

Shops that shine

Guide to visual merchandising



Dedicated to a better Brisbane



Contents

What is visual merchandising?	3
The benefits	3
About this guide	3
Chapter 1 Creating an attractive shopfront	4
Signage made easy	4
Kerb appeal	8
Maintaining cleanliness for optimal store presentation	9
Chapter 2 Creating inspiring displays	10
Displays, layouts and formations	10
Window displays that sell	13
How to apply decals like a professional	15
Chapter 3 Crafting your instore experience	16
Increase foot traffic	16
Guiding customers through your store	17
Optimise your space	21
The basics of creating an engaging shopping experience	24
Chapter 4 Planning and product strategies	26
Analyse your sales data for smarter merchandising	26
Bonus product strategies that sell	27
Chapter 5 Your visual merchandising toolbox	29
Building your display toolbox	29
The essential visual merchandising toolbox	30
Reusable props	31

What is visual merchandising?

Visual merchandising helps products stand out and encourages more sales, whether customers are browsing in person or online. It transforms shoppers into buyers by guiding purchasing decisions increasing transaction value, and showcasing how products can be styled or used together.

Selling products is only part of the picture. Real retail success comes from crafting experiences that connect with customers and bring them back for more. Visual storytelling is a key driver in attracting attention, communicating your brand identity, and providing engaging experiences. From windows and signage to layout and sensory elements, visual merchandising helps turn foot traffic and online views into revenue.

Visual merchandising creates moments worth sharing. Eye-catching displays often land on social media, helping brands stay visible and drive both online and offline sales.

Ultimately, effective visual merchandising tells a story, encourages exploration and inspires purchase by creating memorable, revenue generating experiences.

The benefits

Visual merchandising strategies can help you:

**Attract
customers to
your store.**

**Keep
customers
in-store longer.**

**Boost
customers'
basket size.**

**Build your brand
recognition and
customer loyalty.**

About this guide

Retailers are constantly looking for innovative ways to stand out and capture attention. This guide provides practical strategies to help you attract foot traffic, create impactful displays and design an engaging instore experience that resonates with customers both in person and online.

Now is the time to implement meaningful changes that drive results, increase brand visibility, and encourage word-of-mouth marketing. By transforming casual browsers into loyal customers, you can enhance your store's reputation and boost sales. For easy implementation, this guide includes a practical checklist in chapter 5, designed to help you apply and refine visual merchandising techniques effectively.



Creating an attractive shopfront

Guide customers from street to storefront by making a memorable first impression. You don't need a big budget to make an impact. Catch their eye with signage, stop them with your window display, draw them in with kerb appeal and create desire to enter your business.

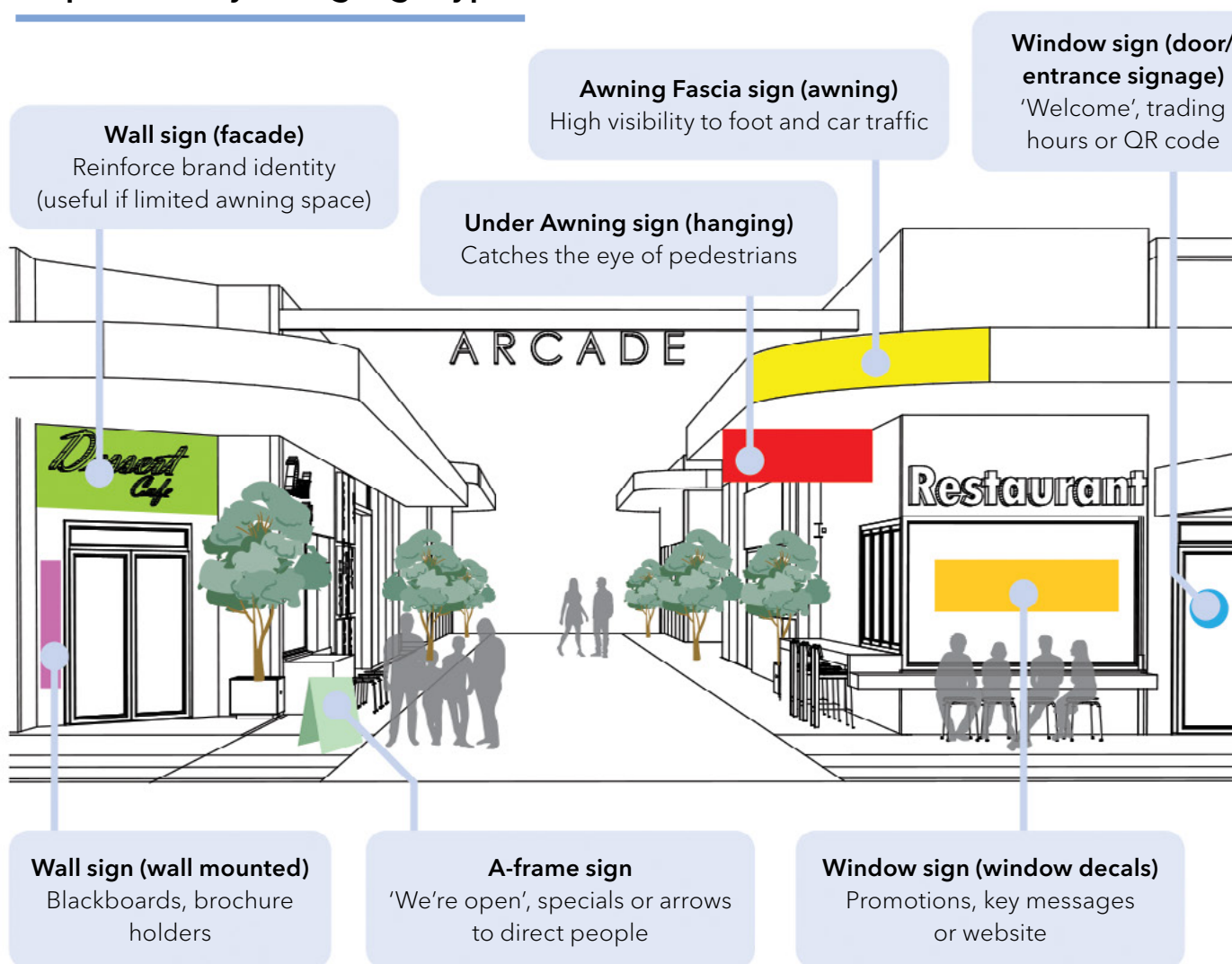
Signage made easy

Great signage makes your store easy to find, draws attention and helps people understand what you sell – especially if you're in a hard-to-see spot like upstairs, down an alley, off the main street or recessed off the main path.

