

Planning Your Retail Store Layout in 8 Easy Steps



STEP 1

■ Decide on a Retail Store Layout

Large or small, most retail stores use one of six basic types of retail store layouts: grid, loop, free-flow/mixed, diagonal, forced-path, and angular. The type of layout you use depends on your space, the shopping experience you are trying to create, and the products you sell.

For example, grocery stores usually use grid layouts because they are predictable and efficient to navigate. On the other hand, boutiques typically use more creative layouts that allow businesses to highlight different products.

Choose a floor plan that works for your business and helps you maximize your profits and create a positive customer experience.

RETAIL FLOOR PLAN

BEST FOR

EXAMPLE DESIGN

Grid Floor Plans

Used in grocery, big box, and convenience stores

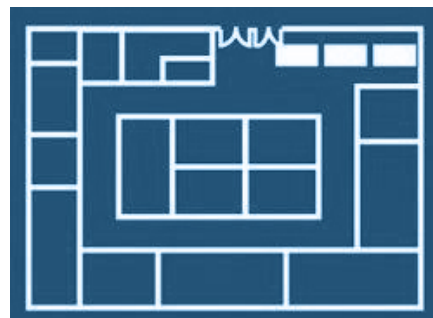
Shelf-stocked goods such as books, toys, specialty foods, hardware, and homewares



Loop Floor Plans

Maximize wall space and lead shoppers along a set pathway

Apparel, accessory, toy, homeware, kitchenware, personal care, and specialty retail stores



Free-Flow/Mixed Floor Plans

Used in specialty and boutique settings

Apparel, accessory, personal care, specialty brand, and mixed-use stores like bakeries that also display packaged goods



RETAIL FLOOR PLAN

BEST FOR

EXAMPLE DESIGN

Diagonal Floor Plans

Maximize employee visibility in retail stores with lots of product testing

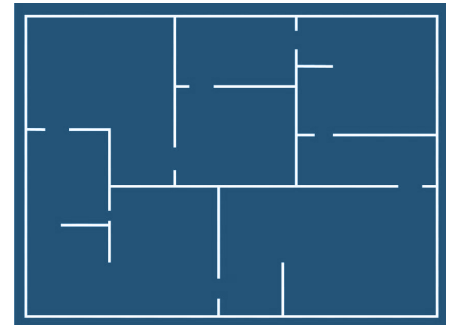
Self-serve kiosks, tech and electronic stores, and beauty and cosmetics retailers



Forced-path Floor Plans

Customers are guided through a predetermined path and exposed to every product

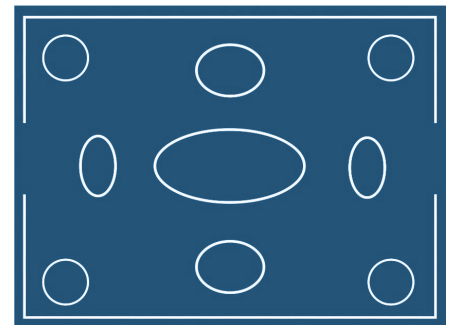
Furniture, home decor, and experiential retail stores and showrooms



Angular Floor Plans

Showcase curated or edited inventories in designer or specialty shops

Designers, artisans, high-end apparel and accessories retailers, and curated or limited collections



Remember, your retail store layout guides product placement, directs customer flow, and defines the overall look and feel of your store, so it deserves plenty of thought. Many factors will affect your floor plan choice, including the size and shape of your sales floor, the types of products you sell, and even the customers you hope to attract. Keep these factors in mind as we explore each floor plan option in detail.

Also, don't feel confined to one retail floor plan or another. You can always opt for a floor plan that uses a combination of two or more layout types within the same space.



*Grid floor plans offer a convenient and space-effective way to shop.
(Source: Talk Business)*

Grid

A grid floor plan, also called a straight layout, uses a grid-like arrangement to create a series of parallel aisles and displays. They are great if you have a lot of merchandise, as they maximize every inch of available floor space, including the corners. They are easy for customers to navigate and store owners to categorize and offer plenty of endcap and feature wall exposure for promotional items and seasonal products.

Since you find grid layouts in most grocery, big box, and convenience stores, they create a familiar feel among shoppers and allow for easy navigation. However, due to this familiarity, it tends to impart a grab-and-go experience.

Commonly found in: Grocery, big box, and convenience stores, retailers requiring a lot of shelf-stocking space

Best for: Shelf-stocked goods such as books, toys, specialty foods, hardware, and homewares

Pros: Easy to navigate, can accommodate high foot traffic, established merchandising techniques, encourages browsing, maximize product space, fosters customer familiarity

Cons: Unimaginative, moving things around can lead to frustrated customer, difficult to feature new products, can stimulate rushed shopping behaviors



*Loop floor plans create a circular path for customers to follow.
(Source: WordPress)*

Loop

A loop floor plan, sometimes called a racetrack layout, creates a more guided shopping experience than a grid or free-flow floor plan. It features a defined pathway throughout the store, which exposes customers to every item on display.

