things To Avoid
- 26 Basic Themes for Auction Lots and Baskets
- Tips for Getting Donations From Businesses

1. A day at the farm
2. Anything with the local fire department or police department—ride in a vehicle, tour, birthday party at the station, wear gear, photo ops
3. Basketball party in the gym
4. Be the school mascot at an event
5. Bedtime story in your own home, read by your teacher
6. Boating trip on a local lake or river
7. Boating trip with the boat owner and your group of friends
8. Camping trip, hosted by an experienced family for camping novices
9. Fee-free year: no PTO dues, free yearbook, school T-shirt, no field trip fees, no school supply fees, no class party fee, free school photo package
10. Grab bag of goodies (leftovers worth at least XX dollars)
11. Guest DJ on a local radio station
12. Lunch with the principal at a local restaurant
13. Limo ride for students to lunch off site with a local celebrity or the principal
14. Lunch at a reserved table in the cafeteria with several friends for a month
15. Museum or bookstore field trip with the teacher
16. Name the school road for a year; keep the street sign at the end of the year
17. Picnic lunch with a teacher outdoors at school
18. Principal for a day
19. Reserved parking at school, for a month, year, or other time period
20. Reserved seating at key family events
21. Reserved seating for all school events (concerts, assemblies, graduation, etc.)
22. School ambassador for a day—e.g., represent the school at a board meeting
23. Season pass to district sporting events
24. Sleepover at the school
25. Special stuffed toy with classroom storybooks
26. Tour of a local factory
27. Tour of local newspaper, radio station, TV station, or sporting venues (even if there's no game)
28. Training session with high school or college coaches (check league and NCAA rules first) or a high school team (e.g., cheerleaders or pompom squad)
29. Clay vases, hand-painted aprons, decorated T-shirts, personalized picture frames, bound storybooks
30. Ceramic tiles, turned into trivets or a table top
31. Clay snack-serving set, platter, or anything from a paint-it-yourself pottery store
32. Collage done with individual drawing or paintings, framed or decoupage onto a larger item
33. Decorated jeans, tennis shoes, hats
34. Decorated vinyl shower curtains (use Sharpie markers)
35. Fall harvest scarecrows
36. Garden stepping stones
37. Mosaic stepping stones, garden benches, garden tables, bird baths
38. Notecards printed with student drawings, envelopes included
39. Painted bird houses
40. Painted cookie jars, ceramic platters, lamp bases, large frames, throw rugs
41. Painted umbrellas
42. Patchwork quilts: photos, handprints, signatures, drawing transfers, team T-shirts
43. Rocking chair, footstool, side chair, nightstand, toy box painted with handprints, thumbprints, or faces
44. Wooden bench covered with poems or sayings written by students

Student Handicrafts

These items sell well, but keep an eye on quality and leave plenty of lead time.

29. Clay vases, hand-painted aprons, decorated T-shirts, personalized picture

Teacher/Staff Donations

45. Art teacher: private lessons, trip to a museum, paint a mural at your home
46. Bedtime story read by your teacher, child keeps book
47. Chaperone an outing in summertime
48. Computer training in your home
49. Gym teacher: supervises a birthday party at the gym
50. Music teacher: compose and record a song with your child's name, play piano at your birthday party, guest conductor for school concert
51. Photo collages, e.g. a week in the life of Mrs. Smith's 2006 fourth-grade class
52. A book of student responses to open-ended questions
53. Tutoring

Always Popular

54. Sports tickets
55. Sports memorabilia
56. Tickets for local cultural events
57. Vacation packages with few restrictions or strings
58. Gift certificates for dinner at a nice restaurant
59. Wine
60. Golf
61. High-end jewelry (auctioned with a reserve price; no risk of underpricing it

Themed Baskets

62. **All Kinds of Sports or Get Up and Move:** anything sports—balls, games, water bottles, sportswear
63. **All Scream for Ice Cream:** fixings for sundaes, cones, toppings, gift certificates
64. **Backyard Chef or Grill Out:** barbecued sauces, grill accessories, Omaha Steak gift certificates
65. **Backyard Fun:** kids beach chair, pail, bubbles, sidewalk chalk, sand castle tools
66. **Beach Party:** towels, toys, umbrella, folding chair, sunscreen, sunglasses, iPod
67. **Birthday Party in a Basket or Where's the Party:** cake pan, cake mixes, balloons, piñata, plates, napkins,

