

## Guides to Practical Bookselling

**C**reating

**W**indow

**D**isplays

Developing Ideas

*Colour*

*Composition*

DESIGN

**Budgets**

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# WHY WINDOW DISPLAYS

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## The Importance of Display

The window display is the first impression that a customer will have of your shop. In addition to being an important selling space the window display can also convey the idea that your shop is an interesting and exciting place to visit. It is part of the branding of the shop and ultimately helps to give it identity and presence. The windows project a message about what the customer can expect inside the shop, so it is important to consider what you want that message to be.

Once a window is installed it will be advertising books twenty four hours a day. It can be used to convert the general passer by into a potential customer. In this respect it is an important marketing tool so it is worth investing a little time, money and energy to achieve the best possible results.

**Attract** – the impact of an attractive, carefully considered window display can make people stop and take notice, diverting thoughts and intentions towards the items that are on sale in your shop. Elements of display that will encourage this are; colour, styling and visibility.

**Interest** – the interest of the customer is held by how well the window is laid out. Are the books placed in such a way that the customer can easily see what is on offer? Grouping, composition and space are important here.

**Impress** – customers will be impressed by the variation and appropriateness of stock in the window. Does it appeal to them? Is it topical? Does it give them ideas or make them think? Cleanliness and tidiness also contribute to the overall impression.

**Action** – the customer comes into the shop and buys a book.

# USEFUL TOOLS

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## THE ESSENTIALS

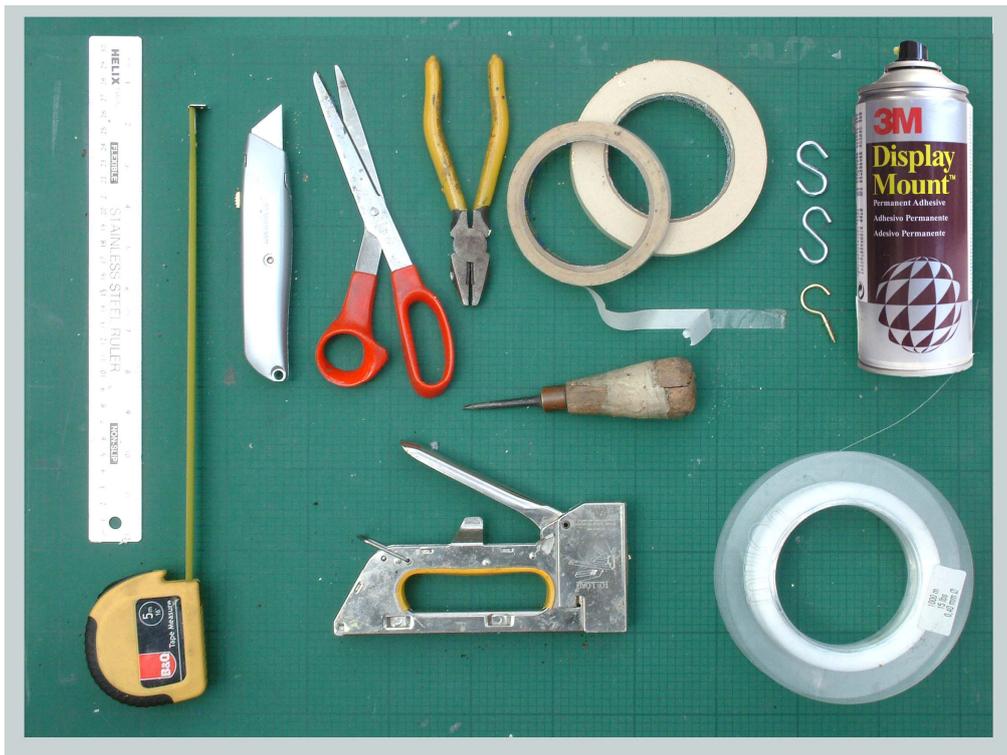
- ✓ Staple gun
- ✓ Sharp Knife
- ✓ Steel edge
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Pliers