Top tip

Your signs or proposed signs may require a permit from Council. Visit brisbane.qld.gov.au and search 'advertising device approval' to make sure you adhere to the relevant rules for your store's location.

Step 1: Know your signage types



Step 2: Follow the key signage rules to make your store visible from the street

Key signage rules

- **Use title case at least 20 cm high** – so drivers can read them from 60 m away.
- **Keep words short (e.g. 'OPEN', 'GELATO')** – less is more, drivers don't have time to read.
- **Match your signage style to your website** – builds brand trust and recognition.
- **Position signs before your driveway or entrance** – don't miss your chance to grab attention.



How to check your signage

- **Drive past your shop.** Can you spot the signage without turning your head?
- **Have a friend video your storefront from a car at normal speed.** Can the key message be read in 2-3 seconds?
- **Stand across the street.** Does your shop stand out from different angles?



Your checklist

- ☐ Signage faces traffic
- ☐ Signage is bold and high contrast
- ☐ Signs are located in key areas (where Council laws permit):
 - awning or above door
 - perpendicular signs (that stick out)
 - windows
 - doors
 - A-frame on the footpath.

Top tip

Painted murals are eye-catching and can help deter graffiti.



Step 3: Guide customers at the entrance

Place information at eye level (1.4 m) on the left of the entrance where people naturally pause.

Include:

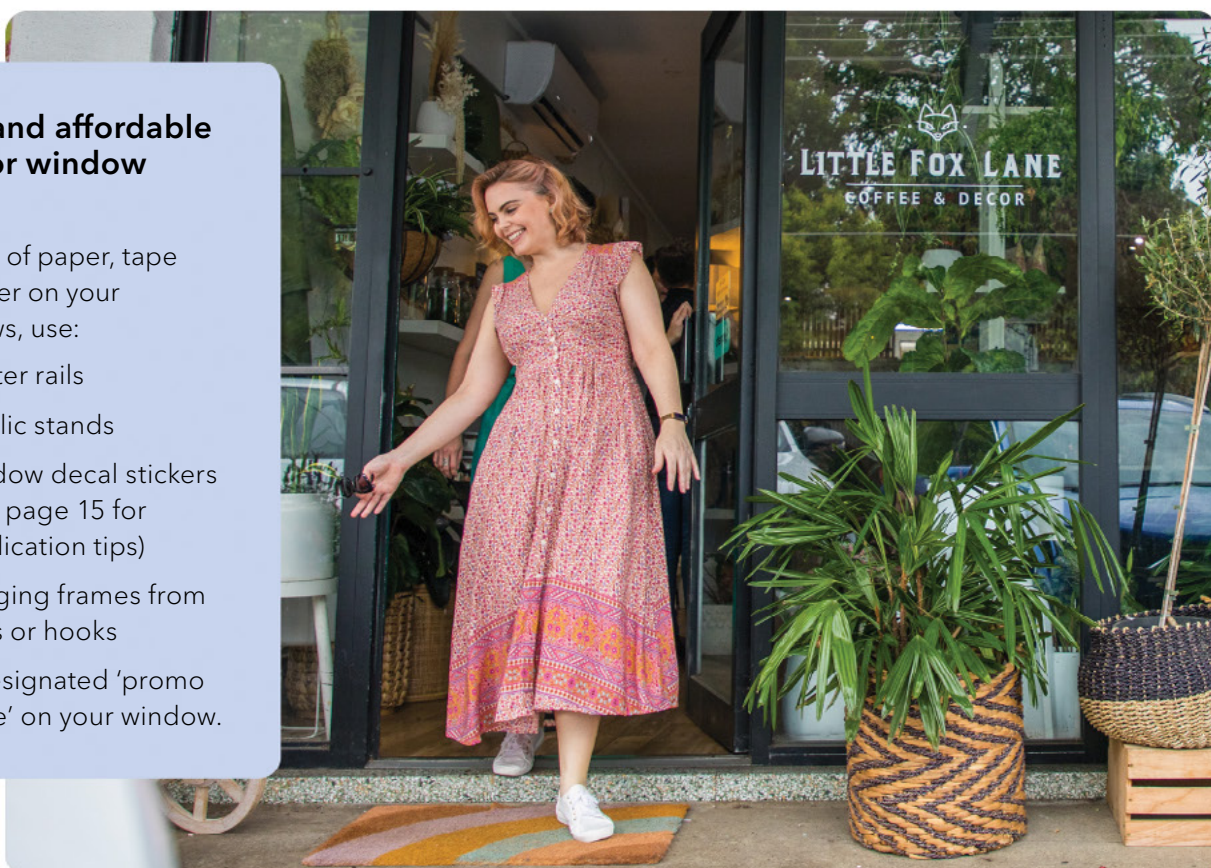
- business name
- opening hours
- website and/or QR code
- brochures in a holder (especially if closed).



Easy and affordable tips for window signs

Instead of paper, tape or clutter on your windows, use:

- poster rails
- acrylic stands
- window decal stickers (see page 15 for application tips)
- hanging frames from rods or hooks
- a designated 'promo zone' on your window.





Step 4: Keep your brand consistent

Over time, inconsistent signage styles can create visual clutter, weakening your brand's impact and confusing potential customers. A clean, cohesive and strategically placed signage system will effectively attract both new and returning customers.

When ordering signage:

- Send your high resolution logo to the sign company.
- Provide your brand guidelines (colours, fonts, style).
- Tell installers exactly where signs go – mark it with coloured tape if needed.

Your checklist: Is your signage doing its job?

- ☐ Can people see your store from 50–100 m away?
- ☐ Can drivers read your key message in under 3 seconds?
- ☐ Does your signage match your brand colours, fonts and style?
- ☐ Are your signs clean, professional and clutter-free?
- ☐ Do you have signs in all key areas?

Top tip

Signage companies may not understand your brand – make sure you give clear, simple directions in writing.

Consider avoiding

- Handwritten signs
- Messy tape or Blu-Tack
- Neon starbursts
- Faded, peeling or outdated signs
- Backlit signs with broken bulbs
- Pull-up banners used permanently
- Third-party ads or unrelated messages
- Blocking footpaths with A-frames
- Faded graphics or photos of product.

Kerb appeal

Your exterior is your silent salesperson, setting expectations before customers enter. Ensure your outdoor branding – from fixtures to signage – strongly reflects your inside identity.

