

PHARMACY FLOOR PLAN

Creating Ideal

TRAFFIC FLOW



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INTRODUCTION

There's much to consider when setting up a new pharmacy or when remodeling an existing one, not the least of which will be the design and implementation of your store's floor plan.

Your pharmacy floor plan setup, which in this case is basically the layout of your front-end merchandising area, is important in that it's a major factor in creating your store's environment - the way your store looks and feels to your customers. It will have a direct influence on how your products are displayed and will also be responsible for your store's customer foot traffic pattern, which is how your visitors travel through the different sections of your merchandising sales area.





THE IMPORTANCE OF PHARMACY TRAFFIC FLOW

While it's easy to recognize the importance of prescription filling at your drugstore –after all, for most independent pharmacies prescription drug sales make up somewhere around 90% of revenues - what happens in the front end of the store is critical for a number of reasons. Besides the fact that you can create a shopping environment that will have your customers purchasing things off your shelves and other displays, you can also cause them to feel good about the shopping experience that's provided at your particular store because they find it interesting, exciting, comfortable, entertaining and it's better than the alternative, which is to visit the big-box pharmacy down the road. There are definite ways to set up your store, including the design of the floor plan, that can help your customers feel the way you want them to feel during their visits. We'll explore some of these.

FIRST LET YOUR VISITORS RELAX

Experts agree that the first several feet just inside a store's entryway should be warm and welcoming but free from clutter. Some store owners or managers want to use this area just inside the entryway to display sales items, seasonal products and especially hot sellers but this is probably a mistake. This area is what's known as the decompression zone because it provides a comfortable transition space from the outside world to the inside of your store. Most customers will ignore the displays and signage featured close to the door.



When you lay out your store's floor plan there are scientifically proven steps you can incorporate to take advantage of known customer behaviors such as the need for a decompression area where customers will be making a mental shift from the outside environment which they're leaving to the environment inside your store. Studies back up this up.

It's also been shown time and time again that shoppers enter a store the same way they enter the road when driving. It's natural to look left and then turn right and proceed in that direction. Interestingly, in countries where cars drive on the left-hand side of the road, shoppers entering a store typically look right and then turn left to proceed.



NOW INITIATE YOUR DESIRED TRAFFIC FLOW

Utilizing this important customer behavior information, your pharmacy's floor plan should make it feel natural for customers to travel from the decompression zone through a predetermined traffic flow pattern that will have them viewing most every section of your merchandising area. Because a great number of your customers will need to have a prescription filled it's important that the prescription drop-off point be located in the rear so they'll be prompted to travel through the store. It's your job as an astute merchandiser to display your non-prescription products in such a way so as to attract their attention and their interest. There are proven ways to do this which we'll discuss later.

Even though you'll want to locate your prescription drop-off counter to the rear of the store, it's important that your customers are able to see where it is from the decompression area either by direct line-of-sight or by easy to see and read signs. While you're at it, you should also put displays of your high-demand items near the back of the store as this will also cause shoppers to travel through the merchandising area to reach them. This is the reason you'll notice the milk displays in grocery stores are typically placed at the far end opposite the store's entrance.

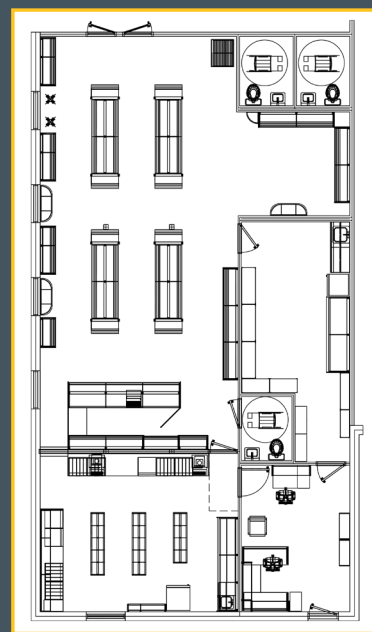
CREATING THE IDEAL TRAFFIC FLOW

Creating the ideal traffic flow begins with the creation of your store's floor plan. This should be studied, seriously considered over time, written down on paper with the idea of flexibility for future changes in mind and then executed with the results being closely observed. Creating an effective floor plan layout will allow you to direct where your customers go, provide them with an interesting and informative shopping experience and, if all goes well, generate retail sales along the way. You want them to be encouraged to walk by a large number of products, to browse and to buy.

