Retail Pharmacy Assistant

11333?

Working in a pharmacy •
Retail Pharmacy Assistant

Working in a Pharmacy

11333B
Details of medications described were correct when this unit was first written. When recommending products you are not familiar with check with your pharmacist.

All terms mentioned in this text that are known to be trademarks or service marks have been appropriately capitalised. Use of a term in this text should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark.

Copyright © 2008 by Cengage Education

All rights reserved. No part of the material protected by this copyright may be reproduced or utilised in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Requests for permission to make copies of any part of the work should be mailed to Copyright Permissions, Cengage Education, Lv1/1 Waltham St, Artarmon NSW 2064.

Printed in Australia

Reprinted 2008
## Contents

**PREVIEW**  
- What Customers Don’t Like  
- What Customers Do Like  
- Handling Complaints  
- Analysing the Loss of a Sale  

**PRODUCT GROUPS**  
- Pharmacy Medicines  
- Own-name Lines  
- Chemist and Department-store Lines  
- Open Sellers  

**HOUSEKEEPING IN THE PHARMACY**  
- Using the Cash Register  
- Cash Register Procedures  
- Wrapping the Purchase  
- Unpacking an Order  
- Pricing the Products  
- Using the Telephone  
- Keeping the Pharmacy Clean  
- Checkpoint Questions One  

**DISPLAY IN THE PHARMACY**  
- Elements of Display  
- Positioning Displays  
- Examples of Displays  
- Maintaining Displays  

**CHECKPOINT ANSWERS**  
- Checkpoint One  

**ASSIGNMENT11333/00**
Preview

In an earlier text we emphasised that it is ultimately the customer who pays the pharmacy assistant’s wages. Without customers, the pharmacy, the chemist, and the pharmacy assistant would not be needed. And because the pharmacy assistant deals with 80 per cent of the customers, she is often the determining factor in the success or the failure of the pharmacy.
What Customers Don’t Like

A recent survey showed that when a pharmacy loses customers, in the majority of cases the reason for the customer not returning can be attributed to the pharmacy assistant. The survey gave the following results:

1. Lack of justification of perceived high prices 14 per cent
2. Inefficient store methods 13 per cent
3. Misrepresentation of quality 10 per cent
4. Unwillingness to exchange goods 10 per cent
5. Indifference of salespeople 9 per cent
6. Lack of sufficient product knowledge 8 per cent
7. Haughtiness of salespeople 7 per cent
8. Errors and delays in service 7 per cent
9. High-pressure approach by salespeople 6 per cent
10. Attempted substitution of product 6 per cent

These reasons were given by 90 per cent of respondents, which means that 10 per cent of customers don’t return to a pharmacy for such reasons as moving from the area, etc.

What Customer Do Like

On the brighter side, here are some of the things customers do like, as shown by their response to the survey questions:

1. Honesty and loyalty
2. Keen, prompt, courteous, personalised salesmanship
3. Dependable merchandise
4. Cleanliness, orderliness
5. Efficient, well-informed salespeople
6. Friendly, pleasant service
7. Prices clearly displayed on every product
8. A wide selection of goods in a convenient display
9. Accurate charge records
10. New, attractive windows; rotation or change in displays
11. Cheerful adjustments and exchanges

12. Well-lit shops

Check yourself and your pharmacy to see if improvements are needed. If you keep these points in mind daily, you need have little fear that your customers will go elsewhere.

**Handling Complaints**

The way in which a pharmacy assistant handles a complaint can win or lose a customer for life. The old saying that the customer is always right has caused a great deal of annoyance to pharmacy assistants. They know that the customer is often wrong. It is necessary, however, for the pharmacy assistant to deal with complaints tactfully because they can directly or indirectly open new possibilities for sales.

It is important that the customer finds it easy to make a complaint. The only way of finding out the weaknesses of a product is by handling the complaints of customers who have bought that product. Complaints that are registered can be dealt with. We said earlier when dealing with objections that the hardest objections to overcome are ones you know nothing about. The same applies to complaints. Dissatisfied customers who do not complain to the pharmacy will complain to their friends, and that can do a great deal of damage to the pharmacy’s reputation. If your customer wishes to complain, it is in every way better that she should do so to you, the pharmacy assistant, than to anyone else. It gives you a chance to clear up the matter. An attitude of this kind creates a feeling of security for the customer, as she knows that she can rely on you if she is not satisfied.

Whenever you are handling a customer’s complaint you will find it helpful to remember these points:

1. Listen carefully, sympathetically, and without interruption.

2. Express regret for any inconvenience that the customer might have suffered.

3. Reassure the customer that your pharmacy wants to do what is fair.

4. Agree, where possible, with points not harmful to your pharmacy.

5. Get the real facts behind this complaint. Enquire, investigate, and examine all the facts.

6. Find out where the fault lies, and thus who is really responsible for the problem at hand. But do so discreetly and tactfully.
7. Try to decide on the best action to be taken under the circumstances.

8. Act as promptly as possible. Delays cause more inconvenience to your customer.

9. Follow through to see that your action has had the desired effect.

10. If your customer remains dissatisfied in spite of your efforts, refer the matter to your senior girl or your chemist.

Study carefully the points listed above, for when you are standing behind that counter – whether you are serving a customer or handling a complaint or just talking to a customer on a social basis – you are representing not only the pharmacy but also the man who employs you, the chemist. The reputation of your pharmacy is in your hands every minute that you are standing in that pharmacy wearing your uniform. Whatever you do, whatever you say, and whatever action you take will immediately reflect on the efficiency, ethics, and reputation of your pharmacy.

### Analysing the Loss of a Sale

Throughout the study of creative selling in Pharmacy we admitted that we will not be successful in making a sale every time we present products to our customers. This is an obvious fact of life. To achieve 100 per cent success within any commercial field is very difficult.

When the average pharmacy assistant does lose a sale, she prefers to forget the incident. But it is not only pharmacy assistants who react in this way, any salesperson who loses a sale feels as though he or she has failed. Failures are hard to take under any circumstances, and because no one wants to think about them, they are forgotten very quickly.

It is important to remember that a lack of success in selling a product or, for that matter, in achieving anything that has ever been attempted in any aspect of life, can only be classified as a failure if no lesson is learned from it.

Mistakes in business are allowed, at least, making a mistake once may be allowed in business. You might even get away with making the same mistake twice, but if you tread on somebody’s toes for a third time, you are likely to be in trouble.

Our suggestion is that if you lose a sale, rather than try to forget that unpleasant experience, you should think about it carefully after your customer has left, and try to find out what went wrong. Analyse the loss of every sale by reviewing everything you said and did while you were with the customer, to find out where you failed.
Some pharmacy assistants will never accept the fact that they may have failed when a sale is not made. They may even believe – in order to justify their own weaknesses – that it was the customer’s fault and not theirs. This is a natural way to feel, it is always easier to blame someone else for something that goes wrong than to point the finger at oneself.

To be a successful pharmacy assistant, you must be able to analyse yourself thoroughly and honestly, and you must have the courage to accept the fact when you are the one who has made the mistake somewhere along the line that has lost the sale and maybe even the customer.

Possible Causes

There are three possible causes of the loss of a sale: the customer, yourself, or the product. Here are just a few of the many questions you could ask yourself if you do lose a sale.

The customer
1. Did the customer come to the wrong shop for the type of product she needed?
2. Were there too many distractions stopping her from giving her total attention to what you were saying. For example, an expired parking meter, a crying baby, or even an impatient husband?

Yourself
1. Did you talk too much and thus talk the customer out of the sale?
2. Did you have insufficient product knowledge?
3. Did you ask too few or the wrong questions to find out her real needs?
4. Was your manner or appearance inappropriate?
5. Did you try to oversell by suggesting too many products, or a product too large or too expensive?

The product
1. Was the price too high or too low?
2. Was the range of colours, shapes, sizes, or brands inadequate?
3. Was the product poorly presented? Was it dusty, soiled, or old?
4. Did you not have the exact article the customer asked for?
Questions to Ask Yourself

Now let’s analyse why a pharmacy assistant may lose a sale. There are ten very important questions that you must ask if you do not want to make the same mistake twice in the field of selling. These ten questions should be written in your notebook, so that you can refer to them when necessary.

1. Was I unable to analyse the customer?
2. Did I fail to determine her need?
3. Was my presentation not sufficiently well planned in advance?
4. Did I fail to overcome all objections?
5. Was my product knowledge inadequate?
6. Did I lose interest in the sale?
7. Did I use the wrong technique in trying to close the sale?
8. Do I need more training in some aspect of my work?
9. Was I lacking in enthusiasm?
10. Was my appearance or manner unprofessional?

Previously you learned that the only way to sell creatively – that is, to sell successfully – is to follow a series of steps:

1. Sell to a plan.
2. Know your product.
3. Tell a planned sales story.
4. Understand your customer.
5. Appeal to human desires.
6. Make use of the buying motives.
7. Analyse your customer.
8. Sell by suggestion.
9. Use showmanship in your selling.
10. Overcome objections.
11. Close the sale.

Now relate these steps to the ten questions that you have been given to help you analyse the loss of a sale. If you are not already working in a pharmacy, to study this section to advantage you will have to imagine
working in a pharmacy

yourself employed. When you are at work in a pharmacy, you can review this section and test your own first-hand experiences. Those of you will be able to use your memories of past ‘failures’ to answer the following questions.

Was I unable to analyse the customer?

The loss of a sale is often caused by the incorrect analysis of your customer. You may have treated the person as a Dependent Customer when, really, she was well able to make up her own mind. By not understanding your customer you were not able to communicate with her.

Did I fail to determine her need?

If your answer is ‘Yes’, you did not turn the customer’s general need into a known need. You assumed that you knew what the customer needed, rather than making sure of this. Maybe you failed to ask enough questions to find out exactly what your customer required.

Was my presentation not sufficiently well planned in advance?

You may not have prepared your presentation until the moment the customer faced you. If you gave her an off-the-cuff presentation without much thought beforehand, you might have left out some important information that would have led to the sale if you had mentioned it. Retrace your steps in this case and determine what you did say to the customer about your product.

Did I fail to overcome all objections?

Did you, by any chance, mistake an objection for an excuse? Was your answer to the objection complete? Did you speak aggressively when you delivered your answer? That alone could cause the loss of the sale and maybe even the customer.

Was my product knowledge inadequate?

Were you listing the features of the product, rather than discussing the benefits to your customer? Did you bluff your way through the sales story and invent indications for the product? Did you waffle on instead of giving your customer the facts and nothing but the facts about the product? Product knowledge is the most important tool for the pharmacy assistant. Without it you will be a complete failure in the pharmacy; test your product knowledge to see if it is adequate.
Did I lose interest in the sale?

You can find yourself losing interest in a sale when your customer is a Dependent Customer, of the Undecided kind. She cannot make up her mind about what she wants and because she takes longer than you expect, you lose interest in the transaction. Customers can sense your loss of interest easily from your appearance and behaviour. The tone of your voice may have changed to a monotone, so that you sound bored with the whole thing. Maybe you have even started to lean on the counter. You may have answered your customer without looking at her. If you have lost interest in the sale, how can you expect your customer to maintain her interest? Don’t blame her if that is the case; blame yourself for losing the sale. If loss of interest is the reason for the loss of the sale, you must study yourself: Examine your motives for wanting to work in a pharmacy. Is it just a job to you, or do you want to be a professional pharmacy assistant? One who sells to serve cannot afford to lose interest.