In a loop layout, the perimeter walls are highly visible and can feature all types of wall and shelving displays. Other displays and fixtures are placed throughout the space to guide customers' shopping paths.

This floor plan is highly customizable and provides an excellent base for combining layouts. With it, the central part of the store can utilize a grid or free-flow layout (which we cover below) or even a mix of the two.

However you design it, it surrounds customers with [product displays](#) on outer walls and allows for all types of creative display variations in the center of the store. It works well for most types of small retail stores, such as apparel and accessories, toys, homewares, kitchenware, personal care, and specialty products.

Commonly found in: Apparel and accessories stores, toy stores, homewares, kitchenware, personal care, specialty stores

Best for: Maximize wall space and lead shoppers along a set pathway

Pros: Engaging shopping experience, guided shopping path, high product exposure, customizable

Cons: Difficult to update displays, can lead to browsing rather than buying, does not maximize floor space, frustrating for customers in search of something specific



Free-flow floor plans use many diverse display types to create an open shopping experience. (Source: Vend)

Free Flow (Mixed)

A free-flow or mixed retail store layout uses different display types throughout the store—there is no set path, allowing customers to shop freely. This layout is the favorite among specialty retailers because it enables maximum creativity, is easily changed and updated, and fosters an exploratory shopping experience.

It creates open sightlines throughout the store, making your wall space highly visible and poised for display features. The open sightlines also make it easy to funnel customers toward specific merchandise zones using eye-catching accent colors and product groupings.

The open look of a free-flow layout is ideal for all types of boutiques and upscale stores. It also works well for stores with smaller inventories since it highlights product groupings.

Commonly found in: Gift shops, specialty stores, boutiques, retailers with limited inventory

Best for: Creating customizable displays and promoting shopper exploration

Pros: Uses different displays for different products, promotes exploration and product discovery, open sightlines, good for wall displays, works well in irregular spaces, easy to update

Cons: Easily cluttered, can be difficult to navigate, customers won't see the same things, encourages loitering, can be difficult to maintain



Diagonal store layouts are ideal for letting customers sample products while providing employees maximum visibility.

Diagonal

Diagonal floor plans are a variation of the grid layout, using aisles placed at angles to increase customer sightlines and expose new merchandise. They feel more open than grid layouts, which improves visibility and promotes more browsing.

A diagonal store design is ideal in electronic or technology stores, beauty and cosmetics retailers, specialty food stores, and any shop that encourages shoppers to test or sample products.

It lets customers move easily between aisles while providing store employees with good angles to view shoppers. Like free-flow store plans, diagonal layouts create open sightlines throughout the store, and this visibility is excellent for pointing customers toward a central sampling or demonstration area.

Commonly found in: Self-serve kiosks, tech and electronic stores, and beauty and cosmetic retailers

Best for: Maximizing employee visibility in retail stores with lots of product testing or self-service options

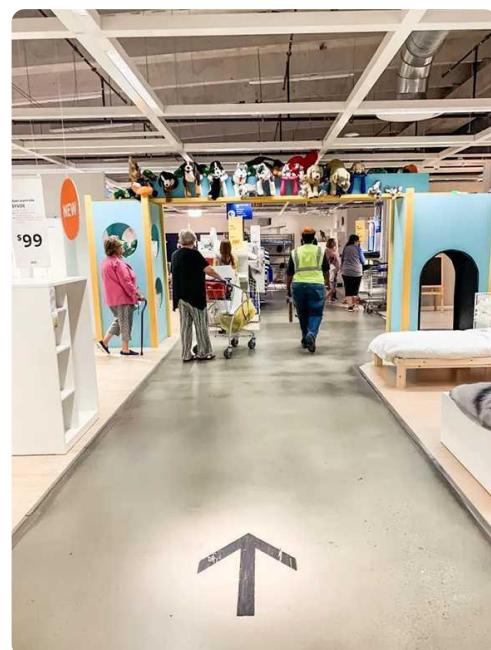
Pros: Easy to navigate, high visibility for both employees and customers, maximizes display space, easy to implement theft protection measure like [SimpliSafe](#)

Cons: Prone to narrow aisles, less room for creativity, difficult to change

Forced

Forced-path or guided floor plans are store layouts where there is an open entryway at the front of the store, then one pathway that guides customers throughout the length of the store and drops them off at the checkout area.

These layouts are most often found in large spaces, like warehouses, and operate similarly to a guided tour or museum. IKEA is a great example of a forced path floor plan. The Swedish retailer uses arrows on its pathways to guide customers through all of its expansive showrooms and avoid traffic issues along the way.



Forced floor plans create a set path throughout the entire store. (Source: Stylish Pharmacist)

Forced-path floor plans are ideal for retailers that want to create a specific, memorable shopping experience and a good choice for showcasing many different product departments or design displays in large spaces. These floor plans do, however, require a lot of effort to keep shoppers interested throughout their journey. Demonstrations, different types of displays, and signage are all great tools that retailers can use to keep the forced path engaging.