## ALSO USEFUL

- ✚ Eyelet maker (for putting eyelets in the corners of card)
- ✚ Screwdriver
- ✚ Hammer
- ✚ Cutting board

## OTHER EQUIPMENT

- ✚ Masking tape
- ✚ Double sided tape (for mounting posters)
- ✚ Sticky fixers
- ✚ Display Mount (for mounting posters)
- ✚ Nylon thread (for hanging things)
- ✚ Dusters and polish
- ✚ S-hooks (for hanging things)
- ✚ Dressmaking pins (for hanging mounted posters)
- ✚ Tape measure
- ✚ Wire
- ✚ Clear film (for wrapping books)



It is advisable to use Display Mount and double sided tape when mounting posters – especially in the summer.

Clear-Film is useful for covering books that are in the display. It helps to protect the covers and can prevent them warping and curling in the warmer weather.

When using nylon thread to hang items in the window try to make sure that it is vertical, and not at an angle. This disguises the thread and helps to prevent it being a distraction.

Good quality tools last longer than the cheaper option and are often far safer to use. A sturdy Stanley knife with replaceable blades is a good investment. It may be worth investing in a metal stapler rather than a plastic one – especially if you use it a lot. From a safety point of view a metal rule with a safe guard is a very good idea.

**Firstly** you need somewhere to start. Staring at a blank piece of paper won't help to develop ideas. The book itself is often an excellent place to start. The title or front cover may give you an indication of the direction your design could take. It may suggest a colour or a theme. Scanning through the book might reveal an image or piece of text that sparks off an idea.

**On** other occasions the theme might be much broader; summer reading, travel, gardening, cooking, crime novels etc. These need to be approached in a more systematic way.

**Always** write down your ideas. A spider diagram can be very useful for connecting ideas and coming up with unexpected relationships. Write your main topic in the centre of a piece of paper, then write down *everything* you can think of that is connected with it. This could be objects, buildings, food, art, people. It could be adjectives that describe the "feel" of the theme, happy, bright or playful. Don't be too concerned at this stage about how you are going to make and install the window. Let your mind run wild!

There are several sources for ideas:

- Newspapers and magazines
- Looking at other window displays. (Not just book shops)
- Taking photographs
- Modern art is a great source for ideas and concepts

It is useful to collect images and ideas in a notebook. Keep pictures of things you find exciting or interesting. They don't have to be directly related to a particular display. They are sources that you can use to stimulate ideas.

Look around your shop and consider if there are any materials readily available. It could be brown paper, bubble-wrap, string. Thinking about how to incorporate them into a display can help to develop ideas.

**Actively** "doing" something like looking, writing, drawing, talking to other people will cause ideas to develop and gather momentum.

Low budgets certainly stretch the imagination. It is not the amount of money you spend on a window that attracts customers - having well presented, innovative ideas that show imagination and thought are more likely to bring people in to your shop. Vast sums of money will not create a window without an idea. There are however some practical measures that can help to stretch your money a little further.

**M**ake use of free posters and promotional material that publishers are often keen to supply. Keep hold of pieces of card from publishers, or anywhere else they come from. They are good for mounting posters that are often of a standard size.

**R**ecycle old materials and props. You may not want the image on a board any longer but the board itself might be useful. Fabrics can be cleaned, ironed and reused.

**P**rops can be collected and adapted for different purposes. A wooden frame for example is useful for mounting things on, or in. It can also be used for surrounding a particular area of a display (grouping). It can be painted, changing the colour and mood to suit the design. It is able to form square or diamond shapes.

**M**aking your own props is a way of saving money although it does take up time. Cutting shapes out of card or making up images can be very effective. Artistic ability does help, but it is not essential, tracing paper and photocopiers are great for manipulating drawings and creating interesting effects.

**C**heap props can often be found in charity shops or at car boot sales.

**K**ee an eye on the area where your books are unpacked. You might get large pieces of card or interesting types of packaging. Make it known in the shop that you are interested in any unusual, or interesting items of packaging. People may bring things to you, or at least tell you about them. Old pallets for example can make wonderful gates or just interesting props on which to display books or posters.