Did I use the wrong technique in trying to close the sale?

There are six techniques you can use to reach the ultimate moment of your presentation, that is, the closing of the sale. Did you use the right technique, or did you give up after you failed with one or two techniques? You must be persistent in this area. If you fail once or even twice, you do not just give up. You must continue to prod until you find the right technique that will make the customer want to buy that product, and gladly pay you money for it. If you have lost a sale because you have used the wrong closing technique(s), reread 11332A, pages 95 to 102.

Do I need more training in some aspect of my work?

Will you ever be able to say, ‘I am fully trained’? I’m afraid not. Training never ends. Training is part of everyone’s job every minute of the day while he or she is at work. Analyse your abilities. Seek out those areas where further training may be required. Do not rely on your strengths to carry you through, but rather try to master those areas in which you are weak. If you do this you will know that you are improving all the time.

Was I lacking in enthusiasm?

Lack of enthusiasm will often cause the loss of a sale, and many customers as well. Enthusiasm is the key to success in anything you attempt. Enthusiasm can be detected in your tone of voice, or in the way you present your product as if it were the first time you had ever spoken about it. You might have sold that same product to 10 or 15 people on the same day but for the sixteenth customer, this was the first time she had
heard your story. Unless you can put your sales story across with the same enthusiasm you had for your very first presentation that day, she will detect how bored you are with the whole thing. Enthusiasm is contagious; make sure that you suffer from this ‘disease’ so that you can contaminate every customer who comes into your pharmacy.

Was my appearance or manner unprofessional?

Were you well groomed? Was your uniform tidy? Was your hair clean and neat? Did you put your make-up on carefully? Did you look the part? You know from what you have read so far that unless your appearance reflects efficiency, capability, and, above all, an understanding of your work, your customers will not have confidence in you or your service. It is vitally important, when customers first walk into your pharmacy, that you, merely by the way you look and act, make your customers feel confident about speaking to you on the most intimate of subjects and about accepting your recommendations of products.

Turn Failure Into Success

When you are working, or if you are doing so already, make each lost sale a learning experience. If you analyse each ‘failure’ and ask yourself some or even all of the above questions, you can profit from your mistakes, so that you will not make the same one twice.

Refer to your notebook list as soon as the customer has left the pharmacy – if there is no other customer waiting, of course. It is easy to forget exactly what happened if you postpone the analysis of a lost sale. Because you will lose many sales during your career as a pharmacy assistant, it is a good idea to put your list of questions on the very first page of your notebook, for easy reference.

Remember that if you are successful in 80 per cent of your sales presentations, you will be as good as the most successful salespeople in the world. This means that even top salespeople have a 20 per cent failure rate, but they analyse their lost sales and never stop learning from their mistakes, and turning failure into success.

Product Groups

As you know, the average pharmacy carries in the vicinity of 20,000 to 25,000 products, and you will be expected to deal with most of them. These products fall into several groups. In most pharmacies the chemist prefers some products to others and he will probably have a priority list
showing which lines he wishes to favour. When you start to work in a pharmacy, you should ask your chemist if he has such a list, so that you’ll know which products he wants you to sell.

Here are some of the product groups that you might be dealing with:
1. Pharmacy medicine
2. Own-name lines
3. Pharmacy and department-store lines
4. Open sellers
5. Pharmacist only medicines – prescriptions

Pharmacy Medicines

As the name suggest, products in this group are only sold by pharmacies. These are the products that you should support all the time because if the customer wants further supplies of that product, she is likely to return to your pharmacy. This is your pharmacy’s security because in these lines lies the pharmacy’s future business.

By law certain products can be sold only through a pharmacy. Because they contain potentially dangerous substances, the Health Department wishes to keep some control over their sale by having a chemist available to advise customers on their correct usage. Trained pharmacy assistants are capable of doing some of this work for the chemist. At no stage should you forget that you are a pharmacy assistant and not a Pharmacist. You must never take over the chemist’s role by giving advice about products or conditions beyond your training.

You will notice that many medicines display ‘S1’, ‘S2’ or ‘S3’ etc. on their labels; this means that they contain substances listed on the Poisons Act. These medicines must carry warning or caution labels such as ‘Keep out of the reach of children,’ or ‘Poison’.

They will specify an antidote and sales may be restricted to persons over the age of 18 years. These products are discussed in depth in the next study text, 11334A, Restricted Medicines and Prescriptions.

Some products, which are not restricted by law, are nevertheless only sold to the public by pharmacies. The companies that manufacture such products have some very good reasons for preferring to sell these products through pharmacies only.
Firstly, in many cases such firms have had a long association with Medicine and Pharmacy, and some of them spend millions of dollars each year on medical research. So even when these firms introduce a product that can be sold by any retail outlet, they often choose to restrict the sales of such products to the field they know best – retail pharmacy.

Secondly, many manufacturers so pride themselves on the quality of their product that they will use all sorts of costly means to build up a quality image. This image that they have taken such pains to create and maintain can be so quickly destroyed by presenting the product to the public in an inappropriate manner. Because pharmacies have such close contact with health services in the community, many manufacturers value the professional way their product is offered to customers, and they depend to a great degree on the chemist’s personal recommendation of their product.

**Own-name Lines**

In many cases the chemist prepares or has manufactured for him certain products that he labels with his own pharmacy’s name, for example, talcum powder, shampoos, vitamins, etc. The idea, of course, is to attract customers to that particular pharmacy for repeat sales of these products. Even though they might be sold by many other pharmacies under a different name, the fact that these products bear his pharmacy’s name leads people to believe that they are only available from that one particular pharmacy. Again this is good business, as people tend to return to that shop for further supplies.

Find out from your pharmacist if he has any own-name lines and be sure to recommend them at every available opportunity.

**Chemist and Department-store Lines**

Quite often these lines are cosmetic and hair-care products that require some skill in selling. For instance, almost all the top-selling cosmetics that you sell in your pharmacy are also available in department stores. In department stores, cosmetic products are sold by sales assistants who do nothing but deal with and sell a certain range of cosmetic lines. Because they are usually qualified cosmeticians they have the training to give specialised service to customers buying these products.

As a pharmacy assistant, you will probably be sent to cosmetics and hair-care schools by your chemist, so that you may acquire the special skills required to sell these products effectively. The manufacturers of hair-
colouring agents, for example, restrict the sale of their products to those stores which employ properly trained staff.

Open Sellers

Open sellers are lines that are available to all sorts of shops – grocery stores, milk bars, cigarette kiosks, in fact, to any retailer that the manufacturer or wholesaler cares to supply. Many of these lines are sold in huge quantities, being commonly used items which are often competitively priced and sometimes heavily advertised as well. They seldom need the professional recommendation that customers expect to find in a pharmacy, and they are sold mainly by display.

You will find that the pharmacy of today uses a great number of open sellers to attract customers. A pharmacy buys these products in large quantities and usually presents them to its customers in ‘Special’ displays, which are normally at the front of the pharmacy. Customers select the items they wish to buy and take them to the cash register. As the prices of these products are competitive with their prices in other shops, they act as bait to attract customers to the pharmacy. Once these products have brought customers to a pharmacy and the customers have been exposed to the professional service available, they will not require bait to bring them back to the pharmacy. They will return willingly, to receive the expert help that a pharmacy assistant is able to give.

You must understand the purpose of stocking open sellers in a pharmacy. The pharmacy stocks them to give you, the pharmacy assistant, the opportunity to convert a passing customer into a habit customer due to the personalised service that you offer.
Housekeeping in the Pharmacy

As a professional pharmacy assistant, you are responsible for a number of important tasks other than those previously mentioned in connection with creative selling. Although these duties may sound very simple and straightforward, their efficient execution is absolutely necessary to the success of your pharmacy. If you learn the correct way to carry out these duties now, you can save your time and energies for more challenging and interesting duties later on.

Using the Cash Register

This is one of the first things you will be taught by senior staff. There is a wide variety of cash registers – some with more features than others. Whilst most cash registers differ in many ways the procedure of how to give correct service to your customers will always be the same. It is usually in the last few minutes that your customer is with you at the cash register that you could undo all the service you have given to that customer by making a simple mistake; i.e. incorrect change.

The handling of money occurs so frequently every day that you must guard against becoming careless. A mistake is not only embarrassing to you, but also to your customer. Your mistake may go even so far as destroying all the goodwill you have created during the transaction, to the point where you may lose a customer forever.

You should never become casual when dealing with your customer’s money or your employer’s money. Mistakes will almost never occur at the cash register if you keep your mind on the job, not allowing yourself to be distracted by what is going on around you. Mistakes should not happen and need not happen if you work to a system when you are handling your customer’s money and your employer’s money at the cash register.

During the taking of money avoid conversation if possible, unless it is relevant to the product purchased or the amount being tendered. The customer may get you so involved in conversation that you cannot even remember whether she has paid for the goods.

While customers do not wish to be rushed or pressured into buying, once they have made their selection of merchandise they do expect quick service. They especially dislike having to wait for their change or their package. Efficient use of your cash register enables you to eliminate such delays. Obviously, the more times you use your cash register, the more efficient you will become. It is imperative, though, not to sacrifice
accuracy for the sake of speed. Speed leads to mistakes and the time it takes to rectify these mistakes will result in delays that customers do not appreciate. It is better to do a thing once, slowly and correctly, than to rush and have to re-do it, hence taking twice as long to complete your task.

When using the cash register, remember the following points:
1. Register first. Wrap after.
2. Accuracy first. Speed later.
3. Concentrate at register. No talking.
4. Only one person at a time at the register.

If you concentrate on carrying out the following procedures correctly, within a few weeks they will come to you automatically.

Cash Register Procedures

Invite your Customer to the Cash Register

You have just closed a sale and you and your customer are both standing in a certain section of your pharmacy. You are holding the product to be purchased in your hand and you want the customer to follow you to the cash register. In most cases the customer does this automatically, but if she seems reluctant to come with you, then it is strongly recommended that you ask her to join you at the cash register.

Sometimes, when you ask your customer to join you at the cash register, she will tell you that she wants to look around the shop, and she will give you, say, $10, expecting you to go to the register, ring up the transaction, and come back with her change and her parcel. This is not a very satisfactory arrangement. The customer may forget how much money she gave you. When you give her the change from her $10, she may question the amount by saying she gave you $20. At this stage a serious problem arises. You will either have to give her an extra $10 – your employer’s money – or you will have to argue with her!

How do you prevent this from happening? If your customer decides that she wants to shop in your pharmacy while you are completing the sale, then we would suggest that you use the notebook in the pocket of your uniform and write out a receipt for the $10 she has given you. This does not mean that you write out an official receipt. All you need to write on a sheet of paper is ‘Amount tendered $10’, and then sign the paper, tear it out of the book, and hand it to your customer with the words, ‘Please
hold onto this, Mrs Jones. I’ll be back with your change as soon as I can, but I would like you to hold onto this piece of paper just in case I make a mistake in the change.’

This way you are virtually saying to the customer, ‘It is not that I don’t trust you; it is that I might make a mistake in the change’. This is the impression you are giving her, and this is the right impression to give her: that she would never be questioned but, rather, that you are questioning your own ability, for – who knows? – you just might be interrupted by a question from your chemist or another customer. By doing this you will eliminate the possibility of arguments about how much money was tendered in the first place.

State the Name and Price of the Product

If the product in question is a bottle of cough mixture, then once the customer is facing you across the counter with the cash register between the two of you, pick up the bottle and say something like ‘This cough mixture costs $10.65’.