Commonly found in: Warehouses, large showrooms, experimental stores

Best for: Guiding customers through a predetermined path and exposing them to every product

Pros: Ample opportunity promoting impulse buys, immersive experience, lots of control over customer experience, promotes exposure to every product

Cons: Can be frustrating when shopping for a specific item, risk of boring customers, difficult to design, can cause traffic jams if not well-regulated

Impulse buy: A purchase made with no prior planning; made on a whim.



Angular floor plans use several displays to showcase their items in a dynamic way. (Source: Retail Design Blog)

Angular

Angular floor plans use many smaller displays in the center of the store to create a dynamic shopping experience that highlights a smaller number of products. Table displays automatically draw customer attention, which makes this layout highly engaging and promotes interaction with all the products on the floor.

However, it creates highly limited display space. As a result, you mostly find angular plans in showrooms, high-end boutiques, and designer stores with highly edited or curated collections. These types of stores also need a substantial inventory space outside of the sales floor for storing restock items and additional sizes.

Displays with softer or rounded lines create better traffic flow than squared fixtures in open spaces.

Commonly found in: Stores with small or curated merchandise that also have large inventory storage spaces

Best for: Showcasing a small number of products that you want customers to engage with

Pros: Perception of higher value, draws attention to merchandise, promotes engagement, easily updated and changed

Cons: Limited display space, difficult to manage traffic flows, not suited for a high volume of customers

Another decision that you will likely be making at this stage in planning your store layout is whether you want to do it yourself or hire a professional. Whatever you choose, there are many resources available to help you plan and execute your retail store layout. Here are some store layout and planning resources to help you get started.

Independent Retail Store Designers

If you feel overwhelmed at the idea of planning your retail store layout yourself, professional designers can help. They will be able to guide you through every step of the process and provide experience and access to contractors and material services. There is a cost, however. Expect to spend \$150 per hour or more on a qualified designer.

Here are some places to start your store designer search.

Kizer & Bender: It is the top national retail consultant, store designer, and merchandising expert. It also has a Top Performers Retail Club, publishes many bestselling ebooks, and runs the award-winning Retail Adventures Blog.

The Retail Design Institute: This is the leading professional association for retail design experts. You can review and contact member design professionals by region.

The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID): This is the leading professional association for interior designers. You'll want a designer who has retail store experience since residential and retail design needs differ greatly.

Display Company Design Services

Many retail fixtures and display companies provide store planning and design services to their customers. Though typically not free, these in-house design services can be far less expensive than hiring an independent designer. Plus, they can help streamline the process of retail store layout and planning and the purchasing and installation of displays and fixtures.

Store Planning Software

Store planning software allows you to create virtual plans for how you are going to lay out your store and display your products. Though store planning software isn't a necessary tool for the average small retailer, it can certainly come in handy if you are looking to develop specific planograms, such as for the holiday season or a special event.

Planogram: A visual representation of a store's products or services displays.

Store design software is more common for multilocation retailers that want to deploy the same planogram in multiple places. Either way, if you are looking to build planograms, [DotActiv](#) offers a handy free tool.

Product Vendors

Another great source of retail store design inspiration is your product vendors and their line reps. After all, your success is their success, so they're usually happy to share retail store layout and merchandising ideas. Many provide retailers with free or low-cost branded display units too. Some line reps will even assist you in product mapping your store, display setup, and replenishment—it never hurts to ask.

Pinterest & Other Idea Sources

Sometimes you just know it when you see it, so always be prepared to capture pictures and take notes when you see store features that you'd like to try out yourself. Take a walk and see what other stores are doing or settle down with a cup of coffee and scroll through Pinterest for a treasure trove of retail store layout ideas.

