

# Bench Lessons

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by Sarah Whisenant



The moment I posted my listing: "beautiful, craftsman-style, solid maple bench/sofa - FREE," I panicked.

The L-shaped bench had been custom-built by the previous owners of our home, tucked into a Spanish-tiled nook behind the living room. It was a pretty place to sit--with a view through French doors to a trellised deck, Japanese Maples and River Birches.

The problem was that no one sat there. Ever. The space was essentially a dead zone. Also, I never cared for the Southwest print covering the cushions (it felt jarring alongside my spare Danish-inspired decor).

Late one evening my husband and I were musing about possible home improvements; he suggested turning the nook into a homework area. We'd install an appropriately sized table, filing system, and jars of pencils, scissors and tape. Our children could complete assignments while I fixed dinner and it would be idyllic. I was ecstatic and ready to move forward the next day (by which time he'd forgotten all about it).

Then one afternoon, my husband surprised me by coming home with an L-shaped desk and two chairs. He removed the bench, assembled the desk and by that evening our homework station was a hub of activity. The bench (solid maple, heavy, and impossible to take apart) sat displaced, outside on the patio. It didn't fit in either of our cars, and snow was in the forecast. It had to go.

I took a photo and created a post on local website listing free items. The minute I published the listing I felt a wave of guilt. The bench was expensive. What would the previous owners think? Was I silly for giving away instead of selling such a quality item? Should I try to find another use for it in our home?

My guilt turned into panic when I realized the website had posted my telephone number too (I'd expected to calmly and efficiently handle the transaction via email). My phone rang non-stop. I felt pressured and was

reluctant to give my address to complete strangers whose calls already felt intrusive.

I immediately deleted the listing, took a deep breath, and listened to my voice- mail messages. By the end of the day, a very grateful woman pulled into my driveway with 2 kids, 1 sister and a very big pickup truck. They happily loaded the bench and I felt enormous relief.

Getting rid of "stuff" can be physically demanding and emotionally trying, but the reward is worthwhile. I'm glad to see a previously unused corner of our house turned into a vibrant area where kids color, complete homework and even squabble. And I don't miss the Southwestern print at all.

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