State the price of the product and the amount tendered by the customer. The customer will now hand you, say, $20. It is always a sound policy to state the amount handed to you by the customer before ringing it through the cash register. The item purchased in this instance costs $10.65 and the customer has tendered a $20. The correct procedure is to say, ‘$10.65 from $20’. This will prevent the possibility of a disagreement regarding the amount handed to you.

Keep the Amount Tendered in View

The amount tendered remains visible to your customer until such time as the transaction is complete, so that, once again, the amount tendered cannot be disputed. The money is placed on the slab or the change plate of the cash register.

Enter on the Cash Register Keys the Amount to be Charged

The amount to be charged in this example is $10.65. As you enter $10.65 on the cash register, you can say to the customer, ‘$10.65 from $20’. Obviously as soon as the amount has been entered, the drawer will open.
Count the Change Aloud to Yourself

Now that the cash register drawer is open, count out the change to yourself in a loud enough voice for the customer to hear. For example, ‘That was $10.65 from $20. $10.65 plus $9 and 35 cents is $20’.

Give the Customer the Receipt; Count the Change
Into the Customer’s Hand

Place the receipt in the customer’s hand and say to the customer, ‘Here is your receipt for $10.65,’ and then proceed to count the change back into her hand.

Today many pharmacies use electronic cash registers. All these procedures can still be followed with such machines. When your customer gives you the money, the amount tendered is entered on the electronic cash register and this is also shown on the receipt. The customer therefore has a complete record of her transaction: (1) the amount tendered; (2) the price of the product purchased; and (3) the amount of change that is given to her. This makes things a lot simpler for everyone.

The customer has every right to a receipt. Too many pharmacy assistants seem to forget this most important part of the cash register procedures. It is not unusual to see receipts lying on the floor near the cash register. Why is it so vital to give the receipt to the customer? This way the customer can check that you have charged her the right price, and by subtracting the amount on the receipt from the amount tendered she can also check that she has received the correct change.

In most pharmacies, it is standard procedure to give a receipt to every customer with every sale of goods. If the customer lodges a complaint about those goods, or perhaps seeks a refund, unless she has the receipt she is in an awkward position, without proof of her purchase.

Place the Money Tendered in the Cash Register Drawer

Now that the customer has accepted her receipt and her change, you may assume that she is happy with the total money transaction. It is at this stage that you take the $20 off the slab or the change plate and place it in the cash register drawer. Once this has been done, always close the drawer as a matter of habit. Often the cash register drawer is left open, perhaps for convenience during a busy period. This is dangerous, as it might tempt some people to try to steal from the cash register. That drawer contains
money that belongs to your employer and, as we said earlier, you should never become casual in dealing with your customers’ money or your employer’s money.

Wrap the Goods

Please note that only now is the time to wrap the goods. You have taken the money, the receipt and the correct change have been given to the customer, and all that remains to complete the sale is to wrap up the customer’s goods. While doing so, you must take the opportunity of making additional sales.

The way that untrained pharmacy assistants try to do this is to say to their customers something like ‘Will that be all?’ or ‘Is there anything else?’. These questions are not of interest to the customer and so are not likely to draw a positive response.

While waiting for you to wrap the goods, the customer may well be thinking about the next task on her list (‘Oh yes, I still have to pick up John’s suit from the cleaners, and then I have to get back to the car so I can pick up the kids from school in time for their music lessons’). While she is deep in thought about what her next step is going to be, the sound of your voice filters through, asking her a question to which she is totally indifferent. Most likely she will answer as quickly as she possibly can, ‘No, that will be all, thank you’. And you have lost a golden opportunity to make additional sales.

The correct way to handle this situation is to choose your words with great care so that you regain your customer’s attention. The following question has proved to be very successful.

Assistant:
‘Before you leave us, Mrs Jones, is there anything you might have forgotten? It will save you the trip back’.

Please note the word forgotten. When you ask the customer if she has forgotten anything, this immediately makes her think, ‘What have I forgotten?’ You have told her why you asked the question: It was to save her the trip back.

Try asking this question while you are wrapping the customer’s goods. You will find that many customers will react positively to your question. Thus you have the opportunity of making more sales for your pharmacy. Thank the customer for coming.
Your main objective is to ensure that when your customer leaves the pharmacy, she goes away pleased with the whole transaction and with the desire to return. So when you smile and say ‘Thank you’, be sure that your customer knows you mean it.

Remember, when dealing with a customer, that creative service does not end until the moment that customer is outside the pharmacy. You greet customers with a smile when they first come in to the pharmacy, and you thank them with a smile when they leave you, hopefully to return again and again to the pharmacy where they have received such pleasant and efficient service.

Wrapping the Purchase

One of your last tasks before your customer leaves the pharmacy is to wrap the parcel, and good pharmacy assistants take great care with this aspect of their work. It is yet another way to provide good service for the customer.

A pharmacy does not charge for the paper used to wrap parcels, but the paper must still be bought and paper is not a cheap commodity these days. Neither does the pharmacy charge for the time it takes you, the pharmacy assistant, to wrap parcels.

As you can see there is no profit made by wrapping a parcel. You might even finish up with a loss situation if, for example, you use too much paper to wrap a very cheap item. The cost of the paper to the pharmacy could cancel out any profit the pharmacy would have made on the sale of that article. Also, for many products the difference between wholesale prices (cost to the pharmacy) and retail prices (cost to the customer) is very small, and the pharmacy’s profit can be minimal on some items.

Most pharmacy assistants know these facts. Paper is expensive, as is time, and yet one often sees paper scattered on the floor behind the counter and also many a pharmacy assistant taking far too much time to wrap a parcel. The paper you use, and the time you take to wrap that parcel, should be seen as a public relations exercise that you perform free of charge, but gladly.

Today most pharmacies carry paper bags of different sizes for wrapping parcels, ordinary wrapping paper bearing the name of the pharmacy, and gift paper for special occasions.

There are four types of wrapped parcels: ordinary parcels, parcels for mailing, parcels for carrier delivery, and gifts.
Wrapping Ordinary Parcels

Either a paper bag or a sheet of paper can be used, but always of the smallest possible size, otherwise the result will be an untidy-looking parcel, as well as a waste of paper. Select the bag carefully to ensure the item will fit. Some pharmacy assistants seem to think that paper is elastic in nature. I have often seen assistants select a bag for an item that is just a bit too big. Instead of choosing a bag of the right size, the assistant tries to squeeze the item into the smaller bag. The paper bag bursts, and so the assistant loses her temper, screws the bag up, throws it on the floor, and gets another one. Sometimes the second bag is exactly the same size as the first one. If only these assistants would realise the costs they are incurring on their pharmacy. The costs incurred come out of the profits of the pharmacy and if profits do not come up to expectations, the assistant’s job security is jeopardised.

So take care to select the right bag size for the purchase. Once you have put the items into the bag, do not hold the bag by the two sides of the open end and twirl it around like a catherine wheel, or you will finish up with something that looks like it has bunny’s ears. While it is quite common to see this kind of parcel being dispensed by chain stores and greengrocers, it is certainly not the way to wrap parcels in a pharmacy.

Once the items are in the bag, you fold the top of the bag over so that the purchase is snugly covered, and then you stick the flaps down with a very small piece of cellotape. Don’t use tape too lavishly to seal the parcel. There is nothing more annoying than having to tear a paper bag up in order to get to the items inside it.

The same care must be taken when measuring out the amount of paper needed to wrap a parcel. Hold the item up to the paper to give you a general idea of how much you will need. Do not tear off huge sheets of paper to wrap a tiny parcel. You will finish up with an untidy parcel similar to the one mentioned above.

Unless you have already handed the receipt to the customer, do not forget to put it in the parcel. Special receipts and prescription papers should always be handed separately to your customer. If you just put them inside the package they are likely to be accidentally thrown out with the wrappings.

Wrapping Parcels for Mailing

Your local post office can tell you how to wrap items for mailing. It would be a good idea to talk to the postmaster, asking his advice and taking a few
notes. Special care must be taken when wrapping liquids; be sure to pack them in plenty of absorbent material. Cellotape is good enough for sealing parcels. Adhesive packaging tape or string is even better.

Always include the pharmacy’s name, address, and postcode on the parcel. The well-wrapped parcel should be able to be kicked like a football without the contents breaking.

Wrapping Parcels for Courier Delivery

When you are wrapping parcels to be delivered by courier, wrap each individual item loosely in tissue or brown paper to preserve the labels. Don’t forget to fasten invoices or notes to one of the articles so that they can be easily found by the unpacker. Then put the goods in layers of newspaper, etc. Seal the parcel with packaging tape and tie it with string.

The address of the parcel should be a street address, not a post office box number, so that the carrier knows where to deliver the parcel. Write ‘airmail’, ‘goods rail’, ‘road transport’, etc. on the outside of the parcel. Do not use tie-on tags for address labels; they may be accidentally torn or knocked off. Be sure to include the sender’s name and address.

Wrapping Gifts

When you are gift-wrapping a parcel for your customer, you should be especially careful to ensure that the finished parcel looks fresh, neat, and tidy. The following procedure has proved successful when selling a gift and then wrapping it.

Assume, at this stage, that you have successfully sold the right gift at the right price to your customer. You are, at present, in front of your cash register. You have given your customer her receipt, counted the change into her hand, and placed the money in the cash register drawer. The next step is to wrap the parcel in gift paper. To be successful in gift-wrapping, follow this procedure in the correct sequence:

1. First, before you wrap the gift, ask your customer whether she wishes the price label to be removed. Some pharmacy assistants will remove the label without asking the customer. Oddly enough, some customers want the price to stay on the gift. I once asked a customer why she wanted the label left on; she answered: ‘Well, you see, Wal, my sister spent nearly $60 on my birthday gift, and I would like her to realise that I’m spending just as much as she spent’. Are you shocked? I’m sure that you are, but the world is full of strange people. That customer wanted to break even with her sister, rather than buy her a gift to show
love and affection for her. Nevertheless we are not there to judge. If a customer wants the price label left on, we leave it on. Just ask your customer if she would like you to remove the price label and in 99 per cent of cases the answer will be ‘Yes’. When you do remove the label from the article, tell your customer that you have done so, otherwise she could get home and, wondering if you have removed it, have to open your carefully wrapped parcel to find out.

2. Wrap the item in a minimum of paper, cutting it to size with scissors if necessary. Cut and fold the corners of the paper neatly. Use a minimum of tape. You can finish the parcel off with a bow or ribbon, if desired. Some pharmacy assistants are very clever at making flowers out of ribbons or at creating other decorations to embellish the parcel further and to make it look even more like a gift.

3. Put the parcel that you have gift-wrapped in a paper bag or in ordinary brown paper, I know that now you will be wondering why it is necessary to spend even more money by rewrapping the gift-wrapped item in brown paper or putting it in a paper bag. It certainly is an additional expense and it will remain an additional expense unless you explain to your customer why you are rewrapping it. You rewrap the parcel so that by the time the gift is given to the recipient, it will be as fresh and as neat as it was when you wrapped it. Also, your customer does not have to sneak a rewrapped gift into the house; she can walk in quite boldly with it tucked under her arm and not spoil the surprise if the recipient lives in the same house. When you tell your customer your reasons for rewrapping the parcel she will obviously be very pleased with the service you have given her. It is the sort of service that makes your customer remember your pharmacy and the care you took in wrapping her parcel.