**S**cavenge around in skips or rubbish areas. There are often offices clearing out or refurbishing. Some places have more interesting rubbish than others.

**M**ake use of friends, family or other members of shop staff that might be willing to donate or lend items that can be used as props.

**M**aybe you have items of your own, props or photographs.

**Are there other shops in the area that are not as visibly located as your own?** They might appreciate being asked to display some of their products in your window. Make a small notice with their name and telephone number on. I often find a small map of their location also helps.

**You could advertise for props in your window – people may have related products to sell that could attract attention to your books.**

**A way of making some money could be to sell the work of a local artist or craftsperson.** You could take a small commission giving you more money to spend on the next window.

**Make use of facilities at your disposal.** A photocopier can be a very useful tool for capturing, enlarging, and manipulating images and objects. A computer combined with a photocopier is an excellent way of producing text signs at almost no expense.

**The success of a window relies upon the approach of the designer rather than the budget.** Being inventive can mean going slightly “off the wall”. Humour can be an inexpensive and effective approach. There is a certain skill involved in making it work so try testing out your ideas out on a few people to see gauge their reaction.

**Remember that it is often the simple and straightforward ideas that make the most successful displays**

## ABOUT COLOUR

Colour is seen more quickly than any other element of the display, It creates an immediate impact and can attract attention from across the street. Colour can emit its own energy, and is very effective when creating an environment in a display space.

Colours can reinforce a message or concept. It is very important for the branding of a shop, company or product – think of Harrods, Orange the phone company, or Yellow Pages. Flags are also a good example of associative colour identity.

Seasonal associations are very important in displays. Summer is associated with yellows, oranges, bright blues. Autumn is the rich browns of fallen leaves. Spring is green and fresh, whilst frosty whites and blues remind us of winter. Sales are often associated with red.

Colour is also related to style. More “upmarket” shops tend to stick to paler more muted colours. Bargain basement shops tend to use bright colours like yellow or fluorescent greens and pinks, - often cut into little star shapes with the price written on. In the right context this can be appropriate. On a fruit and veg stall for example it creates the right mood and is in keeping with its context and meaning.

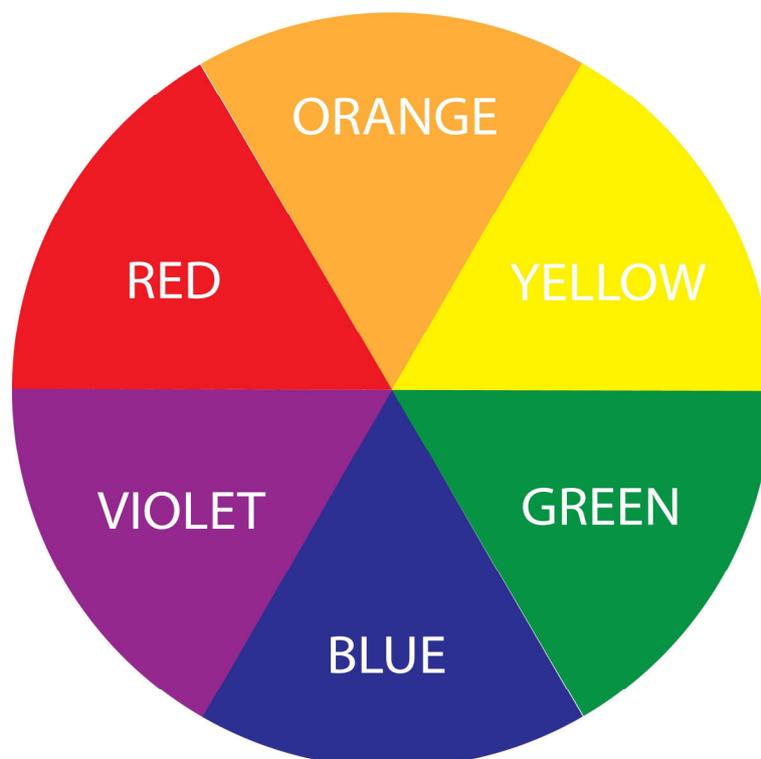
Colours also follow trends – grey was the new black for a while. Following or using fashionable colours can inform people that your shop is up to date. It also feeds into a wider consciousness of colour in magazines – clothes and interior decoration particularly.