- Use custom displays, branded umbrellas, barriers, and engaging signage; avoid supplier-branded decor and promotional posters that dilute your presence.
- Showcase your latest collection at the entrance, not clearance items, to make the best impression and better return.
- Keep your storefront free of clutter and distracting posters to maintain clarity.
- Maintain a clean, inviting entrance with daily checks for smudges, dust, and cobwebs – make this a staff responsibility.
- A fresh coat of paint enhances your kerb appeal – base colours on your brand identity. Note: When repainting heritage facades, consult Brisbane City Council guidelines.
- Refresh window frames and doors every year with a coat of paint and every 7 years for the entire exterior.



Ideas to improve your kerb appeal

- Cozy outdoor seating with greenery.
- Umbrellas with your brand or brand colours.
- Fairy lights in your windows or within your landscaping.
- Your own branded awnings.
- Striped umbrellas and A-frame chalkboard with daily specials, quotes or 'Open' message.
- Seasonal props and window displays to match the holiday season or upcoming event.
- Oversized props at the entry or both sides of the entry so they are symmetrical.
- Greenery and flowers in beautiful urns that are all the same.
- Instagram-worthy backdrops or aesthetics (industrial, bohemian, minimalistic) to make customers stop.
- Comfortable seating arrangements (oversized seats, oversized snow globe dome tent with interior seating or props customers can easily sit on).
- Warm lighting, plants, well-kept and watered landscaping, and cozy decor.
- Free Wi-Fi and ample charging outlets for workers.
- Playlists or ambience that match the vibe (jazz, lo-fi, indie).
- Flower arches or oversized balloons or thriller props to make customers stop.

Maintaining cleanliness for optimal store presentation

Maintain high cleanliness standards through regular checks. Consistent cleanliness enhances the store's appeal, professionalism and customer experience.



Signage and entry

Ensure signs are current, unobstructed and free of cobwebs using a telescopic duster. Keep entryways clear for accessibility.

Windows and glass

Clean displays and glass surfaces frequently to remove dust, smudges and insects for a clear, professional look.

Surfaces and stock

Dust surfaces and stock daily using a feather duster or cloth for both quick and deep cleaning.

Front door

Clean regularly to create a polished first impression, even if propped open.

Professional help

Hire services for windows, floors or high/low dusting as needed to save time and maintain quality.

Creating inspiring displays

Displays, layouts and formations

Well-planned displays guide the eye, support browsing and drive purchasing decisions. A strong display uses balance, structure and storytelling to create impact – regardless of whether it's in a window, on a table or along an aisle.

Display formations

Use consistent formations to create visual interest and draw attention to key products.



Step display

Products rise from low to high across the display, with larger bases for accessories and steps showcasing key items. Ideal for guiding the eye across a feature range.



Pyramid display

Arranged in a triangle with a wide base narrowing to a peak, this format works well on shelves, tables or 360° displays. Effective in chemists, gift stores, newsagents and homewares.



Repetition display

Repeating items in odd-numbered groups (3, 5, 7) creates visual dominance and suggests price value. Use on gondola ends (displays at the end of shelving units) or mass displays for smaller or discounted items.



Zig-zag display

Products are staggered to create movement and interest. Great for related items and increasing basket size. Use tables or plinths of different heights for best effect.

Composition guidelines

Strong display balance has structure, space and storytelling. Use these principles to guide display set up, attract attention and drive sales.

Balance: The two-thirds to one-third rule

Aim for roughly two-thirds product (positive space) and one-third open space (negative space). This gives the eye room to move and keeps displays feeling clean and intentional.

- Use risers, crates or boxes to add height and break up flat merchandise.
- Place focal items at eye level to naturally catch attention.
- Avoid filling every area of the display space. The empty or negative space is needed to see the actual display. Less is more.

Colour: Keep it cohesive

Colour can guide the eye and shape mood. Be deliberate with your palette.

- Limit each display to 1-2 main colours for a unified look.
- For mixed palettes, use rainbow or gradient order (e.g. red-orange-yellow) to create flow.
- Use contrast to help dark products stand out, placing white or light props behind can enhance visibility.

Grouping: Create clear product stories

A good display looks balanced when smaller groups of items are placed within a larger arrangement. Space between groups allows customers to see and understand the display better.

- Put small groups of 3 items together to make a nice, united look.
- Don't put too many products together, crowding can make the display look messy or heavy.
- Organise items by themes, colours, styles or brands to make it easier to browse.
- Use props or matching items to tell a story or add interest.
- Ask yourself, does everything in the display relate and go together?



Example of a pyramid display (middle shelf) using a strong, cohesive colour palette.

Depth: Build layers from back to front

Depth is the front-to-back distance of a display, adding layers and dimension.

- Keep the display away from the glass to create depth before building forward.
- Stagger merchandise, descending from the highest point.
- Avoid pressing items against the glass. Step back for better perspective.

Elevation: Use risers to add structure

Risers not only elevate products physically, they also elevate perception.

- Try crates, stools, nesting tables or small wooden boxes.
- Kitchen departments in discount stores often stock useful items like dish racks to display flat products.
- Match finishes (white or natural timber) to your store's overall style.

Ticketing, signs and posters

- Maintain a consistent style for all signage within the same area - use your brand font and avoid mixing colours or formats.
- Use positive and engaging messaging.
- Highlight savings clearly - use specific amounts (e.g. 'Save \$10') and clearly price discounted items with sale tickets or red markings; avoid vague percentages. Name sales clearly, e.g. 'End of Summer Sale - 4 Days Only'.
- Add attention-grabbing phrases like 'New Arrivals', 'Back in Stock', or 'Limited Edition' to drive interest.
- For visual balance, group signage or posters in threes, or use one large, central poster in the window for maximum impact.



Example of a mirror or formal balance display.

Top tip

Invest in a set of 3-5 plinths - they're versatile, reusable and can be sourced affordably from wedding suppliers.

Window displays that sell

Your window display is the first impression customers have of your products and your store. A great one can stop people in their tracks and invite them in. Here's how to create a display that sells, even on a small budget.

Step 1: Start with a clean slate

Clean the glass (inside and out)

Dirty windows can negatively impact your display. Clean glass makes your display look more professional and lets colours pop. Your display should sparkle and invite customers in.

Use a squeegee for:

- streak-free windows that enhance visibility
- smooth application of decals or vinyl graphics, preventing air bubbles or wrinkles
- removing excess water or cleaning solution for a flawless and professional finish.

Step 2: Choose your display layout

Choose your display formation. See page 10 for more information on pyramid, step, zig-zag and repetition layouts.