- party favors
68. **Bookworm Bonanza or The Bookstore:** books, bookmarks, book light, nameplates
69. **Building Blocks:** Lego, Lincoln Logs, Jenga
70. **Bundle Of Joy:** baby shower gifts for a parent-to-be
71. **Candle Basket:** assorted candles, candle holders, snuffer, fancy matches
72. **Car Wash:** bucket, sponges, chamois, paper towels, Armor All, Turtle Wax, air fresheners
73. **Chef's Delight:** cookbooks, kitchen gadgets, bowls, spices, oils, cutting board
74. **Christmas:** ornaments, cards, wrapping paper, decorations
75. **Coffee Break:** mugs, assorted coffees, chocolate-covered spoons, biscotti
76. **Cookie Monster:** cookie pans, dough, recipes, add-ins, decorations
77. **Date Night:** dinner, tickets to concert or ballet, baby-sitting service
78. **Day at the Pool:** floats, sunscreen, flip-flops, toys, towels
79. **Disney Mania:** videos, clothing, towels, school supplies, anything else Disney
80. **Do-It-Yourself:** tool belt, instruction books, painting supplies, store gift card
81. **Family Fun Nights:** movie night, game night, etc.
82. **Family Night Out:** certificate for a four-person dinner, movie tickets
83. **Fiesta Fiesta:** Mexican jumping beans, fancy salsa and chips, recipe book
84. **Fisherman's Cove:** rod and reels, fishing line, tackle and bait, gift certificate
85. **Garden of Eden:** seeds, soil, tools, garden artwork, accessories, plants
86. **Get Well Soon:** chicken soup, robe, crossword puzzles, tea, pillow, eye mask
87. **Gift Wrap:** assorted papers, ribbons and bows, notecards, fancy scissors, tape
88. **Hair Care:** hot-oil treatment, hair towel, brush, hair clips and bands, blow-dryer
89. **House Beautiful:** cleaning supplies, dust cloths and polish, cleaning service
90. **Italian Feast:** pasta machine, fancy

- olive oils, spaghetti fork
91. **It's a Girl or It's a Boy:** new-baby supplies
92. **Just What the Dr. Ordered:** Dr. Seuss books, pajamas, towels, other logo items
93. **Kitchen Gadgets:** colander, slotted and serving spoons, measuring cups, pot holders, tongs, cutting board
94. **Life's Simple Pleasures:** fluffy robe, scented candles, bath and body products, manicure/pedicure supplies or certificate, eye pillow, facial mask
95. **Love for Learning:** reference books, reading light, flashcards, school supplies
96. **Manicure/Pedicure:** nail clippers, nail file, emery boards, polish remover, cotton balls, cuticle remover, orange stick, hand lotion, assorted nail polishes
97. **Men's Night Out:** small TV, poker chips, cards, cigars, snack foods
98. **New Home:** tool kit, picture-hanging supplies, address numbers, stud finder
99. **Pasta Mania:** colander, cheese grater, fancy pasta, sauces, and olive oils
100. **Petite Picasso:** arts and crafts supplies
101. **Photo Supplies:** certificate for portrait session, picture frames, albums
102. **School Spirit:** blanket in school colors, sportswear, mascot for a day, lead cheer at sport event
103. **Soccer Fun:** ball, portable goal net, jersey/shorts, game tickets
104. **Something's Fishy:** mini tank, food, decorations, gift certificate for fish
105. **Spirited Exchange:** various wines, wine log, tasting book
106. **Stationery Basket:** stamps, journal, notecards, gel pens/markers, envelopes
107. **Tea Break:** mugs, assorted loose and bag teas, infuser, honey, biscotti
108. **Teacher's Pet:** personal pampering items, additional school supplies, books
109. **Tee Time:** golf-club covers, certificate for lessons or course time, tees
110. **Toy of the Moment:** hottest toy of the time and accessories
111. **Travel:** games, snack items, DVD player and discs, books on tape
112. **Writer's Workshop:** pens/pencils, lap desk, dictionary, journal