## USING COLOUR

Using a single colour (or variations in tone of one colour) creates more impact than using several unrelated colours. Single colours tend to draw the eye, mixed colours tend to confuse it.

Complementary colours are extremely important when you are trying to make a product stand out. Particular colours have complementary “opposites”. When placed next to each other these opposites make the individual colours more intense.

## THE COLOUR WHEEL



From the colour wheel it can be seen that blue and orange work well together, as do red and green, and violet and yellow.

The Primary colours are red blue and yellow. These can be mixed to create the secondary colours of green, orange and violet.

**W**hen choosing a colour scheme for your window a book cover can be a good place to start. Look at the lettering on a book, the colour is often chosen to stand out from the design. In order to make the design stand out you might want to reverse this process and use the colour of the lettering as a background.

It is also important to consider the “value” of colour. This is its inherent lightness or darkness. If we put a light coloured book onto a light coloured surface it will fade into the background. Contrasting colour values will make the book stand out.

Colours have their own psychological language. Warm colours such as yellow, orange, or red can convey a bright, cheerful message. Darker greens, blues and violets tend to be more sombre. It is important that the colour you choose for your design conveys the appropriate mood. This will enhance the overall theme and message you want to get across.

Sometimes the careful choice of coloured paper or material can be enough to create an attractive display.

Highlighting areas with bright colours can lead the eye to certain stock items. It can also be a good way of grouping different areas of stock within a display.

**B**lack can make a good neutral void on which to display books and create interesting designs. It accentuates shapes and can be useful in hiding corners and covering ceilings. However it can be over imposing if there is too much and if not used carefully it can dominate rather than work for a display. Be aware also that black creates a great deal of reflection on the window surface.

**P**attern is also an attractive way of encouraging people to look at a display. Simple chequered squares can break up a space. Wrapping paper and wallpaper are good sources for patterns. You can also create your own by out cutting out shapes from coloured paper, making your own print shapes or developing repeating patterns on a photocopier.

## COLOUR AND MOOD

Colour is a very strong element of the window display. It is often the element that can attract the attention of the viewer immediately.

Using one colour to create impact is often more successful than combining various different colours in the same display.



Here a backdrop of bright green is used to attract the attention of the passers by. Also notice how the complementary red stands out against the green.



Here light greens and pastel colours are being used to give an impression of freshness and vitality in a window aimed at customers in the spring.

Colour can say something about the price of the products that you have on sale. Here the very bright fluorescent colours indicate a bargain and reinforce the message of the display. More muted pastel colours are more often associated with a more sophisticated and expensive look.



# COMPOSITION AND DESIGN

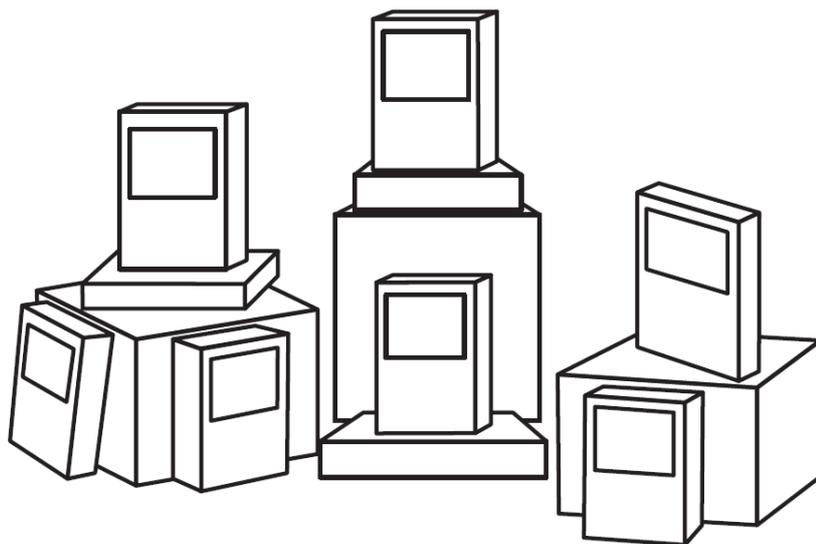
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Composition is used in all forms of art and design. Look around at paintings, pictures, photographs, and other window displays. Try to think if they work or not. Look at how the space is broken up, and how the different elements of the display (product, props, backdrop) have been arranged within the space. This will help you to learn about composition, and also to discover ideas for your own displays.