Step 3: Pick a theme and products

Choose a theme by tying it to a season, holiday or promotion and selecting a complementary colour scheme. Then select merchandise that supports the theme and tells a cohesive story.

Theme ideas:

- Mother's Day – soft pinks and pastels
- New arrivals – bold and bright.

Top tip

To help black products stand out, place white or light items behind them and spotlight.

How to choose products

- Choose bright colours to grab attention; glass dulls merchandise colour by 15%.
- Stick to 1-2 main colours to avoid visual clutter.
- Choose items with bold labels or strong colours.
- Avoid displaying too much black – it disappears behind glass unless well-lit.
- Group similar products together, e.g. apples with apples.
- Avoid mixing unrelated items – it confuses the customer.
- Keep displayed items near the front of the store so shoppers can easily find them.

Remember: Less is more. In a cluttered and messy store a shopper will expect cheap products.

Step 4: Light it up first



Light the top two-thirds of the window where people naturally look.



Use spotlights to highlight key products and draw attention.



Test angles before committing to save time and frustration later.

Top tip

Adjust your lighting before placing anything – it's much easier than trying to fix lighting after the display is in place.

Step 5: Add props and elevation stands

Props and risers frame your display and create structure to your chosen formation. You want to create a strong visual focus and keep merchandising tightly grouped to avoid clutter.

Elevate items: Use timber boxes, crates, nesting tables or dish racks. Paint or leave natural – match your store style. Visit your local mass discounter for storage solutions and don't forget to look in the kitchen department for a range of options such as dish racks you can use to elevate flat items like children's books or plates.

Custom decals and signs: Use to direct attention toward promotions or features (e.g. 'Gifts as special as Mum').

- Use white/light text for window decals or for printed signs use dark fonts on a white/light background for easy reading.
- Place signs at eye level (approximately 1.4 m).

Thriller piece: Use something oversized or surprising that draws attention (e.g. chandelier).

Ideas for props and items for your window displays

- Buy readymade backdrops online (e.g. snowflakes, fairy light curtains).
- Use poster rails, picture frames or A5/A4 sign holders for messages.
- Create signage using free online design tools – stick to your brand colours and fonts.

Final window display checklist

- ☐ Is the window glass clean and clear?
- ☐ Is the display well-lit and balanced?
- ☐ Can your message be understood in 3 seconds?
- ☐ Does the display match your promotion or season?
- ☐ Is there a focal point that grabs attention?
- ☐ Is signage on-brand, readable and well placed?
- ☐ Can customers find the displayed items easily instore?
- ☐ Do you have a plan for next month's window display?

How to apply decals like a professional

Adhesive decals should be installed without bubbles or creases. While professional installation is ideal, you can apply them yourself by following these steps carefully. It takes patience and attention to detail for a smooth result.

You'll need:

Lint-free cloth, window cleaner, masking tape, squeegee (or ruler/credit card), and spray bottle with water and a few drops of dish soap.

Application steps:

1. **Clean the window thoroughly.** Use window cleaner and a lint-free cloth to remove all dirt, dust and grease.
2. **Check placement.** Hold or tape the decal to the window to check its positioning from a distance. Adjust until you are happy with the placement.
3. **Wet the surface.** Lightly mist the window with the soapy water mixture. This allows repositioning and helps prevent air bubbles.
4. **Peel and position.** Slowly peel the backing off the decal, exposing the adhesive side. Place the decal onto the wet window surface, adhesive side down.
5. **Smooth it out.** Starting from the centre and moving outward, use a squeegee, ruler or credit card edge to press out water and air bubbles. Wipe away excess water.
6. **Let it set.** Allow the decal to dry and adhere for several hours. Avoid touching or adjusting it during this time.
7. **Final clean.** Once dry, clean around the decal with window spray for a crisp, professional look. Step back and ensure no smudges can be seen in the sunlight.

Top tip

For large decals, it helps to have a second person assist with alignment and application.



Top tip

Use AI platforms for fresh and creative ideas for window display messages.

Crafting your instore experience

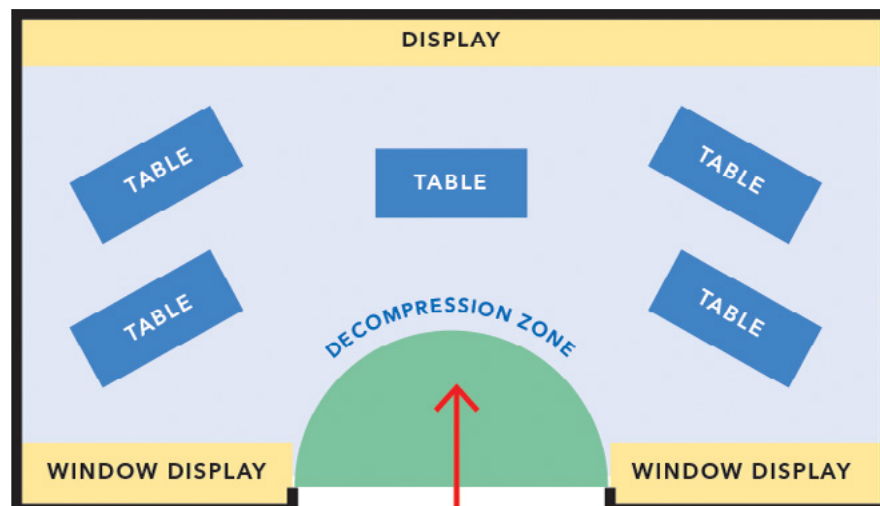
A well-designed store draws people in, makes shopping easier, and keeps them coming back. Smart layouts, clear signage and eye-catching displays help customers feel welcome and engaged. When the space works, so does the experience and that leads to more foot traffic, more sales and more referrals.

Increase foot traffic

Open your door – first impressions matter

An open door can lift foot traffic by as much as 30%. It makes your store feel accessible and inviting, encouraging passersby to come in. A little extra dusting is a small trade-off for more customers and potential sales. Even when staffing is limited, keep the entrance open and consider soft background music to create a warm, welcoming vibe.

Inside, the first 2–2.5 metres is the 'decompression zone', where customers adjust. Keep this area tidy, organised and welcoming with clear, wide access – aim for 1.2–1.5 metre aisles – to accommodate trolleys, prams, and shoppers with diverse needs.



Guiding customers through your store

Want shoppers to stay longer and spend more? Use your layout to lead them through the space. Encourage a left-hand turn at the entrance and create a clear path that guides them through the store. Steer them away from the checkout too early, browsing time matters. The goal? Have them see 80% or more of your store. More visibility means more chances to sell.

