

# GUIDANCE FOR THE DESIGN AND PLACEMENT OF COVID-19 SIGNAGE, FLOOR MARKINGS AND BARRIERS

## Overview

As our economy is slowly reopening and with consumers shopping for groceries or picking up home improvement supplies, managing traffic flow and maintaining physical distancing in your business can be a challenge. Controls such as physical barriers, signage and floor markings have already been implemented and many Ontarians have experienced this new shopping experience.

Despite our best efforts, some retailers have experienced issues with Ontarians walking the wrong way or missing instructions. Poorly placed signs, unfamiliar symbols and complicated instructions may be confusing for Ontarians and result in non-compliance.

Some customers may already be familiar with your store, while others may not know where to find the item(s) they are looking for. So it is important to take these things into consideration in order to affect customer behaviour and be successful in maintaining social/physical distancing.

## 1. Conduct an Assessment

Complete a risk assessment which will help with determining the best location for your signage and barrier planning. It should encompass the various cues in your business such as signage, layout, sounds, surface textures, colours and lighting levels.

Obtain a floor plan. Decide on one or more preferred path(s) of travel to ensure customers are able to access the necessary area(s) of the store minimizing places where they need to cross paths with others. Take into consideration, easy routes if people need to revisit an area of the store they have already been.

Consider posting this floor plan with directions of travel required as customers enter.

Determine whether your temporary signs conflict with the messaging on any existing signs. If necessary, cover up or remove conflicting or confusing signage.

Remove barriers to ensure clear lines of sight and ensure signage indicating directions of travel are visible.

Determine if you are able to alter the layout of your location to direct customers to follow their preferred path(s) of travel minimizing places where they need to cross paths with others.

Ensure intersections are large enough to allow people to wait until it is clear to proceed.

Consider providing customers with a “legend” to orient them to the different symbols you have placed throughout your business and what they mean.

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### 1. Conduct an Assessment

If your business uses carts, consider a policy that everyone uses a cart which creates a barrier while walking.

Space product on shelves with some distance, as people will naturally separate into those pods. It is important to ensure customers can still see beyond the shelves so they can maintain a general awareness of where they are in the space.

Consider relocating high demand items so they are not placed together in order to space customers out and avoid congregating.

Businesses should be reminding customers about their social distancing responsibilities. Consider providing instructions prior to entry into the store and via your paging system. Relying on the customer's awareness and willingness to follow markers without communication may result in non-compliance.

Whether you've posted signs, implemented floor markings or provided verbal instructions, it is important that these communication tools are applied consistently in all of your locations. When customers visit different locations and are faced with the same set of rules and instructions, customers will be more likely to stick and produce compliant behavior. Consider providing a script for your locations to follow to ensure consistent messaging.

### 2. Sign Design Suggestions

Decide on the type of sign such as one that displays information or directions. Mixing the two may cause confusion.

Does the sign or instructions provide clear information on what the customer is supposed to do? Providing clear rules and setting expectations is important for following instructions.

Consider mounting signs at a consistent height, such that all the centre of the sign is between 1500 to 2000 mm from the ground; in combination with floor markings this will provide customers with two places to notice signs and comply with the desired action.

Signs should have a glare-free surface, and need to be placed in well-lit areas (i.e., min 200 lux). Darker areas may mean signs may go unnoticed.

Include appropriate pictograms wherever possible. Best practice is to use universally accepted symbols.

Use high-contrast colours for text and background - black or dark blue on a white or yellow background, or white/yellow text on a black/dark blue background.

Printed material is most readable in black and white. If using coloured text, restrict it to things like titles, headlines or highlighted material.

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### 2. Sign Design Suggestions

For any instructions, keep your text large, preferably between 12 and 18 points, to ensure directional/informational signage print is legible from normal viewing distance(s). Note: Avoid complicated or decorative fonts. Choose standard fonts with easily recognizable upper and lower case characters. Arial and Verdana are good choices.

Provide instructions in multiple languages. Using universally accepted symbols will assist those whose primary language is something other than English or French.

Make sure instructions are clear and to the point. Lengthy text and complicated instructions will lead to non-compliance. Consider numbering instructions if you wish that they be carried out in order.

### 3. Floor Marking Suggestions

Have a consistent floor marking colour system. Use high-contrast colours, such as universal colour coding. For example, red for 'do not enter' or 'stop'. Green for 'enter'. This is dependent on the colour of your existing floor. Note: Use as few colours as possible to minimize confusion.

Floor markings such as arrows and pictograms should be large enough to be noticed and placed in areas where customers have to make decisions (e.g. enter or exit and/or expected path of travel).

Consider 'do not enter' or 'wrong way' aisle signs at or prior to entry into the aisle as well as direction of travel markings within the aisle.

Use symbols such as a red 'hand' or 'two feet' wherever possible in addition to clear instructions such as 'wait here'.

Place pedestrian walkways throughout your location using tape with a minimum tape width of 50mm to direct customers. Walkways should be approximately 812mm in width.

Consider taping walkways with markings staggered 6 feet apart for areas where customers wait for services such as a parts or deli counter.

Provide various options for customers to 'cut off' unwanted areas while minimizing areas where 'head on' traffic would meet. For example, provide symbols on the floor with clear instructions such as "Wait Here" or "Stop". Appropriate pictograms should be used wherever possible.

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### 4. Physical Barriers

Complete a risk assessment to determine potential contact points that are within the 6 foot guidelines and provide barriers.

Consider floor markings and signs so customers are aware of where to stand behind the polycarbonate barrier.

Polycarbonate barriers should be designed and placed so that customers are positioned directly behind the barrier.

The barrier should be tall enough to ensure at minimum it covers 90% of the population. From the floor this measured height is 1850mm. This is to ensure that most people heads will not be above the barrier.

If possible keep items like credit card machines on the side of the barrier closest to the customer.

Where possible the width of the polycarbonate barrier should cover the entire work envelope of the employee. This is to protect the employee in case the customer does not stand in the right spot and/or coughs or sneezes when moving to the designated area.

### 5. Accessibility Considerations

With safeguards in place to protect customers and staff, the signs and barriers may create unintentional accessibility issues. Persons with disabilities should be provided with equality of access to information and communications around COVID-19. Many recommendations listed in this document considers, respects and incorporates the interests and needs of persons with disabilities. Listed below are additional suggestions and resources. For more information on accessibility requirements, you can visit:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-laws>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-workplaces>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessible-ontario>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/accessibility-ontario-information-businesses>

Include detailed information for customers with hearing disabilities.

Use clear language or pictures for customers with intellectual disabilities.

Have large print and good colour contrast for customers with visual impairments.

Include Braille for customers who are blind.

Include information in an accessible format via your company website or social media.

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### References

- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) (2020). Clear Print Guide. Retrieved from <http://www.cnib.ca/sites/default/files/2018-07/CNIB%20Clear%20Print%20Guide.pdf>
- Government of Ontario. (2016). Guidelines for Barrier-Free Design of Ontario Government Facilities. Retrieved from: <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/Standards-and-Guidelines/>

Special thanks to:

- Dr. John L. Lewis, Associate Professor School of Planning, University of Waterloo
- Julia Lewis, CNIB Frontier Accessibility
- The Government of Ontario
- WSPS Ergonomists

For additional [pandemic resources](#) such as job aids, business resources please visit [www.wsps.ca](http://www.wsps.ca).

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