Unpacking an Order

You have learned that you should never become casual about dealing with your customer’s money or your employer’s money. When you are unpacking an order you are unpacking the equivalent of a box of your employer’s money.

The amount of money involved is not the amount you would usually handle when concluding a sale at the cash register. The amount of money in this instance could run into thousands of dollars. The average pharmacy carries in the vicinity of $150,000 worth of stock. As a pharmacy assistant you have a hand in ordering stock. When it arrives you have to check the goods to make sure that you have received everything that was ordered. Your chemist will be paying for the goods that were ordered. If
too much stock was ordered, then obviously it will take quite some time before the chemist recovers the initial cost of the goods. If your checking of the order is incorrect, then he will be paying for goods that he has not even received. When unpacking an order you are handling thousands of dollars’ worth of stock and it is on your say-so that your chemist, in many instances, will pay his bills.

Before we examine the steps to be taken to unpack an order correctly, let us familiarise ourselves with some of the terms we will come across while dealing with this subject.

The Invoice

An invoice is a list of the goods supplied in an order, showing the total cost of that order, including GST. The invoice is normally posted by the supplier after the order has been dispatched.

The Statement

A statement is a list of invoices for a period (generally a month) showing the total amount owing for that period, for example, a monthly account. The majority of pharmacies pay their bills on a monthly basis. Otherwise your chemist would be spending the best part of his day writing cheques for various wholesalers and manufacturers. To avoid this time-consuming effort, wholesalers and manufacturers that deal directly with your chemist give him a 30-day credit account. At the end of each month he receives a statement from each of these suppliers and it is from that statement that he will pay the amount he owes.

The Delivery Docket

You will be asked to initial a delivery docket when you receive an order from a courier. All the delivery docket will tell you is the number of cartons that have been delivered to your pharmacy. It does not in any way tell you what is in those cartons.

The Packing Slip

A packing slip always comes with the goods ordered. You will usually find attached to the outside of the carton; sometimes you will find it inside the carton. The packing slip lists the goods that you can expect to find in the carton you have just received. It also lists goods ordered but not included, with the explanation why they were omitted. As mentioned earlier, in some cases the packing slip/invoice are combined and the price tickets for
the products are also included. The price ticket for every product will be recognised by the code number given to that product when ordering.

What do all those abbreviations on the packing slip mean?

When goods are not supplied, but are still shown on the packing slip, an explanation is given in an abbreviated form. You may see any of the following abbreviations on your packing slip.

DISC: Discontinued – this product is no longer manufactured. It probably cannot be obtained anywhere else, so you must find something else to replace it.

TOS: Temporarily out of stock – This product is out of stock, but will be available in the near future. This notation would normally be followed by T/F or R/O.

T/F: To follow – the manufacturer or the wholesaler does not have this item in stock at the moment, but as soon as it arrives in the warehouse it will be sent to you.

R/O: Re-order – this item is out of stock at the moment, and you cannot reply on the supplier to send it to you. Put it down for your next order.

It is important that you are conversant with these abbreviations. They tell you why certain products have not reached you, and if you don’t know what they mean, you are obviously going to be quite lost when dealing with the unpacking of an order.

What is stock and where do we obtain it?

Stock consists of goods for resale. Stock is every product that is found in the pharmacy. We obtain our stock from wholesalers, direct suppliers, and other chemists. Wholesalers are those people who purchase stock from manufacturers and distribute it to retailers. Direct suppliers are companies that manufacture their own products and distribute them to their clients. Other chemists are a source of stock when, for example, your chemist asks you to go to another chemist and purchase or borrow stock until such time as your own stock arrives.

How do we obtain stock?

We obtain stock by ordering it from wholesalers or direct suppliers. Every pharmacy has its own methods of ordering, and you will find that, when you start work in a pharmacy, one of the first things you will be shown is the stock control system and the ordering methods. Stock control is now
being employed in just about every pharmacy. Stock control determines how much stock you need to order.

There is little question that your greatest job satisfaction is experienced when selling stock. However, a sale can only be made if stock is available to sell. Stock replacement (replacing stock that has been sold) plays a very important part in the continued success of your pharmacy. It should be the aim of every pharmacy to turn its stock over (to sell and replace its stock) as many times per year as possible.

The objective when ordering stock is to maintain only enough stock from one order to the next so that at least 90 to 95 per cent of enquiries for products from your customers can be satisfied. In fact, most pharmacies try to maintain sufficient stock to meet at least 98 per cent of enquiries from their customers.

Manufacturers, direct suppliers, wholesalers and distributors will ring your pharmacy two to three times a day at specific times to enquire whether or not you need to place an order. This method of ordering stock is now a thing of the past although it might still be used in some pharmacies.

Phone ordering has been replaced in most pharmacies by computers; some of these computers even carry the function of stock control and ordering procedures. You will be made familiar with the system your pharmacy is connected to by senior staff. A major difference in computer ordering is that products are no longer ordered by name but by a code number. This code number will also appear on the price ticket for that product. The price tickets will come with the goods – packing slip/invoice. The code numbers on the packing slip/invoice have to be matched to the product with the same code number. This makes pricing easy and diminishes the chances of a price ticket ending up on the wrong product.

You will find that a specific stock control and ordering procedure has been developed by your chemist and it is your job to follow this procedure to the best of your ability. Stock is money. When you are ordering stock you are running up expenses for your pharmacy. You are, in fact, spending your chemist’s money. It might be advisable for you to look at stock, not just as goods for resale, but rather as money hanging on the wall. When you see all that ‘money’ in your pharmacy, you will be more inclined to maintain its good condition.
How do we maintain stock?

The aim is to present stock as attractively as possible. You must make it say, ‘Buy me!’ The best way to present your stock in an attractive fashion is to keep it clean, and don’t forget to clean the shelves too, because this is where the stock is kept. It is also important to face stock up; that is, bring stock forward every time you sell an item so that you do not leave gaps on your shelves. The cleaning and the facing of stock has to be performed continually. You start at one end of the pharmacy and by the time you have gone right through to the other end, you should by rights start all over again from the beginning.

The best way to clean stock is with a damp cloth. If you are cleaning glass shelves, the best method is to use methylated spirits. Wooden shelves can be cleaned with water and detergent. Occasionally you may come across a wooden shelf that is very dirty, and for this you will need a stronger cleaner that removes grease, oil, etc.

How often do we receive an order?

This can vary from one pharmacy to the next. Country pharmacies, for obvious reasons, do not receive as many deliveries as city pharmacies. On the whole, you can expect to receive at least five or six deliveries per day in city and suburban pharmacies.

This means that unpacking an order is a regular occurrence on a daily basis in most pharmacies. It is strongly recommended that once an order is delivered to your pharmacy it is unpacked and put away as soon as possible. If this is not done, before you know where you are you could receive more deliveries. Instead of having only one order to unpack, which would have been a small job, you now could have five or six orders to unpack, which will be extremely time consuming. Do not forget that while you are unpacking an order you cannot be in the pharmacy taking care of your customers and making sales.

What paperwork is involved with an order?

There are certain documents that you must become familiar with. Four pieces of paper play an important part in the processing of an order and the amount of money your chemist has to pay for it.

The Steps to be Taken

Assume that you have just been advised that a delivery of stock has been made to your pharmacy and that it is your job to attend to it. This is what
you have to do, step by step, from the moment you are asked to sign the delivery docket until the time you have completed the unpacking of the order.

*Step 1*

Check the number of parcels. Also check that they have your pharmacy’s address on them and thus are indeed your parcels before signing the delivery docket.

The courier who brings the goods into your pharmacy will usually be the same person each time, so it is very likely that you will have a friendly chat when he is in the pharmacy. It is this friendship that may cause a lot of problems. When this courier comes in, because he has got to know you so well, he may present you with the docket and ask you to sign for goods you have not yet checked. If you sign without checking the number of parcels and without making sure they are indeed your parcels, then you could cost your chemist a lot of money and create a lot of work for yourself if it turns out that you have signed for something that has not been delivered or something that is not really yours.

So, despite the friendly relationship that may exist between you and the courier, be sure to check that everything is all right before signing the delivery docket. Read the fine print on a delivery docket; it states that the person who signs the document has actually sighted the parcels, that the listed number is correct, and that they have been delivered to the correct address.

Suppose that you were asked to sign for six parcels and you signed before checking that six parcels were indeed delivered to your pharmacy. The courier left with your signature on the delivery docket, when you went into the storeroom you found that he had delivered only five parcels. As far as paying the bill is concerned, it is no longer important whether you have received five or six parcels because you have initialled the delivery docket that proves you received six boxes. Now your chemist will be charged for the contents of six parcels. For all you know, the missing parcel could contain goods to the value of $1000. Because you failed to check the number of parcels received, with one stroke of your pen you have caused unnecessary expense for your chemist.

If you sign for the right number of parcels but they are not really yours because the carrier has made a mistake in dropping off parcels that belong to another pharmacy, it is going to cost you a lot of time, and time is money. Just imagine how much time will be wasted in trying to retrieve your own parcel from wherever it is and returning the one you received in error.
The situation could even be worse. You might proceed to unpack an order and eventually find, to your dismay, that they are not your goods after all. This will cause an awful mess which will need a great deal of time and work to rectify.

Such situations can be avoided if you pay close attention to Step One.

When a delivery is made, the boxes or parcels should be placed where you want them. Couriers have a tendency to drop parcels in a place most convenient to them. Perhaps that place is at the front of the shop. When this occurs, you will have to carry the parcels, which can be very heavy, into the stockroom. The courier’s job is to deliver the goods to the area where you will be unpacking the order. Make sure they do this for you. If a friendship develops, don’t let it interfere in any way with your work.

**Step 2**

Find the packing slip.

Obviously you must find the packing slip before you can proceed to check the order efficiently. If the slip is on the outside of the parcel, remove it from its envelope and – for ease of handling – attach it to a piece of masonite or strong cardboard. Perhaps you can obtain a clipboard to use for this purpose.

If the slip is not outside, it will be inside the parcel on top of the contents, as it is usually the last item to be included in the box before it is closed. For this reason, it is advisable to open the box right side up. While this instruction may sound overly simple minded, I remind you of this point because of the many times I’ve seen pharmacy assistants open a box from the bottom. Then they have to unpack the entire contents of the box to get to the packing slip. This results in the double handling of each item in the order – a time-consuming and unnecessary effort.

**Step 3**

Group the products.

Now that you’ve found the packing slip, you can start unpacking the order. When emptying a box, make certain that all the products that are exactly the same are placed in the one group on your worktable. By the time you have unpacked all the products in the box, you should have a number of groups of products on your table. As well as grouping like items, they must be sorted into their various sizes and strengths.
Take the example of penicillin tablets, which are packed in three sizes: 100s, 200s, and 500s. They are also available in three strengths: 125 mg, 250 mg, and 500 mg. If this is the product you are unpacking and you had ordered one size in three different strengths, when you have completed unpacking this order, you will have three groups of penicillin tablets. The first group will contain all the bottles with 100 tablets of the 125-mg strength; the second group will contain all the bottles with 100 tablets of the 250-mg strength; the third group will contain all the bottles with 100 tablets of the 500-mg strength.

It is very important to check the size and the strength of your products when you are grouping them, as you might find that a packer has not put all the products that are of the same nature together, especially if there are two parcels in the one order.

Once you have completely emptied a box it is wise to go through all the packing material to ensure that you have left nothing behind. The best way to do this is to repack the box with all the packing materials you have pulled out while getting to your products.