## The two main types of composition

### 1. ASYMMETRICAL COMPOSITION

This is the most commonly used type of composition. This is because it is very flexible. It forms an attractive and pleasing arrangement that the eye finds comfortable to negotiate. It involves creating a sense of balance with the objects that make up the display. It also conveys an element of excitement and playfulness.



## 1. Asymmetrical composition



Here we can see how an asymmetrical composition can direct the eye of the viewer around the products in the window.

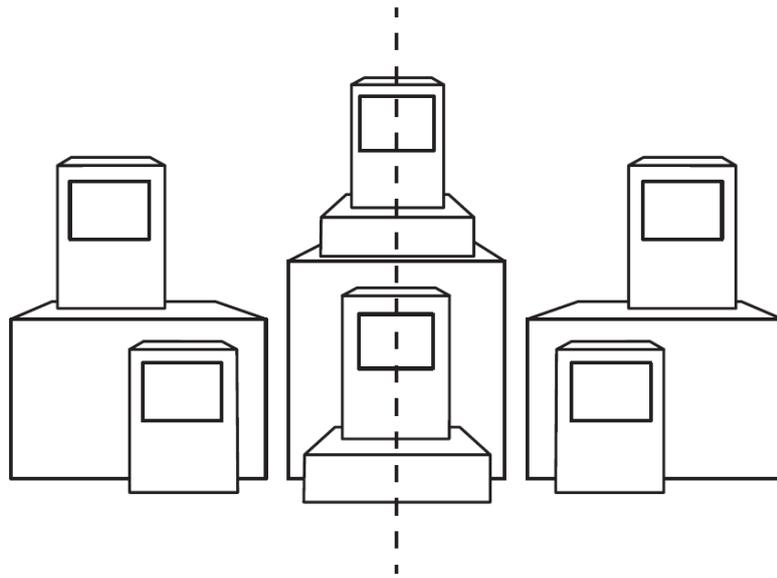
Notice how all the visual lines form triangles which lead the eye into and around the display whilst also maintaining a sense of balance and stability.

The main focal point is the poster at the top. The cushions on the right hand side are stepped inwards to pull the eye back into the display, as are the small group of baskets on the bottom left.

This asymmetrical composition is generally very comfortable for the eye to look at. It is very adaptable, and with some thought about how the eye is led around such a display, it is probably the most useful form of composition.

## 2. SYMMETRICAL COMPOSITION

This is not so commonly used because it is a very rigid and un-adaptable form. It can however be excellent for creating very powerful geometric shapes and structures. It conveys a sense of neatness and order.



## Symmetrical composition

Symmetrical composition can give a sense of order to the window display. In this example the boxes have been carefully arranged to form a symmetrical display.

This layout can say something about the product – that it is reliable and practical. This is not a display that is trying to sell something through elaborate decoration. It is the product and the composition that are doing most of the work.

