

Everything You Wanted to Know About Fixtures (But Were Afraid to Ask)

Ordering fixtures can be a daunting task for store owners and front-end managers. Here are some tips to help take the guess work out of what types of fixtures to order and how to install them properly.

General Advice

- ✓ Do not use homemade or handmade shelving...ever. When possible, avoid custom-made fixtures.
- ✓ Do not be misled into buying slatwall. Slatwall may be inexpensive, but it is very limited in its use and is only good for displaying diabetic shoes and sports braces.
- ✓ Some manufacturers will offer a "low shoe" (also known as a "low foot") for your fixtures. Choose the low profile to gain a few extra inches of merchandising space.
- ✓ Vendors: [Streater](#), [Madix](#), [Lozier](#), and [Handy](#) offer both Rx and OTC shelving. [UniWeb](#) is an excellent choice for the Rx area.



Order the Right Size

- ✓ Gondolas should never be wider than 30 inches. That means the base of each side is approximately 13 inches and the center rail is 4 inches.
- ✓ Gondolas should never be higher than 60 inches and no lower than 54 inches.
- ✓ Wall fixtures can have a base that is 16 inches or 13 inches and should be no taller than 84 inches and no lower than 72 inches.
- ✓ Fixtures sections can be purchased in just about any length; the most preferred is 3 feet and 4 feet.
- ✓ Note: a 12-foot fixture made of 3-foot sections will cost a third more than the same size section composed of 4-foot sections.
- ✓ The best length of gondolas is no longer than 24 feet and no smaller than 6 feet. The optimum size is 20 feet.

Shipping & Costs

- ✓ A large portion of a fixture's cost is the shelves. Review OTC planograms as a guide for how many shelves you will need. For example, your foot care section may call for three shelves, whereas your eye and ear category may call for six shelves.
- ✓ Always ask for an estimate of the freight cost. Ask for prices on a dedicated truck and the "cheapest way" to have items delivered to your store. A dedicated truck that can deliver all of your pieces on the same day will offer shorter shipping times, much less chance for damage, and fewer lost pieces. A non-dedicated truck delivery will be less expensive, but it will take a bit more time and your order delivery may be split into a number of different days and times.
- ✓ It is best to ask your fixture vendor to ship the fixture order only when it is complete; otherwise, you may be unloading a different truck every few days.

- ✓ Have the fixture vendor's 1-800 phone number on hand. Count every shipping container/box as it comes off the truck. Do not let the delivery driver rush you.
- ✓ When offloading from the truck tailgate, avoid setting fixture containers on the ground. Doing so will avoid damaging the piece.
- ✓ Consider purchasing countertops locally. Countertops do not ship well and are expensive to transport.

Installation

- ✓ If building a new store, consider strapping your walls with a wood strip before you apply sheet rock. This will make wall shelving installation a snap.
- ✓ You can order knockouts for electrical outlets in fixture kick-plates (also known as toe plates); this is a must-have if you plan on vacuuming the store floor.
- ✓ If you have light-colored flooring, avoid white fixtures, especially for the OTC section.
- ✓ There are two types of shelving: DL and TL. DL shelves practically slide into position; TL shelves need to be tipped-up to be placed in a gondola and are difficult to merchandise. Budget for DLs.
- ✓ Unless your wall fixtures are going up against a window, you do not need to purchase peg or solid backing for the fixture. Peg board is best for gondolas and wall fixtures.
- ✓ Depending on the vendor, plan on a large amount of plastic or cardboard to dispose of...mounds of it! Consider renting a commercial dumpster just for the leftover cardboard.

(For tips on moving a fixture, [review my old One-Pager Tip.](#))

Budget for the Future

- ✓ If you already own a store and your shelving is looking shopworn or, worse yet, rusted, do not paint it, especially the pegboard. Instead, budget to purchase a new section each year. Consider purchasing the same type of shelving that you know you have; this way, you can reuse any shelves that are in good condition. Shelving is like buying a shaving razor from Gillette: the razor is an okay price; it's the blades that will get you. The fixture is an okay price; it's the shelving that will get you in the end. Plan accordingly!
- ✓ Purchase a new run each year and in few years you will have a new looking store.

-- Gabe Trahan, NCPA Senior Director of Store Operations and Marketing

Front-End Overhaul