Top tip

70-80% of shoppers make impulsive purchases. Create an environment that promotes spontaneity.

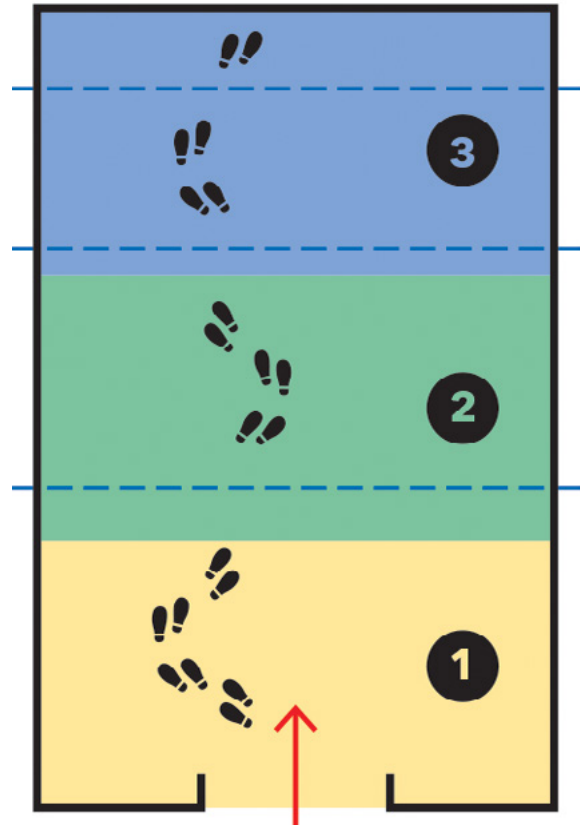
Optimising customer flow

It's important to understand that not all areas get equal foot traffic. The 4.3.2.1 rule reveals typical customer movement:

- 40% browse the front
- 30% explore the front-middle
- 20% venture towards the back
- only 10% reach the back wall.

To counteract this natural drop-off and optimise customer flow, divide your store into 3 sections.

- 1 Front of store.** Keep it open, uncluttered and welcoming to facilitate a smooth transition.
- 2 Middle of store.** Maximise this high-value space with balanced displays of high-density, high-margin products.
- 3 Rear of store.** Use medium-density placement to maintain an open feel and signage to encourage full-store exploration.



Top tip

Utilise 'speed bumps' (smaller displays) to slow customers down and increase dwell time. This includes fixtures like nesting tables, displays, hero stock that is on sale, or seasonal lines in bulk displays.





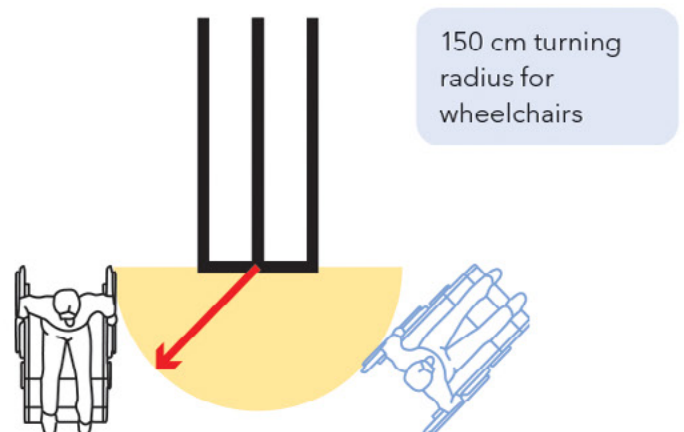
Tips for accessibility and inclusive shopping

Designing with accessibility in mind not only meets compliance standards but also improves the overall customer experience. Tight aisles deter customers especially those with mobility challenges and may result in lost sales.

Recommended accessibility measurements for aisle widths:

- Minimum aisle width for single person access: **80-90 cm**
- Two-way person passing width: **120 cm**
- Turning radius for wheelchairs: **150 cm**
- Ideal product reach from a seated position: **70-120 cm**

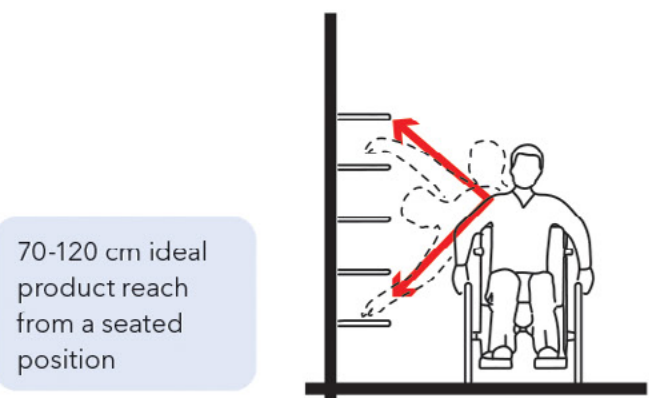
Following these guidelines ensures an inclusive and accessible shopping environment for all.



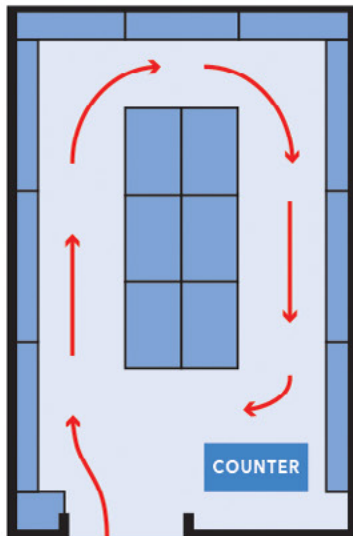
Top tip

Check out Council's *Better Access, More Customers* guide for more accessibility and inclusion tips.



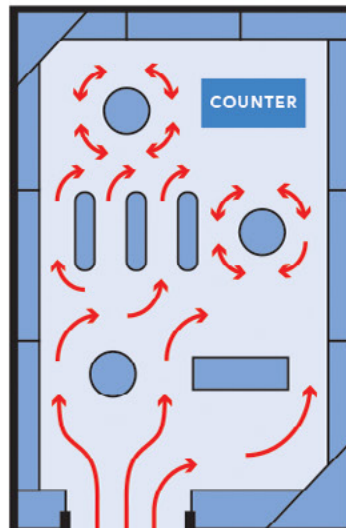


Store layout examples



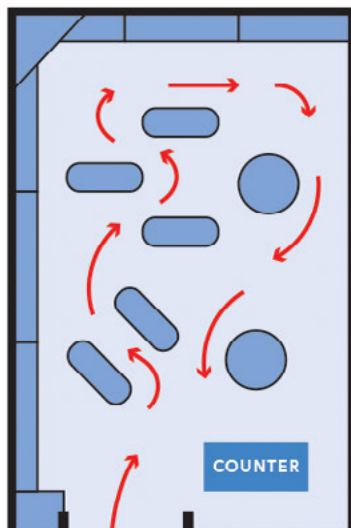
Loop/Racetrack

Leads customers on a circular path or guided route, encouraging them to view most products before checkout.