Step 4

Check the packing slip against the products received.

At this stage you have the packing slip and a number of groups of products on your worktable. Now you must check the packing slip against the products, not the products against the packing slip. This means that, rather than picking a group of products at random from the table and trying to find the corresponding item listed on the packing slip, it is best to start with the first item listed on the packing slip and work down through the list in a methodical fashion. This is a lot easier to do and it saves a considerable amount of your time.

As you read the first line on the packing slip, which may be, ‘6 x bottles of Product A, 100 ml’, find the group on the table that contains bottles of Product A, 100 ml. If in that group there are six bottles of Product A, 100 ml, tick the respective line on the packing slip to show that these have been received. Continue to do this with each line on the packing slip. If everything you ordered has been received, there will be a tick against every line on your packing slip.

While checking the packing slip against the products, you might find that some goods, although listed on the packing slip, have not been included in the packages, but have been identified by an abbreviation such as R/0 or DISC. Any product followed by such an abbreviation on your packing
slip should be written down in a notebook. Once you have gone right through the packing slip, you should take the notebook to your chemist or the senior girl to show that certain products have not been received with the order, and to ask what action is to be taken as a result of this.

Step 5

Write up your credits.

After checking the packing slip against your goods, write up your credits. A credit is asked for if:

1. A product is supposed to have been received, but was not.
2. A product has been damaged somehow or other in transit.

By a damaged product we do not necessarily mean one that is broken, bent, or twisted. A damaged product is any product that does not look brand new when it is received. Sometimes the label on a product is not straight; this is a damaged product. In other cases the top of a bottle of liquid may have come loose. A trickle of the contents of that bottle could have smeared the label. Again, this is classified as a damaged product. If a product does not look clean and new, that product is damaged, and you have every right to claim credit from the person who supplied the product.

Every pharmacy is issued with what is called a credit book by the manufacturers or suppliers of products that the pharmacy stocks. The credit book is normally made up of credit notes that are in triplicate. Claiming credit is a matter of filling in a credit note giving such information as the number of products being claimed for credit, the name of the product, the size, the strength, and the reason for asking for credit (that is, either damaged in transit or not delivered but charged for). Once the credit note has been completed, the original is handed to the carrier when he next calls on the pharmacy; any damaged stock is given to him at this time. The second and third copies are retained by the pharmacy as a record of the credit being claimed.

The credit form is delivered at the same time as the invoice/packing slip and is used to claim for damaged or undelivered stock.

Step 6

Price goods required for the shop.

The next stage is to find out how many of the products just received are required for the main shop area. First check the shelves in the shop to see
which products are needed, and then check that these products are not in
the storeroom. Obviously you will draw from the storeroom first and put
that stock on the shelves, before using the latest stock.

One easy way to find out what is required for the shelves is to actually
take the packing slip out into the shop and check from this whether any
of the products listed are needed on the shelves. If some of these products
are required, then the appropriate number of each product can be noted
on the packing slip. Once this has been done, you should return to your
worktable and price the products that you have listed.

Only the goods that are required for the shop are priced, and not the total
order, because of the way prices rise. It would be quite useless pricing
28 bottles of a particular product when only three are needed for the
shop. If you did price all 28 bottles, within a week, or even a few days, the
retail price of that product could change. This means that you would have
25 bottles to be relabelled, which is a complete waste of time.

Step 7

Place goods on the shelves and in the storeroom.

Now that you have priced the goods that are required for the shop, it
is essential that those goods be placed in the shop as soon as possible.
The fact that you have ordered products means one of two things – you
are completely out of them, or you require some back-up stock. If you
are completely out of some products there could be gaping holes on
the shelves. If you wait until you have completed all the procedures of
unpacking an order before you place such stock on the shelves, your
pharmacy could lose sales to customers wanting that product. Although
you have the product in the storeroom, customers do not buy from a
storeroom; they buy from the shelves in the shop.

While replacing stock on your shelves, take care to rotate stock by putting
new items at the back of a shelf and bringing older items forward. If you
do not rotate your stock from the back of the shelf, the older products will
remain there and, obviously, will deteriorate to such an extent that they
will become unsaleable.

Rotation of stock is of vital importance because some products have
what is called a shelf life: after a certain time has elapsed the product is
no longer fit for human consumption or use. You have probably seen on
various food items a notice to use them before a certain date. This notice
is also on many pharmacy products. You would not be very popular with
a customer if you sold her a product that is very close to its expiry date,
and that customer would probably never return if you sold her a product whose expiry date has long since passed.

Once you have replenished the shelves, the balance of the stock you have just finished unpacking and checking should be placed in the storeroom.

**Step 8**

Clean up your worktable and surrounding area.

With all the stock unpacked and put where it belongs – in the shop, in the storeroom, or in a box with a credit note – your next step is to clean up your work area. The empty cartons or boxes and packing material should be cleared away as soon as possible because, before long, another delivery will be made to your pharmacy and you will have to start all over again unpacking yet another order. If another order comes in before you clean up from the previous order, your unpacking of the second order will be less efficient, for you won’t have a neat and tidy work area.

**Step 9**

File the packing slip.

After you have initialled the packing slip to identify who unpacked the order, file it in the appropriate file. Sooner or later the invoice relevant to that packing slip will arrive and the chemist will delegate the task of checking the invoice against the packing slip to one of his staff members. It is not likely that you will be given such a task when you first join a pharmacy as this work is normally carried out by a more experienced employee. This task ensures that the amounts charged to your pharmacy on the invoice match the products shown on the packing slip as having been received. If there is any discrepancy your pharmacy will have to claim a credit for the error or question the matter with the supplier. Once the invoice is checked against the packing slip, the invoice is filed in the appropriate place.

At the end of the month your pharmacy will receive a statement, and then all the invoices for that month have to be checked against the statement. Invoices less credits for that month should be the same amount owing to the supplier as is shown on the statement. If the amounts balance, the chemist will write a cheque to pay his bills for that month.
Pricing the Products

The pricing of products is a very important part of your duties. The position of a price label on a packet can enhance or detract from the product’s appearance. Manufacturers spend thousands of dollars to create packaging that is attractive to the customer, and if the price label on that particular package is placed incorrectly, the manufacturer’s money and effort are being wasted.

Every person who owns a business wants to make a profit. The same can be said of your pharmacy. Your chemist has to make a profit or he will be out of business and you will be out of a job. He has to sell goods at a higher price than he paid for them. The margin – that is, the difference between the buying price and the selling price – must be high enough to meet all the expenses of operating his pharmacy, for example, wages, rent, advertising, electricity, uniforms, etc. as well as to provide a net profit as a reward to the chemist for the thousands of dollars he has invested in his pharmacy. This profit to the chemist can be compared to the dividends paid to a company’s shareholders or to the interest paid on money in a savings account.

If stock is not priced correctly, your pharmacy’s business will suffer. If the selling price is too low, the business will not make the profit it should. If, on the other hand, the selling price is too high, more than likely the customer will go elsewhere to purchase an article at a lower price.

Generally, prices are suggested by the manufacturers, that is, both the price at which your employer buys (the wholesale price) and the price at which it is considered reasonable to sell to the public (the recommended retail price). Under special circumstances, both the wholesale and the retail prices may be varied. With some fast-turnover lines, such as toothpaste and soap, special wholesale prices are sometimes available, so that the line can be sold at a price lower than usual. Such lines are normally put in baskets marked ‘Special’ and displayed right at the front of the pharmacy.

Many firms publish price-lists and you will soon become familiar with those provided, for example, by the various cosmetic companies. Other firms will expect the retailer to work out the price for himself, or they might produce a list of suggested retail prices.

While the setting of a retail price will not be one of your duties when you first start to work in a retail pharmacy, you may be called upon to put price labels on products from your very first day as a pharmacy assistant. Every pharmacy has its own pricing procedure and you must familiarise yourself completely with the procedure used by your pharmacy.
There are many ways in which price labels are attached to products. Some pharmacies use self-adhesive labels with the price written on by hand; others use a pricing gun that produces a printed label.

As mentioned previously, price tickets will also be forwarded with the products. These price tickets are computer generated, thus ensuring correct pricing and time saving.

The way in which you attach price labels to products is very important. Common sense must obviously prevail in these cases. Some products may belong on shelves that are higher than the average person’s eye level. The price labels on these products must be placed so that they are still visible to the customer. If the price is not displayed clearly, some customers can be reluctant to show interest in the product in case it is too expensive, which could be embarrassing for them. Before you price a product, see where it will be positioned in the pharmacy, and then decide on the best spot on the packet to affix the label so that the product will look attractive and its price will be completely visible to your customers. It is also advisable to affix price labels in the same position on the same products. This way you will maintain the uniform appearance of the packages once they have all been priced and placed on the shelves.

There are certain rules to which you must adhere when pricing products. You must not obliterate any part of the dosage instructions. Nor should you place a price label over the caution statement. The part marked ‘S3,’ or ‘S4,’ etc. must also be kept clear of any price labels. It is obvious that a label should not cover any part of the name of the product. Be sure that the price can be read easily. Customers become particularly annoyed when they see tiny or carelessly written price labels.

Cosmetic packs and French perfumes should not be defaced by the price label. Marking an attractively packaged, expensive product seems to cheapen it. Some gift lines could fall into the same category. The labels for such products are always placed on the bottom of the packet or bottle, where they cannot be seen. It is up to you, the pharmacy assistant, to use common sense about such matters. A simple rule to follow is, if the price ticket seems to detract from the article’s value in your eyes, then very probably it will give your customers the same impression.

Using the Telephone

A simple telephone conversation with a customer may be responsible for forming a lasting impression of you in your customer’s mind.
By now you know how important it is for a pharmacy assistant to be well groomed. A good appearance inspires confidence, and if the customer has confidence in you, the pharmacy assistant, she will be more favourably influenced by what you say to her.

When you are speaking on the telephone, your voice is the only tool you have to inspire your customer’s confidence in you. She cannot see you at that moment, and so the impression you give is through your voice alone. If you don’t hold the phone correctly and, as a result, your speech is unintelligible, your customer certainly will not be impressed and could conclude that you are careless and inefficient.

One way of creating a good impression is to develop a voice with a smile. The cheerfulness and brightness of your personality must be carried along a strand of wire to your customer. Whenever you answer the telephone, pretend you are going to talk to your best friend. The person calling could be your best friend or your worst customer, but the important thing is to answer the phone in a friendly warm tone, no matter who is at the other end of the line.

People ring a pharmacy for two reasons: for business reasons or personal reasons. When you answer the telephone in your pharmacy, you answer it as a receptionist or a secretary. You play the role of a receptionist for your pharmacy and the role of a secretary for your chemist.

How To Answer The Telephone

If someone rings you at home you normally answer the phone by saying ‘Hello!’ or giving your phone number. In business, people answer the phone by quoting the name of the company and waiting for a comment or question from the caller. For example, if you work for the Pentonville Pharmacy and the phone rings, you are likely to answer it with the words ‘Pentonville Pharmacy. Can I help you?’ But that is not the correct method of answering your telephone. After all, who wants to speak to a pharmacy? The caller wants to talk to a person, preferably someone whom she already knows in that pharmacy. If you answer the phone that way, what has happened to the personalised service you are committed to giving your customers?