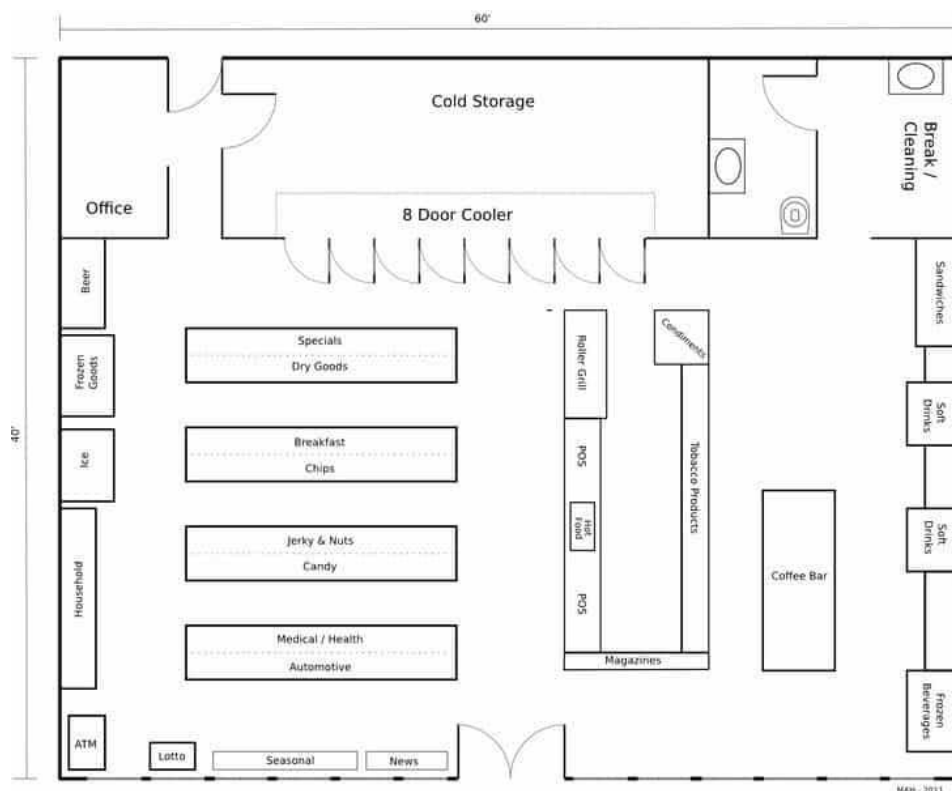
STEP 2

■ Create a Blueprint of Your Store Layout

Once you have considered all the layout options at your disposal, it is time to start taking steps toward arranging one in your space. To begin implementing a store layout, it is best to first put your plan down on paper. This will give you a bird's-eye view of your store once everything is in place, help you understand your space, and guide your installation process.

You will want to begin with a blank blueprint of your store. If you have a copy of your store blueprint, start with that. If not, draw up your own schematic of your sales floor. Grid paper works great for this, or you can use online store design tools, like [SmartSheet](#).

Your blueprint should include everything from the checkout counter and tables to built-in shelves and rack space. Anything that will be a permanent fixture in your store should be drawn into your schematic. You also need to be sure that everything you are drawing is to scale so you have an accurate understanding of how much space you have.



Put your store layout down on paper to get a bird's-eye view of your space. (Source: Pinterest)

After you have your store sketched out, you can start playing with how different layouts could work in your space. As we discussed above, you can choose either a single, streamlined store design or opt for a mixed layout. This decision will all depend on your space and how the different floor plans fit and function.

For example, a homewares store might opt to place shelving in a grid layout in one area of its storefront, but due to its irregular shape, it might use a free-flow or loop floor plan in another. Take your space into consideration and play with different floor plans so you can find one that works in your store and creates the experience you want it to.

One of the biggest things that your store layout will impact is customer flow. Your store layout should work with the natural ways that shoppers flow through your space to avoid creating discomfort and evoke a positive customer experience. A layout that works with your customers' natural shopping habits will help you create a layout that is both comfortable and natural and drives your sales.

Customer Flow: Shoppers' patterns of behavior and the way that they navigate your store.

The main customer behaviors you should understand and accommodate in your floor plan include

Decompression Upon Entry

When customers enter your store, they need space to acclimate and get a lay of the land. To accommodate this and ensure your customers are not overwhelmed at entry, you should create a decompression zone in the first five to 15 feet of your entrance. Decompression is vital to any store layout as it allows customers to enter your business with a clear head, ready to shop.

Decompression Zone: The space at the entrance of your store where your customer makes a mental shift from the outside world to your store environment. Upon entry, they take stock of your store, develop an opinion of your brand, and even make subconscious judgments about the pieces and prices they expect to find.

Avoid overwhelming customers and allow sightlines throughout your space by sparsely decorating your decompression zone. Some merchants will feature small displays with their best-selling products to reel people in, but you should keep your displays at one to two pieces to avoid clutter.



*A decompression zone gives customers space to acclimate when they enter your store.
(Source: MRGCM)*

The Right Turn

Most shoppers in the US will automatically turn right when they enter a store. To avoid disrupting shoppers' natural movement, you should:

Highlight the right-hand side of your store: The right side of your store, especially the area just beyond the decompression zone, is best for promotional displays since this is where customers will look and shop first.

Direct traffic counterclockwise: As customers will naturally drift to the right upon entry, you should arrange your store so that traffic flows based on this right-to-left pattern.

Place checkouts at the end of the path: Checkouts and registers should be located to the left of the entrance so you can maximize the right side of your store for product exposure. The leftward placement will also make the counter fall along the natural exit path.

Customers are also more likely to stay on the floor they entered on rather than traveling up or down to other levels. Keep your best products on your main level to maximize exposure.



