

General Advice for Collection Disposition: Selling, or Inheritance

1. Triage first: vintage vs. junk wax

The single most important thing to teach members (and their heirs) is that effort should be proportional to value, not card count. Cards from roughly 1980 and earlier are where nearly all value lives. Cards from the overproduction era (~1987–1994) are, with a short list of exceptions - a few iconic rookies, unopened wax boxes, some oddball/regional issues - effectively worthless in resale terms. Print runs were in the millions and supply permanently swamps demand.

Practical rule for the fact sheet: a collection of 100,000 cards may derive 90%+ of its value from a few hundred of them. The first task in any disposal isn't inventory - it's identifying that top tier so it doesn't get sold by the pound with everything else. The horror story your guidance should prevent is the widow who sells a T206-era binder to the first "we buy collections" ad for a flat per-box price.

2. Condition - and the grading decision

For vintage, condition drives value on a steep curve: the same card can differ 10x–50x between low grade and high grade. But - and this is very relevant to OBC's membership, given the group's well-loved-cards ethos - mid- and low-grade vintage is a real, liquid market segment. Complete low-grade sets of 1950s–60s Topps have genuine value; they just sell differently (as sets or lots, not graded singles).

Grading (PSA, SGC, BGS) costs real money per card, so the educational rule is simple: only grade cards whose expected value comfortably exceeds the fee plus shipping, generally star cards and key rookies in strong condition. Grading everything is a classic way to spend more than a collection returns. The owner is the best person to make this call *now* - an heir can't tell a sharp 1957 Mantle from a soft one.

3. Inventory: tiered, not exhaustive

Trying to catalog every card is where these projects die. Recommend a three-tier structure:

- **Tier 1 - itemized:** individually list every card above a threshold (say \$50–100): player, year, set, number, condition notes, grading status, and a photo. This might be 50–500 cards even in a huge collection.
- **Tier 2 - set-level:** complete or near-complete sets listed as units ("1959 Topps, complete, mostly VG, stars present/absent"), since that's how they'll sell.
- **Tier 3 - bulk counts:** "12 monster boxes of 1970s commons" is a sufficient inventory entry for material that will sell by the box.

Add a one-page "where things are" document: which cards are in the safe deposit box, which binders hold Tier 1, passwords/locations for any online inventory (this covers Steve's remote-storage item). George V's spreadsheet likely maps onto this structure already, so the update may be lighter than a rebuild.

4. Sale channels and logistics

Different tiers move through different channels, with very different economics:

- **Major auction houses** (Heritage, REA, Goldin, Memory Lane, Mile High) for Tier 1 material. They handle photography, description, and marketing; consignment terms vary and are negotiable on strong material - high-end consignors often pay little or no seller fee because the house earns the buyer's premium. Timeline is slow: months from consignment to payment. Most have minimum-value expectations per lot or consignment.
- **eBay and marketplace consignment services** for mid-value singles and sets - faster, more work, more fees, and someone has to do the photographing and shipping. Consignment services that do this for a percentage are often the right answer for estates.
- **Dealers and shows** for bulk and for speed. A dealer buying an entire collection outright will typically pay a substantial discount to retail - that's not predation, it's their carrying cost and risk - but the discount is exactly why a lowball first offer shouldn't be accepted. The task force's dealer-vetting questions should include: how do you price a buyout, will you itemize your offer by tier, can you

provide references from prior estate purchases, and are you willing to handle consignment as an alternative to purchase.

- **Collector communities** (Net54 and similar vintage forums, and OBC's own network) for member-to-member sales - often the best prices for exactly the kind of material OBC members hold, but requires an active, knowledgeable seller, so it suits pre-planned disposal by the collector more than estate liquidation by heirs.

5. Grouping: singles vs. sets vs. everything

The honest framing for members is a value–speed–effort triangle; you can optimize two:

- **Break out the stars, sell sets and lots for the rest** usually maximizes dollars: key cards individually (graded where warranted), complete sets as sets, commons in bulk lots. Highest effort, longest timeline.
- **Complete sets kept intact** make sense when the set premium is real (scarce high-number series, condition-consistent sets) - and they're vastly easier for an heir to describe and sell than 600 loose singles.
- **Single-transaction buyout** minimizes burden on heirs at a known cost in value. For some members, that's a legitimate, even preferable choice - the guidance should say so without judgment, while insisting on multiple offers.

A useful concept for the will/next-of-kin document: the collector states *in advance* which path they intend ("consign Tier 1 to an auction house, offer the sets to OBC members first, dealer-bulk the rest"), so heirs execute a plan rather than invent one under pressure.

6. Other items worth a section each

- **Appraisal and insurance:** an updated written appraisal for Tier 1 both supports insurance now and gives heirs a value anchor later.
- **Tax awareness (educational only):** heirs should ask a professional about how inherited collectibles are valued for tax purposes before selling - inherited items are often treated differently than items the heir bought. One sentence, pointed at a

professional, keeps this inside your disclaimer.

- **Provenance and records:** purchase records, grading certs, and old appraisals should live with the inventory.
- **Timing:** the sports card market swings; the guidance should discourage panic-selling into a down market when there's no urgency, and note that auction houses can advise on timing for significant material.
- **The OBC-specific option:** a section on gifting or offering material back into the OBC community fits the group's culture and gives members a disposal path that isn't purely financial.