When the phone rings you should answer it with three statements.
1. The time of day – ‘Good morning’ or ‘Good afternoon’
2. The name of the pharmacy – ‘Pentonville Pharmacy’
3. Your name – ‘Judy speaking’.
These three points are all that is needed to open two-way communications. In this way you are offering your personalised service over the telephone to the customer. When you give your name, your customer, who may come regularly to your pharmacy, will remember you. She will be able to visualise you, the efficient, well-groomed, friendly pharmacy assistant. She will feel comfortable talking to someone she is on friendly terms with.

The customer’s immediate response, especially if she knows you well and has been often served by you personally in the pharmacy, is likely to be, ‘Oh, hello, Judy. How are you? This is Mrs Jones’.

As soon as the customer gives you her name, you should write it down in your notebook, which you keep close at hand. The efficient pharmacy assistant will also note on the page the time the call was taken before she writes down the name of the customer. The time of the call might be relevant to the discussion that you will have with your customer.

Suppose that your customer, after introducing herself to you, asks to speak to the chemist. At this stage it is important to find out her reason for calling ‘Is it a business call, Mrs Jones, or do you want to speak to the chemist personally?’

The business call

Business calls are made by customers who want to ask a question or who need to have products delivered to them because they are unable to come to the pharmacy in person.

If a customer wishes to place an order with you by telephone, and you have already written her name on a page of your notebook, your next step is to get her full address. Then list the products she requires. The best way to obtain this list without scribbling hurriedly to keep up with her words is to repeat every item she names, at the same speed as you are able to write it down in your notebook. She may say, ‘One small bottle of Panadol’. While you write, you repeat, ‘One small bottle of Panadol’. Obviously, while you are repeating what she says she is not going to talk.

On completion of this list you should read it all back to her, so that there will be no misunderstandings about what she requires. Once she confirms that the list is complete and correct, you must commit yourself and your pharmacy to a time of delivery. You must also make sure that your customer will be home at that time to receive the goods. If not, you should make alternative delivery arrangements with her. It could be that the goods can be delivered to a neighbour or the laundry door can be left open, etc.
The personal call

If a customer asks to speak to the pharmacist, you must be polite and tactful, of course, but it may be inconvenient for the chemist to speak to her immediately. You can say, ‘Excuse me a moment, Mrs Jones, I’ll see if he’s free to talk to you right now’. If he can speak to her at once, he will come to the phone and your part will be over. If he cannot, you must relay his message – that he will telephone her later, or that she should phone back some other time. It would be a good idea to take her phone number, unless you know you have it recorded elsewhere.

Suppose the pharmacist has said he would telephone the customer a little later on. ‘A little later on’ might never arrive if it’s left up to him. He tends to get very involved in his work and may forget his promise. It is your responsibility to remind him that he has to return Mrs Jones’ phone call.

Now you can see why it is important to note the time that your customer’s call came in. If she phoned at 11:30 a.m., for instance, and the pharmacist said he would ring her a little later on, and by 1 p.m. you notice that he has not yet phoned her, you should tactfully jog his memory. Your chemist will be grateful to you for reminding him about the call he promised to make.

As his ‘secretary,’ you must protect him from people who could waste his time unnecessarily, and you must give him urgent messages as quickly as possible so he can attend to them. As his ‘receptionist,’ you can take some of the load off his shoulders by handling as many enquiries as possible without his assistance. This will save him valuable time that can be spent in dispensing prescriptions and managing his business.

Telephone manners

The following points will improve your telephone manners:

1. Remember that you are the customer’s first contact with the pharmacy. The caller may be a valuable customer, a prospective customer, or a personal friend of the chemist, but whatever the circumstances are, it is important that the caller forms a favourable impression of the pharmacy’s business methods.

2. Cultivate a friendly voice. If you have a pleasing voice and are courteous, tactful, and helpful to your customers, you are an asset. If you are curt and indifferent, you will irritate people and possibly lose business.

3. Speak correctly into the telephone. The telephone is designed in such a way that the best results are obtained by speaking clearly and naturally into the transmitter with the lips not more than two to three
centimetres from the mouthpiece. Avoid whispering, shouting, or mumbling. Do not raise the pitch of your voice to an unnatural level. Let your tone indicate an attitude of interest and helpfulness. Stand up straight when you are speaking. Do not lean on the counter or bench as this alters the tone of your voice.

4. Do not transfer calls. Handle the call yourself, if you can, rather than transferring it to someone else. It is a nuisance for the caller to have to repeat the same story two or three times. On the other hand, if you do not know the answer, turn the matter over to someone who does immediately, rather than discussing the matter at length and eventually saying that you will still have to let someone else help the caller.

5. Do not keep the caller waiting. When obtaining information, do not allow the caller to hold the line indefinitely. Advise him of the progress being made. Otherwise ask for his name and phone number, so that you can call him back when you have the information he wants.

6. Take careful notes. Make a note of all telephone conversations, being particularly careful if you are taking a message for another person. This is another reason to keep a pen and notebook handy. Listen attentively so that repetition will not be necessary.

7. End the call courteously. The closing of a telephone conversation is almost as important as its beginning. An unnecessarily abrupt ending may leave a bad impression. As a rule, the person who originates a call should terminate it, but this, of course, depends upon the circumstances. At the conclusion of the call you should say, ‘Thank you for calling’. Replace the receiver quietly, otherwise the other party may hear an unpleasantly loud noise.

Keeping the Pharmacy Clean

The pharmacy must be kept spick and span to create an image and an atmosphere that will attract customers. So far, we have emphasised the importance of the pharmacy assistant, and how essential it is for her to look the part with carefully applied make-up, clean and tidy hair, a spotless uniform, etc. What if the pharmacy assistant lives up to these standards but the shop looks untidy? Obviously the good impression she gives would not be enough. Good housekeeping is essential to attract customers to the pharmacy.

You can determine whether your pharmacy has an attractive appearance by looking at it as other people see it. Because you are in the pharmacy day in and day out and are accustomed to the way it looks, you may not
notice the gradual changes that occur. You must look at your pharmacy unemotionally and objectively. When you see something which could be improved, talk to your chemist and the senior girl, to see if they agree with your ideas.

Most pharmacies have the usual cleaning equipment: broom, duster, vacuum cleaner, detergents, etc. Let’s discuss how you should use this equipment in your pharmacy.

Floors

When you are vacuuming, make sure that you pick everything up off the floor and tidy the stands as you move around them. At the same time, make a note of stock that is low on the shelves and, after you have finished vacuuming, replenish this stock so that all gaps are filled. Finally, make sure that everything in your pharmacy is presented in a neat and orderly fashion.

Windows

If your pharmacy has windows, they will probably contain displays. At least once a day someone working in the pharmacy should go outside the shop and look in through the windows to view the displays as customers do.

When looking through your windows, check:

1. The presentation of the window. Is your display a good one? Is it cluttered with too much stock? Does anything need rearranging? Is everything still in place? Has any stock fallen over, or has a card tilted? Has any item in the display faded? Are there any out-of-date signs? Do banners hide your main display? Make sure the display looks as good as it did when it was first arranged.

2. The area around the shop front. Make sure the area outside your shop is clean. The glass in the window should be spotless, and the footpath outside should have been swept.

The Tearoom

The tearoom is probably out of your customers’ sight, but it is still a part of the pharmacy and good housekeeping is essential even in this area. Cleaning the tearoom and even the toilets is normally done on a roster basis, but if you have sole responsibility for the tearoom, make sure that you wash up all the cups after every break and, from time to time, clean out the refrigerator, as you would do in your own home.
Ceilings

Strange as it may seem, the cleaning of ceilings is often a problem in both retail shops and homes. A lot of people seem to be able to maintain spotless floors in a house, but you have only to look up at the ceilings and the light fittings to find cobwebs by the dozen. Of course, your pharmacy should be kept clean from floor to ceiling. Once a month, at least, it is advisable to check the ceilings, light fittings, and pelmets around your pharmacy to make sure that they are dust- and cobweb-free. Every so often you spring-clean your home. Do the same to your pharmacy. When you spring-clean your pharmacy, use a vacuum cleaner along the top of the fixtures.

Fixtures

If polished wood fixtures have started to look dull, you should advise your chemist about this so that he can have them repolished. If they are painted fixtures, then a good washing with soapy water will make them look as good as new.

How to Dust Properly

Dusting is the most important of your housekeeping chores. Just as you dust the furniture and tidy up at home, you must also dust and tidy up your shelves, your gondolas (that is, free-standing display units), and your stock. When dusting, these are the things to remember:

1. Dust ‘with your eyes open’ so you can learn more about your products.
2. While dusting, straighten all the stock.
3. Use your notebook while you are dusting and make notes about the replacement stock that is required.
4. Don’t forget to rotate your stock: Put new stock to the back and bring old stock to the front.
5. Every so often, check the prices to make sure they are all the same for each line on the shelves. If there has been a price change and as a result there are two different prices on the stock of one line, this situation will not only cause confusion but it could also bring about demands by your customers that you cannot meet.
6. If you have to move stock for any reason, be sure that you put it back the way you found it in the first place.
7. Arrange the products on your shelves according to a system. Does your chemist want the products arranged in a certain sequence or does he want them in alphabetical order? Whatever the system, make sure that you know what it is and adhere to it as you are dusting the shelves and your stock.

When you feel that you have learned the material to this stage, go on to the questions in Checkpoint 1 on the page.

Please attempt to answer these in the first instance without referring back to your study materials so that you effectively test yourself.
Checkpoint Questions One

- Please write your answers in the spaces provided.
- Check your answers at the end of this study unit.
- If you have any wrong, go back and review the relevant sections in this chapter.

1) When can a lack of success in selling a product be classified as a failure?

2) What are the three possible causes of a loss of sale?
   A ____________________________________________
   B ____________________________________________
   C ____________________________________________

3) What are open-sellers?

4) Where do we obtain stock?

5) Name the four documents involved with an order.
   A ____________________________________________
   B ____________________________________________
   C ____________________________________________
   D ____________________________________________
   E ____________________________________________

6) Where should the price labels for cosmetic packs and perfumes be placed?
Display in the Pharmacy

What is meant by the word ‘display’? To display means to put on show. The purpose of a pharmacy display is to attract customers’ attention. But display is not merely a matter of putting stock into neat rows on shelves. With some stock this is the only thing one can do, but in the majority of cases, display needs thought.

Let us consider the function of display. To do this, we must look at display in relation to merchandising and one of its components, advertising.

Advertising brings the goods to the people through newspapers, radio, television, magazines, etc. By describing goods publicly, advertising aims to increase sales. Advertising does sell products. Research has shown that during an advertising campaign, any product’s sales will increase – some dramatically, some not so dramatically – to a degree that makes advertising a worthwhile tool of selling. Once advertising has stopped, sales slow down. The producers of the advertisement, and the suppliers of the product, hope that when advertising stops, the sales level will still be higher than before the advertising campaign began.

Advertising alone is successful but advertising coupled with merchandising is even more successful whilst:
- Advertising takes the goods to the people
- Merchandising bring the people to the goods.

Display is often used as the next step in the merchandising process, once customers have been brought into the pharmacy by advertising. A display acts as a reminder to people who have been influenced by advertising. It is hard to remember every advertisement that you have seen in a newspaper or on television. Test yourself: Pick up the morning paper and read every advertisement in that newspaper; then put the paper down and see how many advertisements you can remember. You’ll be amazed at the poor result. On the other hand, if you have read all the advertisements in the newspaper and you then go for a walk in a shopping centre, it is almost certain that an attractive display of one of these advertised products will remind you of the advertisement you read this morning.