There are basically three types of floor plans typically used in retail environments, the first two being most common to pharmacies. Your floor plan setup will depend on several factors such as the amount of space available, the dimensions of your merchandising area, the types of items you offer and the types of clients you're aiming to attract. The three most commonly used floor plans include:

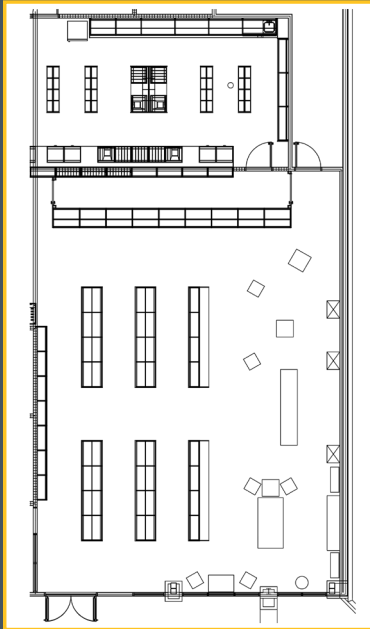
Traditional, also sometimes called the grid or straight floor plan.

This is the one with which most people are familiar because it's generally used in large pharmacies, convenience stores, big-box home improvement stores and retail grocery stores. This design typically makes maximum use of gondolas in the center of the store which can effectively be used to create aisles. Gondolas also offer areas at the end of shelving runs for the placement of end caps. These smaller shelves are ideal for the display of fast moving or "special" sale items. While many think of gondola shelving as being straight and with sharp edges, today's versions (such as those [manufactured by Madix](#)) feature a concave/radius design that has curves and undulates, instantly capturing shoppers' attention.



The traditional floor plan also takes maximum advantage of perimeter walls and corners with the use of wall mounted slat-wall, grid-wall and/or pegboard displays. These are ideal for showing off a great variety of items utilizing numerous display accessories. One great advantage of the grid floor plan is economical use of the most amount of floor space area possible.

Keep in mind the need to remain flexible in your installation of fixtures and displays, as you'll want to regularly change things up to keep them from becoming stale and boring your customers with the same old thing every time they visit your store.



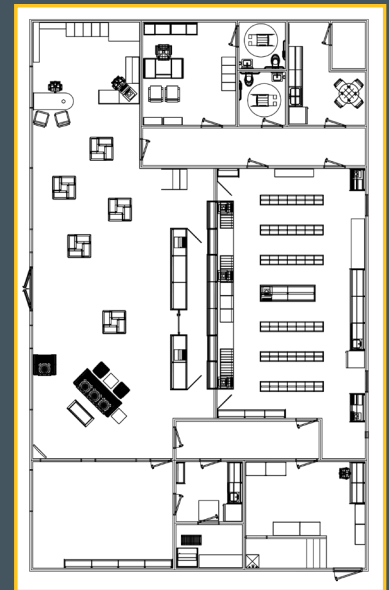
Blended or combination floor plan.

This design is so called because what's sometimes referred to as a loop or racetrack floor plan is combined with one or more of the other types of floor plans. A loop is formed by using maximum wall displays that will tend to pull the customer along from one attraction to the next. Power Walls are created beginning just to the right of the entryway, at the end of the decompression zone, by displaying new merchandise, seasonal items or especially fast moving products that will pull customers in and then along that natural pathway down the wall. It's important that items in this first section of wall displays not feature items that are too expensive to keep browsing customers from forming the opinion that your merchandise is all high priced.

Combining this travel loop around the store's perimeter, the center section of your merchandising area can be set up with the more traditional gondola-formed grid system as can be seen in the accompanying diagram. As an alternative, you can adopt the Free or Open Flow floor plan in the center or even use the Traditional plan mixed with the Open Flow plan.

The Open Flow floor plan.

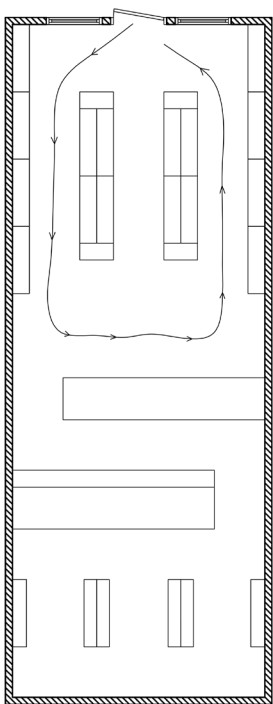
The open flow floor plan allows for maximum creativity, allows quick, easy changes to displays and is often used in smaller specialty shops or boutiques. This type of floor plan is best used in very upscale apothecary style pharmacies that carry higher end items. It also works well in a larger pharmacy merchandising area for displaying special gift groupings offering small numbers of items rather than large quantities of shelved products.