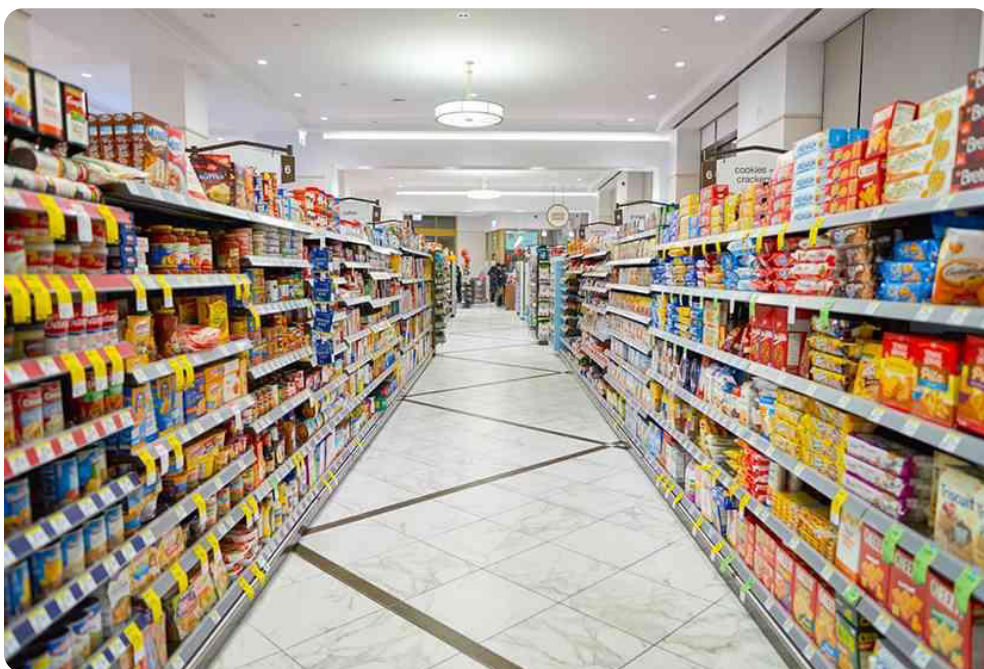
Customers typically turn right when they enter a store, so maximize their natural shopping path with a complementary retail store layout. (Source: Pinterest)

Personal Space

Customers do not like to feel cramped when shopping, so you should allow for ample space for movement. Aisles must be wide enough to invite customers to browse, not bump into other shoppers, and—most importantly—pick up and carry items for purchase.

Spacious pathways are a key aspect of good store planning. I recommend aisle widths of three and a half feet or more to ensure that strollers and wheelchairs can fit comfortably and customers can browse on both sides without feeling cramped. You should also consider whether your customers will be using a cart or shopping baskets, so you can make extra space for traffic to pass both ways. Wide aisles also prevent the dreaded butt brush effect.

Butt Brush Effect: When customers on opposite sides of an aisle brush up against one another with their backs turned due to a lack of aisle space. If customers see narrow aisles, they will often avoid them to dodge this uncomfortable encounter.



Create aisles that are wide enough to accommodate everyone's personal space. (Source: Kitchn)

If your aisles aren't wide enough, you could also be subject to complaints or lawsuits under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The [ADA requires](#) you to have aisles that are a minimum of three feet wide. If someone reports you as noncompliant, you could be fined if you don't widen your aisles and remove obstructions. Don't worry, we will look at more ADA rules and how you can stay compliant in Step 8.

To test your store's pathways, I suggest rolling a large baby stroller or shopping cart through your store. If you can easily navigate all traffic pathways, your customers should enjoy a comfortable browsing experience.

STEP 4

■ Position Your Checkout

A cash wrap, also known as a cash well or checkout counter, is the area that houses your point-of-sale (POS) system or cash register and where customers pay for their merchandise.



In general, the front left of a retail store is a good location for the checkout counter. Shoppers naturally drift to the right when they enter a store, loop around, and then leave on the left side. A checkout counter at the front left of your store puts the last step of the shopping experience on your customers' natural exit path. Plus, this placement doesn't distract people from shopping or take up prime product display space.

While the front left placement is best for most businesses, for some stores it makes sense to place your cash wrap at the rear of the store. This is great for larger retailers that have many in-store associates at a time as it frees up product space in the front of your store. However, placement in the back is not practical for small retailers with limited staff since this positioning can leave the front of the store unattended.

You can learn more about cash wraps, the different types, and how to set one up for your business with our [cash wraps guide](#).

Your cash wrap is where customers pay and should be located on their natural exit path. (Source: Pinterest)

You also want to be sure you give enough space for your cash wrap. For smaller stores that don't use carts, use a checkout counter large enough to hold products as customers continue shopping. Empty hands pick up more products, which leads to more sales. Also, make sure checkout counters are large enough to handle the checkout process efficiently and allow space for customers to put down a handbag.



Carve out enough space for your cash wrap and position it well. (Source: Pinterest)

Once you have sketched out your floor plan, it is time to begin product mapping. When placing your products, do so in a way that promotes customer engagement, creates a positive experience, and drives your sales.