Display and advertising work hand in hand, and a pharmacy assistant should co-ordinate her displays with the products that are being advertised at that time. To do this, she must make sure that she knows what products are being advertised. If manufacturers are going to spend money advertising their products, it is up to you, the pharmacy assistant, to take advantage of this by creating displays of these products in your pharmacy.
Elements of Display

Eye Level

A term quite often used when discussing display is eye level – that area of display which the customer sees without having to move his eyes downwards or upwards. Eye level is said to be about 1625 mm above the ground, a height that is comfortable for the average adult.

It used to be the convention to display products horizontally, that is, all in a row at the same height. Today the trend is towards vertical displays. Walk into any department store or chain store and you will see products in stacks which start on the floor and rise in the shape of pyramids or blocks.

It is important to remember that if you are displaying products that will particularly appeal to children, the stack should not be any higher than about a metre, as the display should be able to be seen by children rather than just by adults.

Children can quickly wreck a display, so you should make sure that low displays are made up of unbreakable merchandise. Children’s toys, etc. (if unbreakable) are better displayed so that children can see them and call Mum over to have a look. We hope, of course, that Mum will oblige, as it is the person who holds the purse-strings who makes the decision to buy a product.

Stock

Sometimes products come in packets. Take a few out of their packets: People want to see the products as well. If you are short of stock, you can solve this problem by taking all the items out of their packets to give the impression of twice the volume of display material.

Strong sunlight streaming into windows can cause display stock to fade. This can be a problem, especially with film, perfumes, medicines, and gift packs, as both light and heat will render such stock unsaleable. Try to use dummies (empty packets) or showcards, and partially close blinds so that the display is protected from the sunlight while still being visible to passers-by.
Lighting inside the pharmacy can also fade stock. Keep an eye out for such fading and bring it to the notice of the manufacturers; they will often replace damaged stock with new stock. If they will not give you new stock, they will usually let you have new packets to replace the old.

**Accessories**

A variety of accessories can be used to enhance a display: tulle, crêpe paper, glass shelving and stands, covered boxes, tree branches, polystyrene foam blocks, showcards, etc. All these can help to make a display more attractive. But they should be used in moderation. If these items are used in too much abundance, they will overwhelm the display rather than enhance the products which you want to sell. Too much emphasis on the accessories may result in your customers asking you, ‘How much does that crêpe paper cost?’ or ‘What kind of branches are used in your window display?’

You can build up a supply of accessories to be used whenever necessary. Local shops will sometimes lend accessories such as bath towels, footballs, and sunshades, etc., but if you do borrow such accessories from local shops, remember to acknowledge them by including a card in your display saying, for example, ‘Scarves by courtesy of [shop name]’.

A small tack hammer and a supply of window dressers’ pins are essential. These pins are heavier and stronger than ordinary pins and can be hammered into displays. Most wholesale paper supply houses carry such stock.

**Price Tickets**

All pharmacy displays must have price tickets that can be seen clearly. Without these a display is not complete. Don’t forget that price tickets for the products in a display are part of the exhibit and, as such, should look attractive.

If you have to make price tickets and you want to cut up cardboard, always use a blade or knife and a ruler. Scissors produce crooked lines and spoil the look of the ticket. The quality of the price ticket is normally associated with the quality of the product. You cannot expect to sell a product for $50 if the price ticket looks like 5 cents’ worth.

Felt-tipped pens give a reasonable result when writing out a ticket, but it is better to use a lettering pen that has nibs of different widths. Best of all is a flat ticket-writing brush, but you do require a certain amount of skill and
practice to use one of these effectively.
If your lettering is not good, you could buy a small booklet on ticket-writing and copy some of the styles shown. Lettering accessories that will assist you can be obtained from most newsagencies.

Colour

Always think of the colour of the stock you want to display, then decide whether you want a contrasting background or one that will blend in with a similar toning. Colour co-ordinate your display to make it as effective as possible, for a successful display must obviously attract an audience. If it is not appealing, people will not look at it and all your efforts will have been a waste of time, money, and materials.

Positioning Displays

There are four areas in a pharmacy where stock can be displayed. These are the floor, windows, counters, and shelves.

The Floor

Floor displays can use gondolas, dump bins and baskets. Displays on gondolas, or floor units, consist normally of such things as gifts or specialised stock, for example, hair-care products, veterinary products, vitamins, first-aid supplies, etc.

The secret of selling from baskets and bins is to always keep them full to the brim with stock. As the stock runs out, it may be necessary to put a box or bunched paper at the bottom of the container to lift up the level of your stock. A half-empty bin or basket certainly does not sell products.

Stock should not be thrown into the container but should be placed in a seemingly random fashion, one at a time. The labels on the packets or bottles should more or less be facing the customer but not in a neatly arranged manner. The stock should look as if it has really been dumped in; hence the term ‘dump bin’. Make absolutely certain, if you are displaying bottles of liquids in this way, that all the tops are tightly screwed on and that no bottle is leaking; otherwise you will have an awful mess to clean up.

Traditionally customers expect stock in baskets and dump bins to be offered at a very low price – that is, to be bargains. The casual appearance of baskets and dump bins suggests that the stock is indeed ‘on special’ and that the price is the lowest the customer would pay anywhere.
Windows

Should a window display be large or small? The only way to answer this question is by applying common sense. The size of a window display must obviously be in proportion to the size of the window.

The size of the display is really not the important factor. As long as the display attracts attention to the products that are on show, then that display is successful.

Window displays are normally more interesting if they have a theme. The stock that is displayed can be made up of many different types of products (mass display) or the same type of product (selective display).

Generally speaking, displays inside the pharmacy should not be too neat and methodical-looking; otherwise customers may feel reluctant to pick up and examine products from the display.

Window displays, however, should be orderly and uncluttered. The window should not be filled from one end to the other and from the floor to the ceiling with a great number of products. The more products that are displayed in the window, the less chance the customer has to see that product she may be interested in. Remember that most people will just glance at a display as they walk past the window. If there are too many products, the customer will tend to see a jumble of items rather than individual products.

Counters

The tops of glass counters are used far too often for display. Some pharmacy assistants seem to think that counters are just big, wide shelves to be used indiscriminately for any kind of display. This makes a counter look cluttered, and often there is not enough clear space for a customer to rest her handbag and parcels while she is standing there.

Small displays on a counter should relate to the products behind them on the shelves. They should also relate to the stock in the department where the counter is situated.

One counter area is the most important in the pharmacy: the counter with the cash register. Obviously, everyone who buys something in the pharmacy will eventually have to go to the cash register. Thus this area is the best place to display a product.
It is an area, unfortunately, that is not used in a logical manner. Cast your mind back to the pharmacy you work in or deal with; try to remember what products are displayed around the cash register of that pharmacy. I think you will recall such things as chewing gum, lollies, combs, and razor blades.

But just think for a minute. Are these products worthy of the most important area of display in a pharmacy? Are they the kinds of products that you want to call to your customer's attention because they will bring her back to your pharmacy? The answer to these questions is obviously ‘No!’ This is not to say that these products should not be in a pharmacy, only that they should not be given the main display area in a pharmacy.

The area around the cash register should be devoted to those products that are typical Pharmacy lines. These displays should contain products that cry out to the customer standing at the cash register, ‘You need me, so buy me now’.

A few examples will clarify the nature of the products that are suitable for displaying in this way.

**Example 1**

The day is very hot and humid, the sort of weather that makes the average person feel awfully tired. Your customer's energy has been sapped. She walks into the pharmacy, obtains the items she needs, and then goes to the cash register to pay for them. Next to the cash register there is a display of a product that cries out, ‘Feeling tired? Replace all that energy you have lost with …’!

Is this likely to affect your customer? It surely will! At that moment she feels that she needs to replace all the energy she has lost due to the heat and humidity and the running around she has had to do all morning. When she sees a product that is going to replace that energy, she will buy it immediately.

**Example 2**

During the same day there was a complete change of weather. A southerly hit the city at midday, temperatures dropped dramatically, and now it is pouring with rain. Is it relevant now to display a product that replaces energy? Of course it isn’t. What products do you think could replace the one displayed earlier when the temperature was so high? What about vitamin C? This vitamin will help to minimise the possibility of catching a cold, so your display will capitalise on the now cool, damp weather.
As you can see, in one day you could easily have used two different displays next to the cash register because of the weather. The cash register counter is that kind of display area – one that can change from one minute to the next, according to the circumstances. You can probably think of a dozen products in a dozen situations where a change of display around the cash register is absolutely necessary. It is purely the application of common sense that will tell you what sort of display you need to have at the cash register at a particular time of the day, or the week, or the year, etc.

Keep your eyes and ears open and this alone will tell you the sort of display you need near the cash register. It is a very important area. It is an area where people congregate. You can make a lot of extra sales for your pharmacy from a display around the cash register as long as the display is relevant and attracts the attention of your customers.

Shelves

What is the largest display area in the pharmacy? Naturally the answer is the shelves. There is always more wall space than floor space because for every floor there are at least two walls and sometimes three, and four, if the door and windows don’t take up the entire shopfront.

You will sell more stock from shelves by placing small showcards or what are termed shelf talker cards near the stock. Some pharmacies use price tickets or price stripping on the shelf edge under the stock and this can also be a great selling aid.

The quantity of stock on a shelf attracts attention. This means that the more facings you give a product, the more of a chance you give the customer to notice that particular item. For example, if your chemist wants to push certain lines, you would give them more shelf space than the other products. Chemist-only lines should be given two or three rows while your open sellers should be given only one.

Most pharmacies use their shelf space as a storage area. Yes, they have stock very neatly displayed on the shelves, the stock is clean and tidy, the pricing is correct, and everything seems to be right. But what sort of display do they have? Rows and rows of stock. Is this all that can be displayed in a pharmacy?

By now it will be obvious to you that the emphasis in Pharmacy is on product knowledge. If you take product knowledge out of the pharmacy then this shop is no different from a department store or a chain store. People expect the pharmacy assistant to know what she is selling and to
Working in a Pharmacy

know something about the conditions the products treat. This knowledge is the most important part of your effort to help the pharmacy compete against all other types of shops.

If you have one advantage that no one else has, wouldn’t it be logical to emphasise that advantage when you are setting up a display. Of course it would be. Look around your pharmacy shelves. Do you see a display of product knowledge or do you see a display of products?

Examples of Displays

Attractive displays that have a theme – that is, tell a story – are the most effective. With a theme, the customer can visualise step by step each product she is likely to need in a given situation, whether it is to relieve the common cold or to maintain healthy hair. This way you are displaying – and selling – product knowledge.

The Common Cold

Products used to treat the common cold would all be found together in one area of the pharmacy. Considering that the common cold, which is with us all year round, develops through certain stages, these products should be grouped according to those stages.

Stage 1. The first symptom of a cold is usually a tickle in the nose or throat or a ‘runny nose,’ caused by an irritation of the nasal passages.

Stage 2. Irritation of the throat by mucus in the nasal passages will sooner or later develop into a ‘sore throat’.

Stage 3. Phlegm, or mucus, in the sore throat causes a harsh, nagging cough. The irritation from coughing is usually followed by an infection of the throat, which in turn causes an infection of the lower respiratory tract.

Stage 4. At this stage one of two types of cough will develop: an unproductive cough (a dry cough), or a productive cough (a wet cough).

