



Guide to salon design and fit-out

NHF

Supporting the hair, beauty
and barbering industries

In association with

REM

LOCKHARTMEYER
SALON MARKETING



Introduction

In hairdressing, barbering and beauty, first impressions matter! The character of your salon or barbershop, its personality and values, will often be reflected in its look and décor, whether that's vintage, rustic, modern, eco, minimalist, retro, luxury or pampering.

But what's the secret to a successful salon design?

How do you create a strong salon brand and identity, a "wow" factor that clients are going to remember from the moment they walk through your door?

What do you need to think about when fitting out your salon?

And how do you do all this without breaking the bank?

That's what this **NHF Guide to Salon Design and Fit-Out**, produced in association with trade member **REM UK Ltd** and **Lockhart Meyer Salon Marketing**, is all about.

Visit REM at www.rem.co.uk and Lockhart Meyer at www.lockhart-meyer.co.uk

Important information

The information contained within this document is for information and guidance purposes only and must not be used as a substitute for seeking legal or professional advice. The information is correct at the time of writing.

How the NHF can help

Check out the NHF's other guides on all aspects of running a hair, barbering or beauty business at www.nhf.info/nhf-guides.

NHF Guides

- Absence management
- Allergy alert testing
- Apprenticeships
- Becoming a training provider
- Business finance
- Card payment processing
- Careers
- Chair renting
- Client experience
- Complaints
- Data protection and wi-fi
- Employing people
- Franchising
- Health and safety (part of kit)
- Hiring a manager
- Managing performance
- Marketing your salon
- Minimum wages
- Pensions
- Prices, wages and profit
- Recruitment
- Salon fit-out
- Salon software
- Self-employment
- Selling your business
- Start-up guide (updated)



Good salon design starts with the basics

You may have a strong vision of how you want your salon to look. But before you even get to the fun design stuff, you need to have got the less glamorous basics right, like plumbing, flooring and so on.

TEST YOUR WATER PRESSURE

Most local water companies will do this for you. You will need a minimum of 1.75 to 2.5 bar of water pressure, otherwise a booster pump will be necessary.

TEST YOUR WALL CONSTRUCTION

If you're planning to have wall-mounted dryers or processors this is a must-do. You will need solid concrete or brick walls; partition walls aren't suitable.

THINK ABOUT YOUR PLUMBING

You'll need to locate your wash area as close as you can to water and waste outlets. Not only will this be cheaper to install but a shorter pipe run is less likely to cause you future plumbing problems.

THINK ABOUT DAYLIGHT AND ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

You'll want to make the most of natural daylight, but you also need to think carefully about what sort of artificial light is best.

You'll want a mixture of strong "task" lighting that both stylists and clients will be able to see by, but then additional lighting that creates the mood and ambience you want to achieve.

Barbershops often go for darker or stronger colours so using more spotlighting, rather than washes of light, can highlight colours as well as the task in hand.

In a beauty salon, there's likely to be more close work with the therapist sitting down with the client rather than standing over them. So light that is flexible and portable, table-top lamps, magnification lamps or lamps attached to nail stations, trolleys or mobile bases will be useful.

Think about layers of lighting - so lighting that has different functions, some task-based, some more decorative or focused on atmosphere such as creating a calm environment for beauty treatments with dimmable lighting.

THINK ABOUT YOUR CEILINGS

As well as looking around the salon, look upwards. If you have a high ceiling, that creates an airy, spacious atmosphere. But, if you're not careful, it can feel cold and empty. With low ceilings, it's the opposite - the space can quickly feel cluttered or cramped, even if it's not.

With high ceilings, tall, slim styling units can often work well to fill the space more. But you might also want to consider lowering the ceiling in places to more clearly signify the different zones of your salon (and see our tip on zoning below for more on this). You might, for example, want a lower ceiling in the reception and retail areas or over the backwashes to create a more intimate, relaxed ambience.

How you decide to use, and fill, your space is going to be an integral part of your salon design and look, and so this is something you need to be thinking about early on in the design process.