26 Basic Theme Ideas for Auction Lots and Baskets:

1. Automobile care
2. Baking gadgets
3. Camping supplies
4. Candy/chocolates
5. College student care package, including shipping costs
6. Computer software and servicing
7. Dress-up supplies
8. Exercise
9. First-aid kit for a car or camper
10. Home children's library
11. Housewarming
12. Lottery tickets
13. Mother's Day or Father's Day
14. Nascar
15. Patriotic/Fourth of July
16. Pet pampering or general pet supplies
17. Safety products for home or automobile
18. School supplies, including a backpack and supplies box
19. Science items
20. Scrapbooking
21. Sewing
22. Snow day
23. Spa night/ladies' night in or ladies' night out
24. Sports-specific baskets for baseball, basketball, football, etc.
25. Local sports tickets
26. Teddy bears

7 Things To Avoid

- Artwork done by amateurs other than the school's own students
- Collectibles with a narrow appeal (e.g., figurines, vases/decorative glassware, coins)
- Anything used, unless it's antique and obviously valuable
- Certificates for partial value (e.g., \$100 off a \$20,000 roofing job)
- Homemade items, unless they are of exceptional quality
- Anything with a lot of fine print and restrictions—it's too hard for your guests to digest the fine print during the auction
- Anything *perceived* to have a lot of fine print, even if it doesn't—be clear that there are no or few strings attached (e.g., for a weekend at a resort, people might assume there are strict, undesirable date restrictions even if there aren't)

Commercial Donations

Tips for getting donations from businesses:

- Visit in person
- Speak to the manager
- Have a letter to leave behind
- Offer to come back to pick up donated items
- Follow up a “maybe” with a phone call
- Be specific about what you want
- Be creative—take anything, lots of something, clearance merchandise, etc.
- Ask for a sponsorship donation if not an auctionable item (to cover the cost of decorations, food, printing, desserts, music/dj, etc.)
- Put yourself in their shoes—they want business-growth opportunities
- Send a proper thank-you letter in a timely manner

Possible sources of auction items (and some donation examples):

1. Amusement parks
2. Appliance stores
3. Automotive shops (oil change, detailing, tire rotation)
4. Bakeries
5. Bed-and-breakfasts
6. Bookstores
7. Bowling centers
8. Caterers
9. Local colleges (waive tuition or auditing fee for a course)
10. College athletic associations (sports tickets, sportswear)
11. Cruise lines
12. Cultural venues such as museums, historical attractions, zoos, music arenas, theaters
13. Dance studios
14. Dentists (professional tooth whitening)
15. Electricians (install a new fixture)
16. Florist shops
17. Framing stores (frame your child's artwork; donation of foam core scraps for displays)
18. Local franchises of food chains, gas stations, convenience stores
19. Furniture stores
20. Hall rentals (with few strings attached)
21. Local hardware stores (donation of items; help with decorations)
22. Heating and A/C service companies
23. Home services (handyman, furnace repair, carpet cleaners, yardwork, snow plowing)
24. Home-improvement centers
25. Home-based businesspeople (Pampered Chef, Avon, Discovery Toys, Partylite)
26. Hotels and motels (special overnight stay)
27. Ice-cream shop
28. Landscaping companies (tree-trimming and other services)
29. Limousine services
30. Minor league sports teams
31. Optometrists (complete pair of prescription glasses)
32. Orthodontists (discount on services)
33. Personal chefs
34. Personal service providers (massage, nails, hair)
35. Pet shops (food, accessories, books)
36. Photo studios (family portrait sessions)
37. Plumbers (install a replacement faucet)
38. Private teachers (music lessons, art lessons, personal trainers, dance classes)
39. Rental car companies
40. Local restaurants, including mom-and-pops places
41. Ski, golf, rock-climbing, tennis, swim club passes
42. Summer camps (buy a space for your kid or pay for a child in need)
43. Tailors/seamstresses (alterations)
44. Veterinarians (pet teeth cleaning, boarding, nail clipping)
45. Video stores
46. Videographers