From your knowledge of the stages the common cold goes through, you can display cough and cold remedies in four sections:
- Nasal preparations
- Sore-throat lozenges
- Cough mixtures for dry coughs
- Cough mixtures for wet coughs
As an additional display you could have a special grouping to show one example of each product that may be needed to relieve the symptoms of coughs and colds. Here you would include cold tablets and capsules, vitamin C, flu medications, etc. You could complete the story told in the display by including multivitamins to help your customer understand that when she gets to the stage where she has a cough she is nearly over her cold and might require additional vitamins to build up her system and thus avoid a relapse.

This kind of display not only helps to educate the public that there are four stages of the common cold, but also helps you, the pharmacy assistant, to remember to recommend those products that the customer is likely to need for the relief of cold symptoms.

Suppose, for example, that a customer asks for cold tablets to treat the symptoms of her cold. You will know that one of the stages of her cold will be a sore throat, and just by looking along your shelves while picking up the packet of cold tablets you will notice that next to them there are vitamin C tablets and sore-throat lozenges. You will then remember to recommend these products. It is simple enough to do.

Assistant:
Here are your cold tablets, Mrs Jones, Are you taking vitamin C?

Customer:
Yes, I am.

Assistant:
By the way, is your throat sore?

Since you already know full well that, yes, her throat is likely to be irritated and sore, you will be ready to suggest lozenges to ease the pain.

If another customer asks you for lozenges, you will ask her about the cough you know she has (or will have soon). Then you can recommend a cough mixture when you find out what kind of cough she has developed.

The sort of display just described will help you to remember what products are related to the product the customer asks for. More importantly, such a display tells the customer that you know what her condition is, you know what is happening to her, and you know what is about to happen. Therefore you are well equipped to help her.
Hair Care

There are five basic steps to beautiful hair:
1. Shampooing
2. Conditioning
3. Tinting
4. Setting
5. Spraying.

When you consider these five steps, you will realise that they must be followed in this particular order. If you wanted to tint and set your hair, you certainly would not set it first and tint it immediately after.

The next time you go into a pharmacy, look around and see whether these five steps are displayed creatively. Think about how you would set up a display. If there is a hair-care section on the shelves, and a counter in front of this section, how would you arrange a small display on the counter to illustrate the five steps to beautiful hair?

One way to set up this display would be to make a miniature staircase out of five boxes of graduated sizes, covered with coloured paper. On each level you could place one bottle or packet of the product which is used in that step. You could label each step or let the products speak for themselves. Obviously the items used in such a display would come from the same range of products.

Such a display would help you remember that a customer who comes in to buy a shampoo could also require a conditioner that complements the shampoo that she chooses. This display would also serve to remind your customer of other products she might need.

Baby Products

When the baby products’ section is well organised with products clearly displayed, a mother will have little difficulty in finding what she wants for her baby. Don’t forget that baby products are often bought by other members of the family or friends who may not know much about babies.

Placement of stock in this section should emphasise professional know-how. You can display product knowledge and make shopping much easier for customers by putting the baby products in three groups:
A mother knows that she has three major responsibilities to her baby: to feed it, to keep it clean, and to keep it healthy. If the products on your shelves are placed in these three categories, it will be a lot easier for the mother to work out which product her baby needs and where to find it.

Another way – one which I recommend highly – is to group the products according to the baby’s age:

- One to three months
- Three to six months
- Six to nine months
- Nine to twelve months

These headings can be displayed so that mothers can see them clearly. This sectionalisation of baby products offers many advantages to the customer:

1. She need not search through many products to find the one for her baby. For example, if the baby is only four months old, the mother will select items from the section headed three to six months,

2. The products under each heading carry the recommendation of the chemist even though he or she is not there personally. It is a display of his or her professional knowledge, which will be helpful to many mothers.

3. If a mother does not know what a product is for and the name is not familiar to her, at least if it is within her baby’s age group she knows that it may be suitable for her baby. In some cases, she will enquire about it.

The products within each group can be further sectionalised according to the usage. Some examples of these sorts of products are given below.

One to Three Months:


- Orange juice, vitamin C, multivitamin preparations.

- Oils, cotton buds, cotton balls, creams, sanitising preparations, nappy rash treatments, nappy liners, disposable nappies, plastic pants, powders.
> Small scissors for cutting nails, brushes and combs.
> Toys.

Three to six months:
> Milk mixtures, bottles, teats, sterilising solutions, cereals and other food
> Multivitamin preparations
> Teething rings, teething preparations, analgesics, rusks.
> Disposable nappies, nappy liners, plastic pants, nappy rash treatments, sanitising preparations, powders, shampoos.
> Toys.

Such a display educates the mother about the products her baby is likely to need at various ages. It also shows her that you know what products her baby is likely to need and what conditions she may have to treat at each particular age, for example, teething when the baby is five or six months old. The way the products are grouped will remind you that, for example, if a mother buys a bottle and some teats, she may also require a sterilising solution.

With a good display that shows the mother you really do understand the care of babies, you can also make things easier for everyone by using your shelves as a showroom of knowledge rather than just a storeroom of products.

A display such as the one just described is not difficult to set up. The hardest part is to make the necessary headings for each section. The major header card could read ‘Baby Needs,’ then for the age sections you could have cards labelled ‘One to Three Months,’ ‘Three to Six Months,’ ‘Six to Nine Months,’ and ‘Nine to Twelve Months’. It does not take a long time to set up such a display, but it will take a fair amount of careful planning beforehand.

**Gifts**

Nearly everyone faces the same problem when selecting and purchasing a gift: how much to spend on it or, more to the point perhaps, how much one can afford to spend.

Suppose that when looking at the range of gifts offered by your pharmacy – and in this instance I refer to products which are displayed as gifts perhaps on a gondola or in one special area – you find that the prices vary
from $1.00 to, say, $30.00.

In this situation to display the gifts creatively you could group them under the following four headings.

- $1 to $5
- $5 to $10
- $10 to $20
- $20 to $30

Now if you place all the products that cost between $1 and $5 in the same section of the gondola, with an appropriate label above them to say that this is the $1 to $5 group – and so on for all the groups – you will definitely make the selection of the right gift easier and faster for your customers.

This type of display will also save a lot of your time when you are helping a customer choose a gift. So it helps both you and the customer. The most important aspect of such a display, though, is that it shows thought and organisation, rather than just a jumble of objects with varying prices.

Maintaining Displays

Displays should be cleaned, and polished if necessary, every day. Perhaps even twice a day. The display is there to attract attention. When it does attract attention, it has to be able to stand up to close scrutiny by customers.

There are a number of differing opinions regarding the length of time that a display should be left up. Most research indicates that after two or sometimes three weeks a display starts to lose the impact it should have on customers. They come to regard it then as a part of the furniture; they look at it but don’t see it. It is no different from the furniture in your own home. You don’t change that very often, and so after a while you tend to take it for granted.

If people react to a display that has been up for two to three weeks in the same way they react to the furniture in their own house – by not seeing it – the solution is to move the display from one spot to another. When you have moved it to a new area, it will have a new impact. People will see it as though for the first time simply because it is in a new position.

Alternatively, you could remove the display altogether from the shop and then bring it back after a fortnight. Any change is likely to capture people’s attention so that they see what they are looking at, rather than looking and not seeing.
The same principle applies to dump bins and baskets. Move them from one spot to another; move them to the left or to the right, or bring them forward. If you don’t make any changes at all, people will take them for granted. They will walk past them; they won’t bother to inspect their contents; they won’t even see the bins or baskets because they are so used to them being there.

A special only remains ‘special’ for a few days or perhaps a week. After that it becomes an accepted fact. If you are displaying specials in, say, six or seven baskets, alter the first week exchange the contents of each basket for the contents of another. You can do so without moving the baskets themselves. Because there will be different products in each basket, it will seem as though there are new specials on offer. Thus your specials will continue to attract interest for a much longer period of time.

When you are confident you have learned the material contained in this study unit, attempt the assignment over the page.
Checkpoint Answers

Checkpoint One

Check your answers with the suggested answers below.

1)  When no lesson is learned from it

2)  A  the customer
    B  the product
    C  the pharmacy assistant

3)  Open-sellers are products that are available to any retailer the manufacturer or wholesaler cares to supply

4)  Wholesalers, direct suppliers and other chemists

5)  A  invoice
    B  statement
    C  delivery docket
    D  packing slip

6)  On the bottom of the packet or label
When you feel confident that you have thoroughly mastered the material in this unit, attempt the following assignment.

Transfer your answers to a Multiple Choice Assignment Express Card.

Make sure you have included the assignment number and your personal details, including your student number on the card, before mailing your assignment to Cengage Education.

For each multiple-choice question, select the letter that corresponds with the word or words that best complete the statement.

1) A survey found that in most cases pharmacies lose customers because of:
   A. Higher prices than charged elsewhere.
   B. Inadequate service given by pharmacy assistants.
   C. A limited range of products offered.
   D. A lack of attractive displays.

2) An order is always accompanied by a document called:
   A. A packing slip.
   B. A brochure.
   C. A statement.
   D. An order form.

3) Open-sellers are stocked by pharmacies because:
   A. They sell in large quantities.
   B. They attract customers to the pharmacy.
   C. No professional recommendation is needed.
   D. They are more likely to sell quickly.
4) When a sale is lost:
   A The reason is not important.
   B Don’t worry because the customer is usually at fault.
   C The chemist will usually blame the assistant.
   D The reason for the failure should be analysed.

5) When wrapping a normal purchase, the pharmacy assistant should:
   A Remove the price tag immediately.
   B Use plenty of wrapping paper.
   C Never use paper bags.
   D Use a minimum of paper and cellulose tape.

6) When a customer has a complaint about a product bought from your pharmacy:
   A Refer the matter to your chemist immediately.
   B Ask your customer to contact the manufacturer.
   C Handle the complaint tactfully yourself.
   D Refuse to take responsibility on behalf of the pharmacy.

7) The rotation of stock involves:
   A Changing the position of a product group on the shelves.
   B Placing new stock at the front of the shelves.
   C Moving old stock to the front of the shelves.
   D Changing the position of displays from one spot to another.

8) Bargains are best displayed:
   A In small, attractive groups.
   B In the counter next to the cash register.
   C In the window.
   D In baskets or bins.
9) The area of the counter around the cash register should be used to display:
   A Typical pharmacy lines.
   B Gifts.
   C Open-sellers.
   D Products to treat the common cold.

10) Products are usually displayed:
    A Above eye level.
    B Below eye level.
    C Vertically.
    D Horizontally.

11) When a special begins to lose its impact after about a week:
    A Transfer the products to the shelves at their normal price.
    B Move the products to another dump bin or basket.
    C Send the stock back to the manufacturer or supplier.
    D Set up an attractive display using your product knowledge.

12) Specialised products such as gifts are normally displayed:
    A On the shelves.
    B On the counter.
    C On floor units.
    D In the window.
Indicate on the answer sheet whether the following statements are true or false

13) A customer’s purchase should be wrapped before any money is taken.
   True/False

14) Stock can be defined as every product that is found in a pharmacy.
   True/False

15) The manufacturer’s abbreviation ‘DISC’ refers to the discount offered on items purchased.
   True/False

16) Dusting is the most important housekeeping duty in a pharmacy.
   True/False

17) Pharmacy stock can be displayed on the floor, in the windows, on counters and on shelves.
   True/False

18) Window displays are usually more interesting if they have a theme.
   True/False

19) The quality, not the quantity, of stock on a shelf attracts attention.
   True/False

20) Displays should be left only for two or three weeks.
   True/False