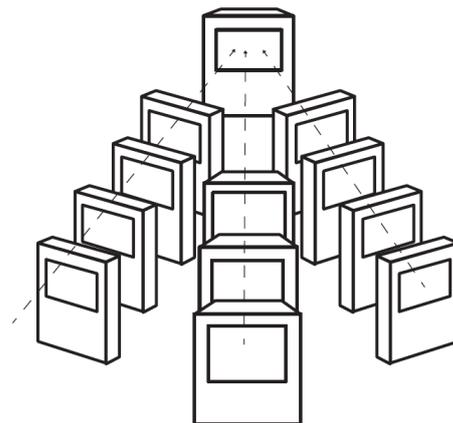
This display can also say something about the type of shop that this window is in. The composition is organised, reliable and straightforward giving an indication of the type of service and attitude that the customer can expect from the staff of the shop.

## Grouping methods

It is important to group like products together in order to maintain a theme and make it easier for the customer to negotiate the display.

### Radiation

This uses a single product (book, prop or information) from which all other products are arranged around it in radiating lines. It is useful for bringing attention to one particular book or piece of information. Think of ribbons or string radiating out from the product you want to feature. The eye is unavoidably drawn towards it.



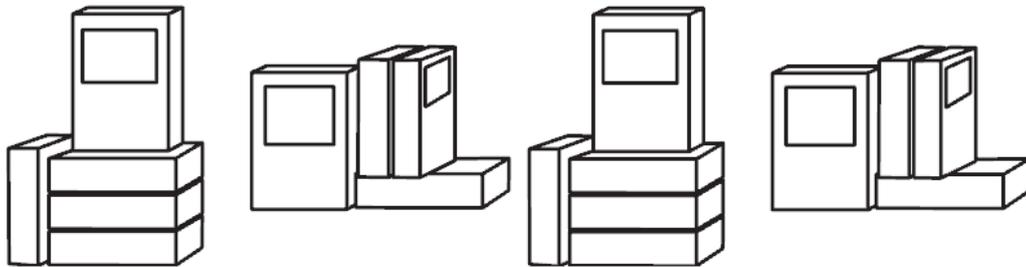
### Repetition

Placing objects in a similar repeating pattern of shape or colour, or a combination of both. This works well with long windows. The idea being that if the customer is not attracted the first time, they may be by the time they have reached the end of the window.



## Alternation

Achieved by placing alternate patterns of books along a window. This could be done by size, colour, pattern or a combination.



## Other considerations

### FOCAL POINTS

This is the most dominant element of the composition. It is what will draw the customer's interest and make them explore further. It is often the main point of the display, the overall message or product that you are trying to get across.

### SECONDARY FOCAL POINTS

These are areas that feed off of the main focal point. It is important that they should not interfere with the main focal point but rather complement it.

### MASS AND SPACE

Both of these elements are useful for isolating products and directing the eye towards them. It is also an important part of achieving a comfortable balance in your design. Just because there is a space does not mean that it should be filled with more products. Overcrowding can often be confusing and off-putting.

### MOVEMENT

Creating movement in a display is almost guaranteed to attract attention; it can be done with flashing lights, or a TV screen, hanging mobiles. Mirrored surfaces also reflect movement from the street.

### LIGHTING

This is very important for highlighting particular areas of a display. It also creates mood and atmosphere. Shadows can be used to create dramatic effects, or filters can enhance the mood and accentuate the colour.

## VISIBILITY

Most windows need to be designed with two types of visibility in mind. People need to be attracted from across the street, as well as from close-up. Text size and focal points are important factors here.

### Focal Points



Here the central painting with the word 'Spain' clearly visible is the main focal point. Secondary information is less prominently displayed in the two smaller posters

Sometimes it might be appropriate to create a dramatic display, something that stops people in their tracks and creates interest in your shop.

Focal points are an essential part of any display. They are the elements that you want the customer to see, and they should be the main message of your display.



## Secondary Focal Points



In this example the main focal point is the stack of red flowers. But three secondary focal points have been created by placing areas of red within the overall triangular format of the composition.

The idea is that the eye of the viewer will be attracted by the main focal point and then be led along the sides of the triangle to the secondary focal points and the products placed there.

Secondary focal points can be used to bring attention to specific areas of the display. But it is important not to let them distract from the main focal point.

