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# Aisle in Disorder

## Can You Fix This Merchandising?

**T**he rows of gondola shelving spread throughout your salesfloor may not be as flashy as your endcaps or power aisle displays, but they do a lot of work. That's where you put the rank-and-file products that make up your core departments. Customers will be looking there for destination items that can make or break their shopping trip, so it's critical you keep up with your housekeeping. Messy aisles mean it is more difficult for customers to find what they need. They might leave with a bad impression of your business.

Don't let it happen to you. Especially for departments that get a lot of traffic during the busy spring and summer, it's critical that employees know how to fix a merchandising issue when they see one.

You can even use the photo below as a test. Something has gone wrong in this lawn and garden accessories aisle; can you and your employees spot what needs to be fixed? Do you have any suggestions for making the aisle easier to shop? Identify what needs attention, then turn the page for the answers and a review of some best practices of in-aisle merchandising.



## 1 Missing in Action

Shooting the outs (or identifying empty spaces on the shelves) on a weekly basis is the best way to keep ahead of empty peg hooks. A product that is completely out may be a sign you need to adjust your minimum/maximum levels of how much you order. Or it could be a sign of other errors in your inventory records. Regardless, don't let that peg stay empty for long, or customers will start thinking you can't fulfill their needs.

## 2 AWOL

It's difficult for customers to find what they need if products are not in their proper places. It's also difficult to keep accurate inventory records if a product is separated from its bin tag. In this photo, the long-handled sprayer nozzle gets a double demerit for being absent from its hook and also protruding into the aisle, a potential hazard. Long-handled items in particular can easily get messy. Check each aisle regularly for offenders.

## 3 Read the Handbook

There's a way to improve this aisle. Help customers understand the project they're working on. Signage with product information will give customers greater confidence they are purchasing the correct product for their needs and offer tips on how to use it. It will also help them find what they need faster. In addition, informational signage can boost every staff member's product knowledge if they review it during their downtime.

## 4 Step in Line

Clean merchandising means all product packaging is aligned, with boxes in neat, orderly rows. Hanging products should be hung squarely. A product that is out of line may more easily get damaged, too. Consider removing damaged packaging and selling it at a discount or returning it to your supplier. Damaged packaging gives shoppers the impression your inventory is subpar. If packaging is damaged, verify all parts are present and that nothing has been stolen. ➔