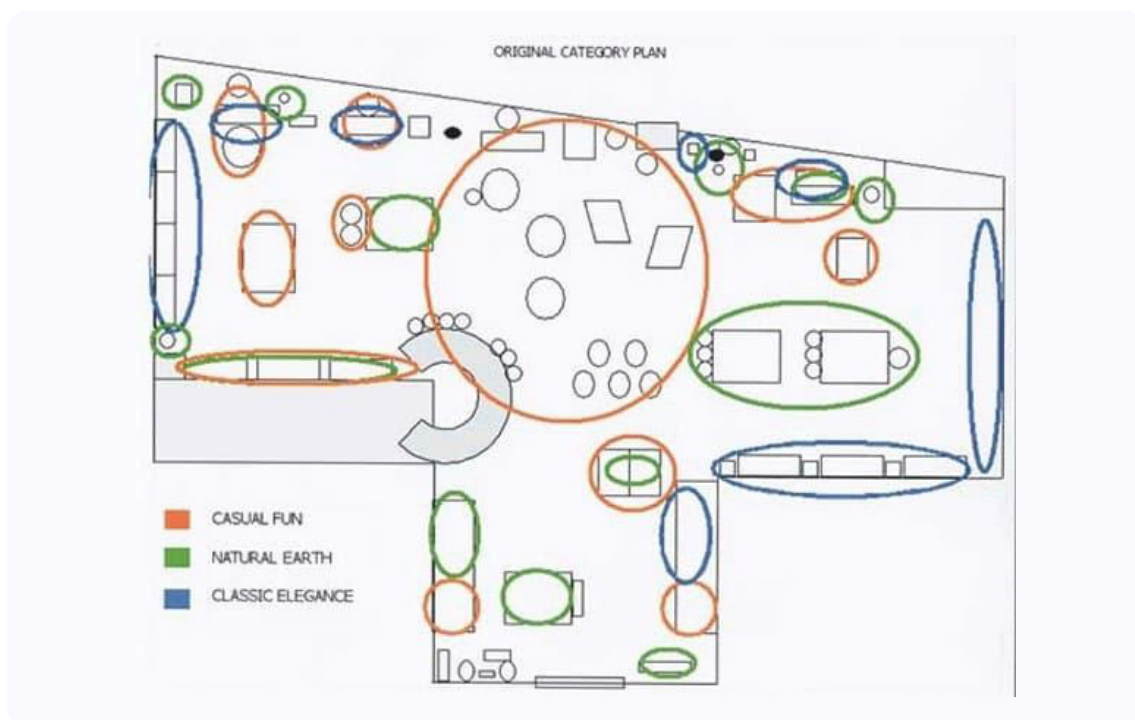
Product Mapping: The process of determining where your products will go in your store.

There are several things that you should consider when mapping where your products should go.

Identify top sellers or key products: You should know the products that are customer favorites or your brand's signature pieces so you can display them prominently and use them to create interest in other products.

Carve out a section for displaying sale merchandise: You want to be sure you have a designated area for sale merchandise. I recommend placing your sale section toward the back of the store and keeping it relatively small to draw people through your space and avoid taking attention from full-priced displays.

Create a space for seasonal and limited availability products: You want to highlight new, limited, or seasonal items, so be sure you have a good space for these products that will draw the eye and promote engagement.



Retailers use product mapping to strategically place product categories in designated store areas. (Source: Gift Shop Magazine)

Implement Zone Design & Merchandising Strategies

In zone design, you categorize products into “zones,” such as kitchen and cooking, home decor, or skirts and pants. The quantities of products determine the size of each zone.

Zoning design makes it easy for shoppers to find what they are looking for, which will lead to more transactions and greater sales. Not only that, but your customers will also have a better experience shopping in your store.

Place Bestsellers in Primary Zones

Primary Zones are located in the back of the store and are where you display bestselling or essential products. For example, you will often find bread, milk, and cheese in the back of grocery stores. This arrangement will force customers to walk through your entire store, get exposed to new products, and even motivate impulse purchases.

Another popular way that retailers use bestsellers is by cross merchandising them with other items. This strategy works similarly to primary zoning in that the bestseller will reel customers in and then they will be exposed to new products in the same area.

Cross merchandising: The practice of displaying items from different product categories together to incentivize customers to make multiple item purchases. Cross merchandising provides value to customers by reminding them of a need, sparking an idea, or saving them time from having to search the rest of the store.



Necessities like milk and dairy are often zoned to the back of the store. (Source: Crafty Coin)

Utilize Cross Merchandise Strategies to Increase Units Per Transaction

You should also use **cross merchandising** to make shopping easier for customers and to promote multiple item purchases.

For example, say you cross merchandise pasta and red sauce in the same aisle. Placing these items together makes it easy for customers to find everything they need for a pasta dinner and will help you sell through your items faster.

As you are laying out your store, consider what products work well together and how you can feature them together in a cross merchandising strategy. Zone your products so that customers can find things easily and complementary items are together, even if that means placing categorically different items in the same area.



This grocer cross merchandised items for a barbecue to make shopping easier and to promote multidepartment purchases. (Source: Dor)



Zoning impulse buys at checkout will help boost your sales. (Source: Vendhq)

Add Low-cost Impulse Products at Your Checkout

Place impulse items like small toys, candy bars, lip gloss, or other small, low-cost items near your register. When customers approach the register to pay and leave, you don't want them to stop shopping. Placing low-cost impulse buy items near registers, as shown in the image below, encourages shoppers to add an item or two as they check out, which will drive your sales.

Tip: Items closer to the front of the store or around the register are more likely to get stolen because they are easier to get out the door, so place your most expensive items toward the back of the store and utilize mirrors and cameras to maintain visibility.