## Mass and Space



Mass and space are both useful elements for isolating products and directing the viewer's eye to certain areas of the display.

It is important not to overcrowd the window as this gives the viewer too much work to do in order to sort out what is going on.

In this example there is too much information being directed at the viewer. There are the products themselves and written and visual information all happening in the same space.

It is often tempting to squeeze as much as possible into the window on the basis that if it is on display then it will be seen. However too much overcrowding could put the viewer off completely with the result that nothing in the display is seen.

A good example of mass and space in action is to think of a map. It is the spaces on the map that help us to negotiate what we are looking at and where we are. If this map were all streets it would take us longer to figure this out. Similarly with the window display if it is all product it takes us longer to figure out what is in it.



**Always** support a window display with a highly visible in-store display. This should ideally be as close as possible to the shop entrance. We want the customer to be able to pick up that book they have seen in the window as soon as possible. In order to link the displays you should use an element of the window display in the in-store display. This could be something as simple as a colour in the form of a tablecloth, or maybe a poster.

Freestanding tables need to be designed so that they are appealing from each side. An asymmetric pyramid form is ideal for this. If possible, use the space above the table to hang a prop or a poster, this will help to bring attention to the display. If not then use a raised stand in the centre of the table as the focal point, and place the books around it.

**When** using hanging displays it is important to make sure that you are not blocking lines of sight. You want customers to be able to clearly see what you have on offer throughout the whole shop.

**Do not** put signs or props on the books. The customers need to be able to pick them up and handle them. The display should make this as easy as possible.

**Keep it simple.** Fancy book tower “sculptures” may look impressive, but customers are invariably scared to go near them. An in-store table display, unlike a window display is often a direct selling space, so it needs to be friendly and approachable.

**Utilise other areas.** Stacks of books can work well as temporary selling spaces, especially in areas where people linger, such as the till. Stack the books on a wrapped box or some other type of support to stop them getting damaged.

Choosing a regular day to change the window display will help to establish a routine around which to organise your time. It also allows other staff to appreciate that you will be busy, and take interest in what you are installing next.

There are three main stages to creating a window display;

1. Concept and ideas
2. Design and collecting/making props
3. Installation of display

Time dedicated to these stages will vary, but if the first two are thoroughly dealt with the installation should be reasonably straightforward. Think about how long it might take to install and set time aside to do it. Remember that the existing display will have to be taken out and the window cleaned.

**Set** yourself a time limit on how long you can afford to spend on gathering and developing ideas. Try and keep the design relatively simple and be realistic about what props you can make in the time that is available to you.

It is important to install everything carefully and considerately. Get everything ready beforehand so that you have an organised plan of how you are going to install the display.

**Make** sure the books are ordered in time and that you have enough to go in the window and on the in-store display.

**When** planning your calendar it is important to consider the location of your shop. Is it in a busy office area? Are there many tourists about? Is there a school or a sports ground nearby? This type of information should be considered when planning what window displays you will be installing. It will allow you to direct the display themes towards the customers your shop is most likely to attract.

**It is** also a good idea to be familiar with local events such as exhibitions, festivals, films or theatre. You might consider a combined window with the organisers of those events.

**Work** your way through a diary and make a list of national events and celebrations that you might be able to use as themes. Always make sure the window is relevant to your stock. A Valentines Day window might seem like an exciting window to do, but will it sell books for you?

**Also** consider the time of year and what people are up to. Are they going on holiday, gardening, looking for presents? Think about what is popular on the television, or in newspapers and magazines.

**Try** to plan ahead for the next three to six months; this will give you plenty of time to think about ideas. It is also worth having some “spare” themes just in case a window suddenly becomes inappropriate. This could be caused by late publication dates, or for political reasons, or something totally unforeseen.

**A** window display has a useful lifespan of about 10 – 14 days. It is advisable to change them about every two weeks. This applies to windows that are on a busy street. If the window is in a side street, or is maybe very small, you can get away with leaving it longer. But remember to keep it clean and dust free. Moving or changing the stock will also help to keep the display fresh.