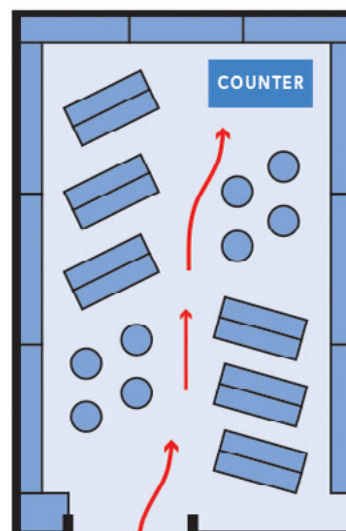
Free flow

Allows shoppers to browse freely with smooth circulation - ideal for boutique-style stores.



Semi-controlled

Combines guided paths with open areas, typical in supermarkets.



Spine

Features a central aisle that directs traffic efficiently, common in pharmacies.



Where to place your counter

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to counter placement, it all depends on your store's layout. Counters often sit in what's called the 'poison zone', an area customers naturally avoid until they're ready to purchase. The tips that follow are general suggestions, so take what suits your space and adjust as needed.



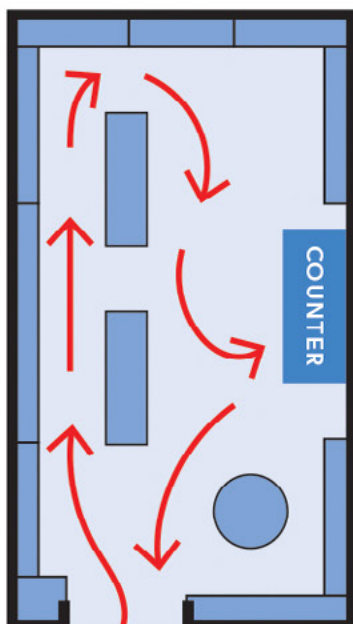
Top tip

Place the counter in low-traffic or underused areas.

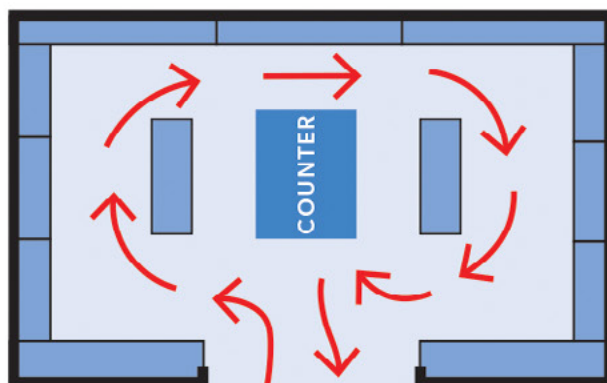
Consider avoiding

- positioning the counter to face customers directly upon entry as it feels unwelcoming
- placing the counter at the back facing directly at the entrance.

Examples



For long, narrow stores with left entrance, position the counter mid-wall on the right to encourage browsing on both sides; customers will naturally move left, avoiding the counter.



In rectangular stores with wide entrances, centre the counter to promote smooth traffic flow and a loop layout.

Optimise your space

Maximising space is one of the biggest challenges for retailers. You can increase display capacity by creating alcoves, freestanding islands and by making effective use of walls, ceilings and floors. Most importantly, review your buying strategy and eliminate slow or non-moving stock to give you more space.

Hot spots

Hot spots are high-traffic areas that attract customer attention.

Leverage them to:

- increase conversion rates
- boost average transaction value
- clear seasonal stock quickly
- drive impulse purchases.

Smart hot spot strategies

- Use complementary product bundles (e.g. a handbag with a matching wallet) to increase per-transaction sales.
- Rotate displays weekly to encourage repeat visits – fill shelves fully and use props as space fillers if stocks are low.
- Keep related brands/ranges grouped to create eye catching displays – if you mix products, use a theme to link them together (e.g. colour or season – signage can help explain your theme).
- Expand hot spots by angling fixtures toward main foot traffic, doubling visibility.

Transform dead spots

- Add interactive elements (samples, mirrors, seating).
- Place exclusive offers or clearance deals to attract discount shoppers.
- Use angled corner shelving for visibility and to draw customers into low-traffic areas.
- Place seating near changing rooms for partners to increase dwell time in store.



Where customers actually look - the impact zone

The **'impact zone' (1.3-1.4 m)** is located at eye level and is your most valuable display space – place your bestsellers here for maximum visibility.

Top zone (greater than 1.9 m)

Less noticeable; ideal for extra stock, signage or add-ons.

Middle and Impact zones (1-1.9 m)

Most effective for high-margin, fast-selling items.

Bottom zone (less than 1 m)

Least effective unless merchandising for children; suitable for bulk storage, overflow or decorative props to block downward attention. Most adult customers are unwilling to bend or squat to access products in this zone.



Accessories - where do I put them?

Boost impulse sales by placing accessories near your counter. Start with around 1.5 metres of space and adjust based on stock levels and how products are performing month to month.

Make sure the display is full with no gaps, easy to access and always tidy. Use playful prompts like 'Did you remember...?'.



Lighting - make it pop!

Lighting guides customers, highlights merchandise and enhances the shopping experience.

- Use contrast to focus attention – dim aisles, brighten displays and add rear wall spotlights to encourage movement towards the back.
- Set timers for after-hours visibility.
- In clothing stores, use warm lighting above the mirror and targeted spotlights in fitting rooms to boost confidence (avoid cool or fluorescent bulbs) – maintain a warm colour temperature throughout the store to create a welcoming and flattering environment.
- Focus spotlights on the top two-thirds of displays to ensure merchandise is illuminated, not your pelmet.
- Front-store lighting should be impactful, especially in winter, to attract passersby.
- Replace burnt-out bulbs promptly and ensure all bulbs are the same colour temperature.



Our lighting top tips

Use lower ambient and more accent lighting for a relaxed, personalised atmosphere.