Create power walls at high-visibility points in your store. (Source: Pinterest)

Use Power Walls to Peak Interest

A power wall is a wall in a high-traffic or key area of your store that you merchandise with items that attract attention and promote engagement. Typically, you place it on the right of your store, just beyond the entrance, so that it is one of the first things customers see when they enter your store and can draw people into your space.

Power walls can be anywhere throughout your store—just be sure that they are in a high-traffic area to get maximum visibility. Use them to showcase important departments and new and seasonal items, create vignettes, tell product stories, and feature high-demand, high-profit products.

However, you should remember that your power wall will need to change frequently, so plan for that. Outfit your power walls with hooks, shelving, or other fixtures that you can easily change to showcase various product groupings.

Once you have an idea of your general store design and product mapping plan, it's time to consider your store fixtures and displays.

Fixtures: Permanent—fixed—parts of your store such as lighting, counters, fixed shelving units, wall mounted racks, and dressing rooms

Displays: Pieces that hold product and tend to be mobile, versatile, and customizable—modular units, tables, slatwall, and free standing clothing racks

When it comes to outfitting your store with fixtures and displays, start by investing in quality fixtures, then add flexible displays that can be repurposed, and finally seek out affordable temporary displays from your product suppliers.

Choose versatile fixtures and displays that can display a range of products. Your business's merchandise is constantly changing, and you want to be sure you don't have to constantly buy new fixtures and displays to show them off.

Invest in Fixtures That Define Your Brand

Your store's walls, floors, fixtures, and displays should create a coordinated backdrop that defines your brand but lets your products pop. The ultimate purpose of fixtures and display units is to put your products front and center. At the same time, however, the overall look, styling, and finish of your fixtures and displays are your biggest branding opportunity.

Choose cohesive fixtures and display pieces that speak to your branding and coordinate with your product collections but don't overpower them, like the successful looks below.



Your displays and fixtures play a large role in crafting your store's entire look. (Source: Decorist)



Invest in fixtures and display pieces that are in line with your brand and aesthetic. (Source: Pinterest)



Your displays should be versatile and speak to your brand. (Source: Sonoma Magazine)

Use Displays That Enhance Your Unique Products

In addition to choosing displays and fixtures that enhance your brand, you should also select ones that enhance your products. Different products are better suited for different kinds of display strategies. For example, a clothing store will likely want to have hanging space, whereas a pottery store will likely want to stick with shelving and tables.

Use adjustable display options such as slatwall, gridwall, apparel racks, shelves, and tables so you can use them for many different products.

Additionally, your fixtures and displays must be able to handle products' weights and sizes. Harder and heavier items should have sturdy and tough shelves, whereas lighter products can use floating shelves or furniture pieces.



These chic racks are not distracting and allow the pieces within them to stand out. (Source: Pinterest)



A versatile display wall makes it easy to show off tools and swap in new items as they arrive. (Source: Blue Prop)



Tables and hanging displays are easy to update and do not take away from the store's goods. (Source: Cherry Creek North)

Save Money on Specialty Displays

Many manufacturers offer retailers low-cost or free specialty display fixtures designed to highlight their branded lines, like the one pictured below. These make great speed bumps or outpost display units for those on a tight budget. Your product line reps can tell you if they're available, plus provide merchandising and display advice.

While you'll likely want to splurge on your permanent fixtures and displays, you can opt for these free or low-cost displays for seasonal, temporary, and new products and point-of-purchase (POP) impulse displays.



Talk to your suppliers to see if they offer free POP displays. (Source: THIMM)

Use Displays & Fixtures to Create Speed Bumps & Control Customer Flow

While your store layout should accommodate shoppers' natural behaviors, you can also use your layout to control customer flow and create certain behaviors. Speed bumps are a great way to slow your shoppers down, get them to engage with your products, and drive your sales.

Speed bumps: Displays or fixtures designed to make your customers pause, so they engage with your products and slow down their shopping.

They help draw attention to surrounding products and create more customer interest. For example, at clothing stores, a cluster of mannequins by a table display will make customers more inclined to stop and look at the mannequins and subsequently explore the offerings on the table. Or a paper store might place a table of cards in the middle of the store, where shoppers will stop and look at all the options.

Speed bumps can look like anything from table displays to focal points to temporary POP displays. The thing that makes a design feature a speed bump is whether it causes people to slow down and engage.



This mannequin creates a speed bump where customers will stop and explore. (Source: Business Insider)

Your speed bumps should go in areas where there are not a lot of other displays; thus, there is low engagement. They are not typically fixed and can move when you better understand your customer flow and where those low engagement points are in your space. Play with different positioning and use an integrated [POS system](#) to track the effectiveness of your speedbumps.

You can learn more about merchandising techniques that promote customer interaction and drive sales with our comprehensive [merchandising guide](#).

In addition to controlling customer flow, creating effective displays, and driving your sales, your retail floor plan is about welcoming your customers in, making them feel at home, and providing an experience that makes them want to return.

Thoughtful amenities like seating, dressing rooms, and customer service areas will make the shopping experience memorable for customers and encourage them to continue to engage with your business. Incorporate elements that provide customer comfort as you are creating your store layout.