Clean, well-maintained windows are as much a part of creating a good impression on the customer, as the display itself. People get extremely close to the window. Seeing dust, fraying material, torn paper and dead insects does not create the professional image of your shop that you want to project.

It is essential to keep the window surfaces clean – inside and out. The interior space should be clean and neat. You only want to see the things in the window that you have put it there.

**A**lways clean the window out before installing the next display. Access to a vacuum cleaner can be handy. This not only keeps the space tidy, it also clears a mental space in your head that can help you to install the window clearly and systematically. Remember to replace light bulbs where necessary.

**C**heck the windows on a daily basis. Books or props may have fallen down (especially in the summer where the heat can have adverse effects). Members of staff may have taken a book out of the window for a customer, or customers may have helped themselves. Once the window is installed don't just forget it. It will need a bit of maintenance.

## SUPPLIERS

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This list is essentially based around the London area. You may need to do some research in your own locality to find the equipment you need. This list is intended to give you some idea of the sort of suppliers to look for.

### **LONDON GRAPHIC CENTRE**

Mercer Street  
Covent Garden  
London  
Tel: 020 7759 4550  
[www.londongraphics.co.uk](http://www.londongraphics.co.uk)

Good for paint supplies, brushes, coloured paper and card, large rolls of fadeless paper and general art supplies. Branches throughout London.

### **PAPERCHASE**

213 Tottenham Court Road  
London  
W1T 9PS  
Tel: 020 7467 6200

Excellent selection of paper and card. Also Christmas decorations, although all the other shops in your area might go there as well. Branches throughout the country, but might not be as extensively stocked as this one.

### **JOHN LEWIS**

Oxford Street  
London  
W1A 1EX  
Tel: 020 7629 7711  
[www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)

Haberdashery department good for ribbon, feathers, wool, general sewing and craft accessories. Also for fabric dyes. In Oxford Street they have a vast selection of dried and artificial flowers. Branches throughout the country.

**DZD**

145 Tottenham Court Road  
London  
W1T 7NE  
Tel: 020 7388 7488  
Fax: 020 7388 7499  
[www.dzd.co.uk](http://www.dzd.co.uk)

Very useful for all aspects of window display. It has a vast variety of props and materials including garlands, Christmas trees, plastic props, material, fake grass and lots more. Also supplies equipment such as nylon thread and hooks. Has an excellent website.

**LEYLAND SDM**

[www.leylandsdm.co.uk](http://www.leylandsdm.co.uk)

Specialist Decorators Merchants. Anything a professional decorator might need. Excellent selection of household paints. Branches throughout London.

**ROBERT DYAS**

Branches throughout London. Look around your local area for the nearest equivalent.

This is an ironmongers shop. Good for screws, hooks, s-hooks, eye hooks, tools and equipment.

**GREEN MAGIC**

[www.green-magic.co.uk](http://www.green-magic.co.uk)

Supply all sorts of display accessories. Useful for hanging strips. Excellent mail order service

**BRICK LANE**

This east London street is excellent for cheap material. Nearby Petticoat Lane also has shops selling African textiles.

**SOUTHALL**

This west London area has a lively Asian community. There are lots of fabric shops selling interesting materials. Saris can be good value for money. Nearest train station is BR mainline Southall.

**.A WARNE & CO.**

Tel: 020 8543 3045

This company supplies clear film for wrapping books.

**Fishing wire** (also known as monofilament) can obviously be found in fishing shops. It is often found in art and craft shops – it is used to thread beads onto. Also available from DZD (see above for details)

**Velcro** is available as small pads from most high street stationers. DZD and London Graphics supply larger rolls.

It is worth being aware of your local area, especially markets which often the fabric stalls. Garden centres are also useful for such things as trellis fencing, plant pots, netting or gravel.

**N.B.** The preceding list is supplied as an aid to delegates and neither the Booksellers Association nor the course presenter has any association with any of the organisations listed, nor guarantees in any way their supplies.