Place spotlights near walls to make your sales floor feel more intimate/smaller.

Make products pop with spotlights that are twice as bright as the surrounding lighting.

Employ dimmers and timers to showcase your store to passing traffic after-hours.

Interior category signs

Good signage is fundamental for effective store design, allowing customers to navigate independently.

Category signage should be seen when the shopper enters. Place high near the pelmet or ceiling and face toward the entry to clearly identify sections.

Clear, visible signs help customers find products easily, reducing exit losses.



The basics of creating an engaging shopping experience

Great stores don't use visual merchandising just to look good, they use it to sell. A stunning display that doesn't drive action misses the mark. Effective merchandising is purposeful. It tells a story, encourages discovery, and creates moments that lead to purchase and brand connection.

Tip 1: Think like a customer

Create a welcoming environment using the senses.

- **Greet every customer with a genuine smile and 'hello!'** A warm welcome sets the tone and makes people feel comfortable to stay and browse.
- **Catch their eye with attractive, well-organised displays.** Make sure your offers are clearly visible and visually appealing.
- **Play upbeat music that lifts the mood.** Music can influence how long someone stays – think about the last time you lingered in a store because you liked the playlist.
- **Introduce a signature scent.** A pleasant fragrance can create a lasting impression and help customers associate positive feelings with your store.
- **Keep your team active and visible.** Movement invites interaction. Staff who are tidying, setting up displays or simply present on the floor make it easier for customers to start a conversation.

Tip 2: Know your products inside and out

Great sales teams know what's on the shelves, what's selling and what to suggest when something isn't. That knowledge helps them build displays that not only catch the eye but also convert interest into sales.

Tip 3: Make it work for you

Visual merchandising is not a rigid formula. Every store is unique and while guidelines are helpful, true impact comes from understanding your market, your customers and your brand identity. Collaborate with your team to tailor displays that make sense for your shoppers while maintaining brand integrity.

Tip 4: Turn displays into silent sellers

Mannequins play an important role in guiding customer choices by showing how to put an outfit together. A thoughtfully styled display inspires shoppers and encourages them to purchase multiple pieces, not just one.

Your checklist

- ☐ Does the layout invite exploration? Does it lead you around most of store effortlessly?
- ☐ Are the right products catching attention? (and not just the best sellers!)
- ☐ Does the store's style resonate with your customers?
- ☐ Are the staff friendly and open to conversations with anyone who enters?





Tip 5: Strategic product placement

Position new and seasonal products in prime spots. Ensure store flow and pairing encourage cross-selling. Assess if slow moving products need better placement or marketing, and rotate hot spot displays weekly based on sales data and rotate the entire store seasonally or quarterly.

Tip 6: Collaborate and listen

Your sales team is a goldmine of insight. Every day, they interact with customers, hear feedback first-hand and notice patterns in what people are drawn to or walk right past. Use what they know to guide your merchandising choices. Build displays based on real behaviour, not passing trends. If a display goes untouched for a couple of days, take action. Switch out the products, update the signage or add a fresh element to catch the eye. Pay attention to what's working. Then do more of it. Sometimes, the smartest ideas come from the team on the floor, all you need to do is ask.

Tip 7: Maintain standards and elevate the experience

A clean, well-organised store creates a sense of quality and drives sales. Stay on top of mess and clutter with regular checks and keep displays looking clean and dust free. Assign clear responsibilities, provide staff training and use checklists to maintain consistency. Review sales data often to ensure best-sellers stay in stock and focus your efforts on the top 20 products that bring in the most revenue.

Planning and product strategies

Analyse your sales data for smarter merchandising

Allocating space well means giving the most valuable real estate to the products that actually drive sales and profit. It's about aligning shelf or floor space with real performance data, not just gut feeling or what seems popular.

Identify your bestselling categories and lines

Use your Point of Sale (POS) data to find out which products and categories contribute most to your yearly sales. Focus on the following key indicators:

- total revenue and gross profit by category
- number of units sold.

This gives you a clear picture of what's truly driving your business and helps you make smarter merchandising decisions.

Match space to sales performance

Work out what percentage of total sales each category contributes. For example, if accessories account for 25% of sales, it should receive roughly 25% of your shelf or floor space. Then take a step back, does your bestselling category have prime placement? If not, it's time to reconsider your layout.

Top tip

Effective, strategic visual merchandising combines creativity with planning - a key to retail success.

Focus on profitability, not just volume

Popular doesn't always mean profitable. A product might sell in high volumes but deliver low returns. That's why it's important to place high-traffic items in key spots but pair them with complementary products that boost profitability.

When reviewing your range, analyse:

- gross profit per unit
- profit by category
- margin trends over time
- sales per square metre.

Aim for a balance between:

- demand merchandise - reliable sellers like everyday essentials
- impulse merchandise - visually appealing, often higher-margin items that benefit from strategic placement.

Give premium space, especially near the middle or counter, to high-margin, high-impact products. Use your POS system to guide these decisions, drawing on 6-12 months of sales data to get a clear, accurate view of performance.

Bonus product strategies that sell

Cross merchandising displays

Cross merchandising involves displaying 2 or more complementary products together to encourage multiple purchases. These displays show customers you understand their needs by offering convenience and time-saving solutions.

How to use cross merchandising displays

- Use at least 2 related products.
- Include signage that clearly explains the connection between the items.
- Align with current trends or seasons: highlight popular colours, occasions or themes.
- Keep the display simple, using a key prop or mannequin to tie it together.
- Brief staff on the purpose, selling tips and display duration.
- Encourage staff to reference the display during sales conversations, in a way that feels natural and helpful.

Dump bins

A dump bin is a promotional display placed along the store's main walkway. Products are presented in a loose, 'dumped' arrangement to suggest a bargain or price-driven promotion.

How to use dump bins

- Use only in racetrack-style layouts with a minimum 1.5 m clearance on all sides.
- Display products in a casually piled style to create the 'dump' effect.
- Include clear price signage featuring a round number (e.g. \$5).
- Keep bins looking full – use filler like paper or risers to elevate stock.
- Limit use to a maximum of one month to keep displays fresh.
- Make sure staff are familiar with the featured product.
- Always check that bins are safe, clean and stable.



Slow movers in hot spots

A slow mover is a product with lower-than-expected turnover for its category. These items can take up valuable space and impact cash flow if not addressed quickly.

