How to Price Surplus Building Materials

A practical guide to setting a price that attracts buyers while helping you recover as much value as possible from materials you no longer need.

Why Pricing Surplus Is Different

Surplus materials are not necessarily worth what you originally paid for them. At the same time, they may be worth far more than scrap value to someone who needs exactly what you have. The goal is to find the middle ground: a price that makes sense for you and gives a buyer a reason to act.

1. Start With the Original Cost

Find the original purchase price if you can. It gives you a useful starting point, but don't assume you should simply discount it by a fixed percentage. Consider how much of the material remains, whether it is current and usable, and how difficult it would be for a buyer to find elsewhere.

2. Check the Current Market

Search online for the same or comparable material. Look at manufacturer information, supplier pricing, marketplace listings, and other sources. Pay attention to the quantity being offered—not just the price of a single piece or box.

3. Consider Availability and Lead Time

This can be one of the biggest advantages of surplus. If a contractor can get your material today instead of waiting weeks for a supplier, your material may be more valuable than a simple percentage of retail price suggests.

4. Factor in Condition

Be honest and specific. New, unopened material generally commands the highest price. Open-box, discontinued, previously installed, or cosmetically imperfect material may need a larger discount. Clearly describing the condition builds buyer confidence.

5. Look at Quantity

A large quantity can be attractive to a contractor who needs it all, but it can also limit your pool of buyers. If you have 500 square feet of flooring but a buyer only needs 150, consider whether you're willing to sell a smaller quantity.

6. Consider Brand, Style & Specifications

Well-known manufacturers, discontinued colors, specialty products, and exact dimensions can affect value. Include model numbers, product names, colors, sizes, thicknesses, and other identifying information whenever possible.

7. Don't Forget the Buyer's Savings

A buyer may be comparing your price not only with retail cost, but also with shipping, minimum order quantities, delivery charges, and the cost of waiting for new material. A good surplus price creates savings without making the material look suspiciously cheap.

8. Price to Encourage Action

If your priority is clearing warehouse space quickly, price more aggressively. If the material is desirable, difficult to find, or has a long supplier lead time, you may have room to price higher. Decide whether your primary goal is maximum recovery or a faster sale.

A Simple Pricing Checklist	
■ What did I originally pay?	■ What does comparable material cost today?
■ Is the material readily available or hard to find?	■ What is the exact condition?
■ How much material do I have?	■ What brand, model, color, size or specifications matter?
■ What will the buyer save on shipping or lead time?	■ Do I want the highest possible price or a faster sale?

Putting It All Together

Once you've gathered the information above, choose a reasonable market price and then adjust it based on your goals. For example, if comparable material is selling for $1,000 and your material is new and immediately available, you might price it near the lower end of the market to encourage a quick sale. If it is hard to find or has a long supplier lead time, you may be able to price closer to current retail value.

Be Specific in Your Listing

The more information a buyer has, the easier it is for them to decide whether your material will work for their project. A strong listing should include:

- **Material:** exact product or a clear description
- **Brand/Manufacturer:** if known
- **Quantity:** how much is available
- **Unit of Measure:** square feet, linear feet, boxes, pieces, gallons, etc.
- **Condition:** new, unopened, open-box, used, or other
- **Color/Style:** when applicable
- **Dimensions/Specifications:** model numbers and other details
- **Location:** city and state
- **Pickup/Delivery:** explain what is available
- **Photos:** clear pictures of the actual material and packaging when possible

Avoid These Common Pricing Mistakes

- **Pricing from emotion:** What you paid is important, but the market determines what a buyer will pay today.
- **Ignoring urgency:** If a buyer needs material tomorrow, availability can be valuable.
- **Hiding imperfections:** Honest descriptions reduce wasted time and disagreements.
- **Using one price for everything:** Different materials have very different resale potential.
- **Forgetting the cost of keeping it:** Warehouse space, handling, and time all have a cost.

SURPLUS DOESN'T HAVE TO BECOME A WRITE-OFF.
The right buyer may be looking for exactly what you have.

Ready to turn surplus into opportunity?
List your surplus materials on BuildSmart Surplus and connect with contractors, suppliers, flippers, and DIYers looking for materials.

buildsmartsurplus.com