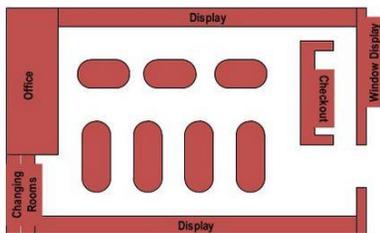


## Has your shop avoided the "butt-brush" effect?

Think about one of your favorite shopping excursions. Mine was in Chicago where we roamed the streets of Wicker Park and Bucktown. Many of the boutiques were intimate and inviting. We wandered all day in the rain and loved it. It was a shopper's delight and I spent way more than I should have.

The physical layout of your store definitely determines how long shoppers linger and subsequently purchase. Knowing the correct way to direct them through the aisles will mean higher sales at the cash register. Here are the pros and cons of 4 different forms of store layout:

### Free form layout



Many boutiques or small independent shops under 5,000 square feet use what's called the "*Free Form*" layout. A free-form layout provides an intimate, relaxing environment. However, it can also be an expensive use of floor space.

**ADVANTAGES**

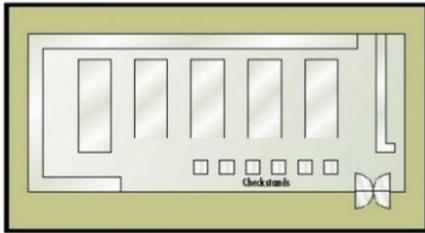
- Allows for browsing
- Increased impulse purchases
- Visual appeal
- Flexibility

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Can be more costly to implement
- Waste of floor space
- Possibility of confusion
- Difficulty cleaning

Because there isn't a well-defined traffic pattern with the Free Form layout, customers are not naturally drawn through the store. Your salespeople and their selling skills are what makes this layout work.

Grid layout



The "*Grid*" layout is often used in grocery stores where merchandise is displayed on shelves on both sides of the aisles. If you're dealing with over 6,000 square feet this is an inexpensive option. I have seen it used in retail shops such as Tuesday Morning and many Goodwill stores too. An advantage is more merchandise can be placed on the sales floor, but it

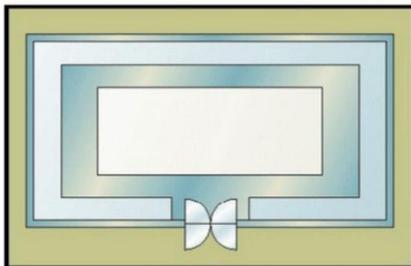
isn't very visually interesting.

**ADVANTAGES** • Low cost fixtures • Customer familiarity • Large merchandise exposure • Ease of cleaning

**DISADVANTAGES** • Limits browsing • Decor is uninteresting • Encourages rushed shopping behavior

This is a classic design where the "butt-brush" effect (This is a term developed by Paco Underhill, a consumer behavior specialist. It refers to shoppers, particularly women who will avoid merchandise in an aisle where they feel their backsides will be brushed or touched) can be a problem depending on the width of the aisles. Generally, 4' wide aisles are recommended. Read ["Do you have "Resaler Tunnel Vision?"](#) for more information on the width of aisles.

Loop or racetrack layout



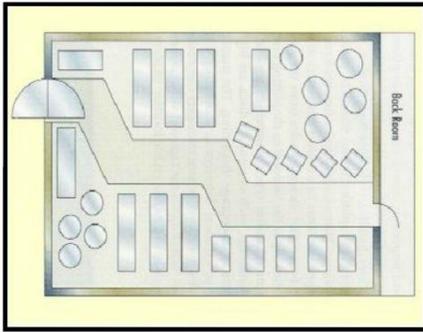
Kohl's is a great example of a store that uses the "*Loop or racetrack*" layout. It offers a clearly defined main aisle that loops around the store with fixtures in the middle running parallel to the side walls.

**ADVANTAGES** • Maximum merchandise exposure • Increased impulse purchases • Ease of shopping • Encourages exploration

**DISADVANTAGES** • Often requires more walking • Defining departments can be costly • Customers can become overwhelmed

With this layout, different departments must be clearly defined by a change in color, surface, signage or lighting in order for customers to keep moving.

## Spine layout



The "*Spine*" layout is a variation of the first three. It's based on a single main aisle running from the front of the store to the back. This design is often used by specialty stores between 2,000 and 10,000 square feet in size. Changing the flooring can help facilitate the movement from one department to the next.

**ADVANTAGES** • Effective use of space • Encourages browsing • Good view of entire sales floor

**DISADVANTAGES** • Variety of fixtures can be costly • Getting shoppers off the main aisle requires creativity • Difficulty cleaning

Unfortunately, if not planned appropriately, shoppers can feel "trapped" once they're in the back of a shop using the Spine layout. Space between fixtures is key to help the shopper feel comfortable lingering.

Creating an atmosphere where shoppers want to linger is not always an easy task. Whichever layout you ultimately choose for your shop, make sure your store's image is clearly conveyed in the design, type of fixtures, wall and floor colors, lighting and signage. By pulling them all together in a seamless package, shoppers will feel comfortable and much more interested in opening their wallets.