How to improve slow movers

- Assess visibility – is it placed at the right height for easy viewing?
- Ensure it's grouped in the correct product category.
- Review signage – is it present, relevant and effective?
- Evaluate pricing – does the price reflect customer expectations and value?
- Consider seasonality or trends – has the product gone out of fashion or is it out of season?
- Monitor performance every 6 weeks and make adjustments as needed.
- Circulate slow movers through other stores if possible via your internal inventory list.
- Provide staff with a checklist to support consistent review and action.
- If no improvement is seen after all interventions, remove the item from display and add it to clearance.
- Keep a running list of all slow-moving stock with dollar values to avoid tying up cash flow.
- Sales items with red or yellow signage and clear price markdowns are effective in moving dead stock. A pricing strategy of cost plus 10% is recommended; however, it's essential to clearly communicate that the item is on sale.

Hot spot counter displays

The counter zone is one of your most valuable sales spaces, ideal for boosting average transaction value with impulse products. Displays can be freestanding near the till or placed along the line to the checkout.

How to use hot spot counter displays

- Treat the counter as its own sales area and assign a staff member to manage stock levels and cleanliness.
- Choose products that are impulse-driven, seasonal or easy add-ons under \$2, \$5 and \$10.
- Select items relevant to upcoming events or holidays (e.g. Christmas, Mother's Day).
- Keep displays topped up – never let them fall below half-full.
- Products should feel like a natural fit for most shoppers, encouraging quick last-minute purchases.



Your visual merchandising toolbox

Building your display toolbox

Are you focusing on every detail, from the shopfront to instore displays and ambiance, to create an inviting space that encourages customers to explore, enjoy and return for more? You will need a toolbox dedicated to visual merchandising.

Your toolbox: Smart visual merchandising essentials

Seasonal visual merchandising can create unnecessary waste, with banners, props and decorations often thrown away after a short run. Reduce costs and environmental impact with these sustainable display strategies.



Choose reusable props

Invest in items that can be styled in different ways throughout the year. For example, a vintage leather suitcase can be displayed open and filled with product or used as a riser when closed.



Use recyclable materials

Where possible, replace foam-based signage and props with recyclable alternatives like chalkboard signs, paper or cardboard.



Incorporate everyday objects

Timber crates, old books, antique furniture, wooden ladders, stools and chairs, can add personality and warmth to your displays. These items are reusable, cost-effective and help create a distinctive brand look.



Select low-toxicity paints

When painting props or store elements, choose non-toxic, fume-free paints that are safer for staff and better for the environment.



Switch to energy-efficient lighting

Use LED, low wattage, or LED spotlights to reduce energy costs while keeping your store well-lit and inviting. Warm lighting is recommended for a welcoming atmosphere.

The essential visual merchandising toolbox

Every business should have a dedicated kit for assembling and maintaining displays. Keeping these tools in one place ensures quick and easy access.



Basic display tools:

- **Hanging materials:** nylon, twine, wool, chains, wire.
- **Cutting tools:** sharp scissors, box cutter razor knife.
- **Mounting supplies:** pins, eyelet hooks, 3M removable hooks, double-sided tape, masking tape, invisible tape.
- **Clipping essentials:** paperclips, bulldog clips to hold pages open or clip clothes together at the back if the size is too big for the mannequin.
- **Handy tools:** long-nose pliers and small hammer.
- **Stapling gear:** staple gun, stapler, staples, staple remover.
- **Poster support:** cardboard strips to keep posters straight when suspended, or a poster rail (can be purchased online) which is 2 plastic stripes to mount the poster and long hooks.
- **Small step ladder or stool** for adjusting displays.
- **Clean, ironed fabric or paper** to cover tabletops, risers, window floors or use as backdrops.
- **Book stands** to hold books or plates upright.
- **Display platforms** made from cardboard, MDF, plywood or acrylic, available in various sizes and shapes, which can be painted or covered.
- **Display boxes or plinths** to elevate the product in the display.
- **Cleaning supplies:** dusters, brush and pan, broom, vacuum cleaner, window cleaning spray, rags and rubbish bag.
- **Heavy card in multiple colours** to put underneath your displays to bring out the product colours. We recommend using one colour for your entire display if possible or on each shelf use a different colour that coordinates with the product.
- **LED lights that can be put in the display** which are available from large format building stores. Use double-sided tape and packaging tape to hide your cables behind your fixtures.
- **Hair dryer** to apply decals, hard edge ruler and squeegee.

By organising a well-stocked toolbox you can create eye-catching, eco-friendly visual merchandising displays that enhance your store's appeal while reducing waste and costs.

Reusable props

Use crates, boxes or shelves to lift products and create focus. Keep props the same colour and in good condition for a clean, consistent look.

Stools, nesting tables or even upside-down storage boxes make great risers. Check the kitchen section of discount stores for timber boxes or dish racks, ideal for displaying flat items like books or plates. Paint white or keep natural to suit your fixtures.

Here is a list of prop ideas for you to consider.

- ☐ Neutral-colour plinths or display boxes
- ☐ Backdrops
- ☐ Wooden crates
- ☐ Wooden ladders
- ☐ Metal risers, acrylic stands or timber boxes
- ☐ Wicker baskets or trays
- ☐ Clip-in spotlight fixtures
- ☐ Chalkboard or whiteboard signs
- ☐ Pegboard signs or panels
- ☐ Artificial greenery and florals – vine greenery and a lot of flowers in one theme
- ☐ Artificial fruit e.g. strawberries, lemons, grapes.
- ☐ Mannequins (full body or torso)
- ☐ Cardboard cubes or cylinders
- ☐ Freestanding photo frames – 5 all in the same colour for signage
- ☐ Reusable vinyl window decals
- ☐ Glass jars, vases or containers
- ☐ Paper or cardboard in complementary colours
- ☐ Natural wood offcuts or blocks
- ☐ Fabric offcuts or packaging paper for padding or layering, or putting inside of baskets to elevate products
- ☐ Recycled plastic tubs or bins, or glass vases – all the same style.





Retail is a stage, and visual merchandising is the script.

Every display tells a story, one that captivates, excites and invites customers to be part of the experience.

A well executed display does not just sell products; it creates moments that turn shoppers into loyal fans.

**Boom Retail Marketing Consultants,
Brisbane**



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

Brisbane City Council
GPO Box 1434
Brisbane Qld 4001




Every effort is made to ensure that
information is correct at time of printing

Printed on sustainable paper



CA25-614644-07-7273
©2025 Brisbane City Council

 brisbane.qld.gov.au
 3403 8888

 /BrisbaneCityCouncil
 @brisbanecityqld
 @brisbanecitycouncil