Seating

Be sure to provide some type of seating for both customers and anyone who is accompanying them. There were countless times in my own experience when partners, friends, or relatives would spend their entire time in my shop seated in our chairs. Our seating options not only encouraged the shoppers in the group to stay longer since their party was comfortable, but it also gave everyone a positive experience.

Seating can be as simple as stools near the checkout, a lounge area near the dressing rooms, or an entry bench. In some cases, however, seating is not just comfort and is actually a part of facilitating easy shopping. For example, a shoe store should provide seating throughout its space so customers have a spot to sit and lace up. Consider how seating might be used in your space, whether just to provide a spot to relax or as part of shopping activities, and add chairs and other fixtures accordingly.

If you do have fitting rooms, adding seating to the surrounding area is great for facilitating easy shopping as it allows customers to show their new wares without having to travel through your whole shop.



Create seating to give customers and friends somewhere comfortable to lounge. (Source: Decorist)

Dressing Rooms

Fitting rooms are an increasingly important way for brick-and-mortar stores to compete with their ecommerce rivals. They offer a private place for customers to try on clothing and get up close and personal with your merchandise.

Be sure you are carving out enough space for your fitting rooms so customers don't feel cramped and uncomfortable. You should also outfit your fitting rooms with storage, seating, [ample lighting](#), and hanging areas so customers can change easily and have a place for their personal items. Providing these features will ensure your customers can use your fitting rooms with ease and enjoy their experience in your store.

Want to learn more about creating the best dressing rooms? Read our guide to [designing the best fitting rooms](#).



*Fitting rooms should always be brightly lit to create the best visibility for your products.
(Source: Singapore Interior Design)*

Customer Service Areas

Your customer service area is where customers can conduct returns, ask questions, and get assistance from store associates. In smaller stores with fewer customers, your customer service area is typically your checkout counter; in larger stores with heavier traffic, there tends to be a completely separate counter where customers can get assistance without clogging up the checkout lines.



Smaller stores integrate their customer service desk into their cash wrap. (Source: Pinterest)



Larger stores with heavier customer flow create separate customer service desks. (Source: Cousins Market)



Your customer service area is where customers will go if they need help or are having any issues. (Source: Avilar Blog)

Click & Collect Shopping Space

When mapping out your layout, you should also consider adding a space for fulfilling click and collect orders.

Click and collect: When shoppers place an order online to pick up in-store; also known as buy online, pick up in-store (BOPIS).

Though the popularity of click and collect shopping skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic because of safety concerns, shoppers are still planning to use the service for the sake of convenience even as the world is opening up. In fact, according to [eMarketer](#), US click and collect purchases were valued at \$83.5 billion in 2021 and are projected to grow to \$101 billion in 2022.

To accommodate this new demand, you should designate an area for order pickups both inside and outside of your store in a place that does not disrupt the rest of your traffic flow. You should also be sure to clearly mark the area with an “Online Pickup” sign and leave pickup instructions on your website to ensure customers know what to expect and that the transfer goes smoothly.

Want to learn more about setting up click and collect orders in your store? Check out our [click and collect guide](#) for all of our top pointers.



Designate space for online orders that allows shoppers to easily pick up purchases without impeding the experience of in-store shoppers or clutter up the checkout counter.

To ensure your space is accessible to all and to avoid any costly fines, you should be sure that you are following the guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act. There are rules that retailers have to follow to ensure that spaces are navigable and comfortable for Americans facing disabilities.

The ADA has a [comprehensive accessibility checklist specifically for retail establishments](#). It outlines all the items you need to include to be ADA compliant.

The main things that you need to account for in your retail store layout include:

Parking and Entry: Keep parking areas clean and unobstructed and ensure that handicap spaces are available and occupied only by those with proper credentials. You should also have a wheelchair-accessible ramp or curb option that remains clear of obstructions and maintains enough space for wheelchairs to navigate.

Navigable Store: Make sure your aisles are at least three feet wide and remain unobstructed. You should also keep enough space between displays, fixtures, and design elements for wheelchairs and scooters to pass. Also be wary of items on the ground and maintain a clear floor space without obstacles where people might trip.

Restrooms, Fitting Rooms, and Elevators: Keep accessible bathrooms open during all business hours, remove items from fitting rooms that impede wheelchair access, and maintain your elevators so they are in working order during business hours.

Customer Information: Ensure your customers know about your disability-friendly features by posting accessibility information on your website and educating staff so they can provide in-store assistance.



Bottom Line

Planning your retail store layout is no small task, but many small retail store owners do it all themselves with great success. Take it slow, follow our steps, and remember to put the customer first. With the ideas in this guide and a little elbow grease, you'll soon be on your way to mapping out a retail store that's easy to navigate, welcoming to customers and, best of all, profitable.

You May Also Like ...

- ▶ Now that your store interior is set to sell, spruce up your exterior with a [stunning window display](#) and a [storefront sign](#).
- ▶ Want more tips? Check out these [store design ideas](#) to increase sales.
- ▶ Learn how to [start a retail business](#).



Fit Small Business

WWW.FITSMALLBUSINESS.COM