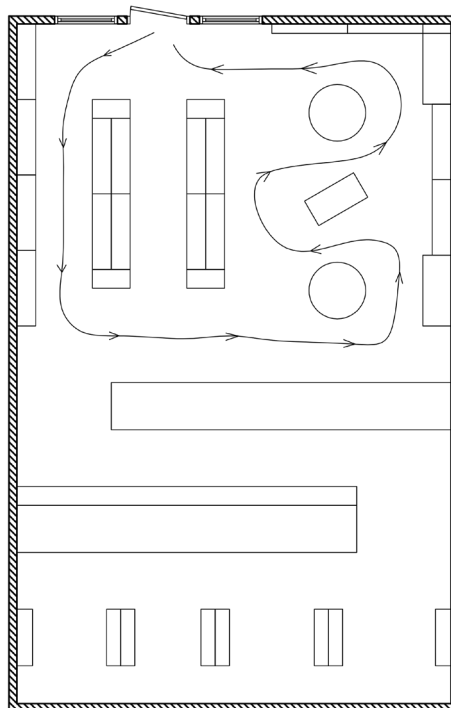
STUDY CUSTOMER TRAFFIC FLOWS

If you draw a map of your pharmacy and then mark down the general pattern your customers are taking through the store it will give you an idea of where to place different products. Take note of which areas most shoppers go, which they rarely go to and which they go to but then quickly leave. Determine where and how much customers are browsing around and then direct them to the products they most want by following these tips:

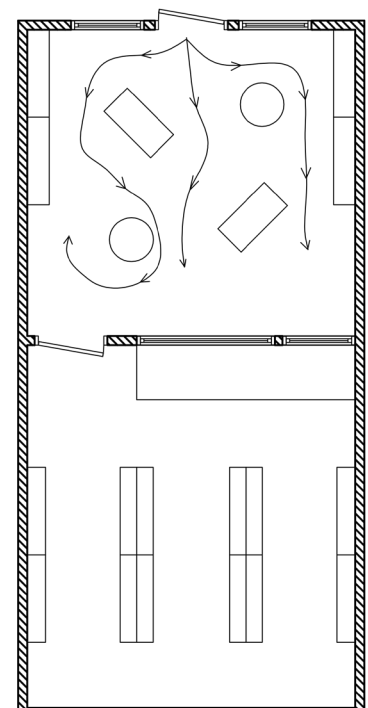
- High-profit items should be displayed in high traffic areas. Low-profits products should go into low traffic areas.
- Remember not to display products or detailed promotional material in the decompression zone as it's likely to be ignored.
- The first product display featured should contain items that are widely appealing and affordable so as to gain shoppers' attention and condition them to your reasonable prices.
- Low-cost, repeat-purchase impulse items should be placed in high traffic areas and on or near counters.



Traditional



Blended



Open Flow

MILES OF AISLES

The aisles in your pharmacy will likely be developed through the use of gondola shelving and, with today's easily movable fixtures, you shouldn't hesitate to move things around on a regular basis. Aisles should be wide enough for two shoppers to pass by without bumping each other and to accommodate those pushing a carriage, shopping cart or in a wheelchair. Fire Code and ADA regulations require aisles of no less than 36" in width, however studies have shown that 42" wide aisles are more appropriate to prevent shoppers from feeling cramped or jostled about. Aisles any wider than this aren't conducive to fostering the desire to slow down and browse.

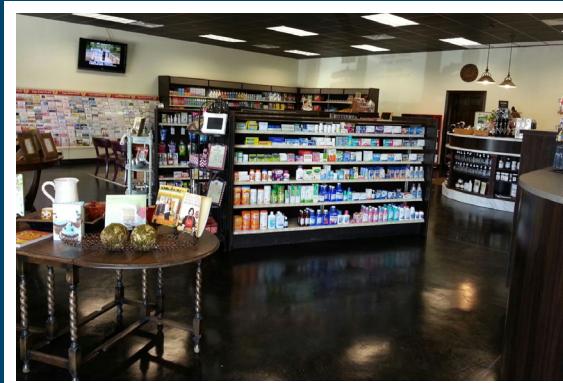
CHECKOUT COUNTER

The placement of your checkout counter is important and is often an area misplaced in store design. You don't want your cash register up front and center for all to see when they enter your store because this causes the subconscious thought of spending money which makes some people feel uncomfortable. The checkout counter is best placed slightly away from the entry area and on the left hand side of the store since this is the side most people will naturally emerge from the shopping area.

Placing the register on the right side of the store steals space that's better used for product promotion and is the most advantageous location for your first power wall display. Make sure to feature some impulse-item displays on or near your checkout counter. This is your last chance to sell them something they want and need – it just needs to be offered in a way they find hard to refuse!



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