

Fixture delivery is an exciting milestone, but it can also bring a lot of questions. What should be ready before the truck arrives? Where should everything go? How do you make installation go as smoothly as possible?

The good news is that a little preparation goes a long way. With some advance planning, delivery and installation can feel far more manageable than you might expect.

Start with the Layout

Before delivery, make sure you feel comfortable with your floorplan and fixture placement. One of the simplest and most helpful things you can do is tape off your fixture locations on the floor. This helps you visualize the flow of the space, confirm clearances, and make sure everyone involved understands the intended layout.

Think Beyond Delivery Day

As you confirm where your fixtures will go, it can also be helpful to think about how your books will live on the shelves once they arrive.

A good starting point is to plan for approximately one spine-out book per inch of linear shelf space. For example, a 48" shelf will typically hold about 48 spine-out books. From there, consider how many books you want to display face-out. Face-out books are wonderful for visibility and discovery, but they usually take the space of four to five spine-out books. Many bookshops plan for roughly 15–20% face-out display, which gives the shelves a fuller, more engaging feel without overcrowding them.

This kind of planning helps you get a better sense of how your inventory will feel in the space before you begin shelving.

It is also helpful to think about the story you want your shelves and displays to tell. Each shelf does not have to be complicated, but it should have some sense of intention. A small sign, a theme, or a simple connection between books can help customers understand what they are discovering.

For example, a shop might build displays around seasonal themes, community themes, staff favorites, or a familiar character or idea that carries through different sections. That theme can show up in fiction, nonfiction, children's books, hobbies, self-care, or gift areas in small, thoughtful ways.

Thinking this through before delivery can make book selection, shelf planning, and display planning much easier. Your fixtures create the structure, but your books, signs, and themes bring the space to life.

Plan for a Staging Area

Delivered materials need a place to land. Shelves, skids, and other components should be staged somewhere safe and out of the way while installation is in progress. Thinking through this ahead of time helps prevent congestion and confusion on delivery day.

Coordinate Installation in Advance

Most fixtures arrive fully assembled, but they still require field work such as leveling, anchoring, trimming, and shelf placement. If you are using a local installer, be sure they understand the scope of work ahead of time and are prepared for the delivery window.

In older buildings or spaces with uneven floors and walls, shims and trims are often part of the process. This is normal and expected.

Keep Anchoring Simple

There are three main priorities during installation:

1. Level the fixture at the bottom
2. Anchor it securely to the wall
3. Determine whether adjacent fixtures should also be anchored together

Depending on your wall type, blocking may also be helpful. In some cases, it can minimize punctures and make utility planning easier. Check with your local building department to confirm exact requirements for your area.

Think Ahead About Electrical Needs

If any part of your plan involves lighting, powered fixtures, or nearby electrical access, make sure those decisions are made before anchoring begins. It is much easier to plan for cords and access in advance than after installation is complete. Check with your local building department to confirm exact requirements for your area.

Plan Your Shelves Before They Go In

Shelf placement often takes more time than people expect, so it helps to think through section-by-section spacing before installation day. Larger items may need taller openings, while standard shelving may be spaced more tightly.

A simple shelf plan can save time and make it easier for your team to work quickly and consistently.

Prep Inventory Before the Shelves Are Ready

If possible, organize your inventory before final shelving begins. Many customers find it helpful to sort products by section, category, or alphabetical range using temporary worktables. This makes stocking faster and more efficient once installation is complete.

For books, a common planning guide is about one spine-out book per inch of linear shelf space, adjusted for face-out display. Since face-outs take more room, planning for that mix ahead of time helps you better understand how full your shelves will feel.



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Use the Waiting Time Well

While your fixtures are in production or in transit, there is still plenty you can do:

- Prepare signage and merchandising materials
- Train staff
- Set up your POS workflow
- Organize receiving and backstock systems
- Build marketing momentum
- Think through how you want your space to feel for customers

These steps can make opening week much smoother.

You've Got This!

Every opening or reset includes a few unknowns. That is part of the process. The most successful projects are not the ones without surprises, but the ones where the team prepared well, stayed flexible, and kept moving.

With a clear plan for layout, staging, installation, and inventory, you will be in a strong position for a smooth delivery and successful setup. And remember, if questions come up as you prepare for delivery, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to help.



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