THINK ABOUT YOUR FLOOR SURFACES

Will you need to deaden high levels of noise? Will you need to be able to access under-floor services easily? Your floor surface will also need to be hard-wearing and non-slip. You might want to consider different surfaces in different areas or zones of the salon. All these questions need to be considered.

THINK ZONES

If your salon has the space, one way to create a sense of a client "journey" is to divide your space into zones. These don't have to be physically divided zones - and in fact it's probably better they're not, as this can risk making the salon space feel broken up and disjointed. Instead, zoning can often be done through the clever use of colour, lighting, décor and floor surfaces.

Each zone should complement the next one yet still fit within the overall theme or brand identity of the salon.

Do also see our tip about your reception area



Tips for designing your salon styling area

ALLOW SUFFICIENT WORKSPACE

Ideally your first styling unit should be a minimum of 600mm from a window or wall to allow the stylist to work comfortably. Second and subsequent units should be 1.2m from the centre to centre. The working space out for the stylist should be a minimum of 1.5m. Consider island styling units if you need to fit more clients into a tight space.

ACCEPT THAT STAINS WILL HAPPEN

This is an inevitable part of day-to-day salon life. Therefore, darker upholstery is more practical for a hardworking hair salon. If you really want a lighter colour, think about fitting clear chair back covers.

USE DIFFERENT LIGHTING STYLES TO CREATE ATMOSPHERE

Hang task lights above each section but also then add some feature pendants above the reception area and wash points. Wall-mounted uplighters can create a soft "wash" effect, although they will take up valuable wall space. If wall space is limited, maximise the way you use your ceiling. Have a chat with your electrician about what they recommend.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE STAYING LEGAL

All salon electrical fittings and appliances must conform to basic electrical EU and UK legislation. So, check every electrical item you purchase has the CE logo proving it conforms. Be aware, too, that any electrical work nowadays has to be carried out by a fully-qualified and registered electrician. Similarly, all plumbing fittings need to meet the 1999 Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations - look for the WRAS logo on any components.



THINK ABOUT WHAT WILL BE VISIBLE AND WHAT WON'T

Are you going to have colour mixed out of sight or are you going to put it in the spotlight with a colour-bar? This could become an important part of your salon look and a talking point with clients. But, if you're not careful, it could become a messy eyesore. So, weigh up the pros and cons on what clients can see.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE AMOUNT OF STORAGE YOU WILL NEED

To keep your salon tidy and clutter free, you will need to design in shelf space and cabinets to store away all those product bottles, scissors and hair brushes out of sight. Equipment trolleys can also be a great way of neatly storing necessities. Consider, too, having holsters on styling units for storing hairdryers and straighteners.

BE CLEVER WITH MIRRORS

Especially if you have a small or shallow salon space, feature mirrors can trick the eye and make the space seem much larger than it is. If wall space is limited, consider whether a standalone double-sided mirror could work; not only might it become a talking point, it will mean it won't take up valuable wall space.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE BOLD WITH COLOUR

White can come across as clean and airy; and can give a feeling of space to your salon, especially when used on the ceiling. A lighter colour can often help to make a space feel more spacious than it is in reality. Therefore, if your space is tight, go lighter rather than darker.

The best way to create a sense of light and space is to use the lightest colour on the largest surface area, such as the walls, and a darker tone on woodwork. Using a dark colour on skirting boards will make your walls appear lighter in contrast.

But bold and powerful colours can also make a real impact, as long as they're not overpowering. If you want to use a strong colour, but you don't want it to be too in-your-face, consider picking out a couple of feature walls in a different colour and then carry that on through towels and other accessories in the same colour.

While you may want to create a clean and clinical atmosphere for a beauty salon, an off-white will be more welcoming than a brilliant white which can make your treatment rooms look like a doctor's surgery and create glare or reflection. Do use colour as accent shades and in your reception area.



Tips for designing your salon wash area

DESIGN IN TRANQUILLITY

Use partitions to design a tranquil corner for clients away from the bustle of the salon.

ALLOW SUFFICIENT WORKSPACE

As with the styling area, it is important to provide sufficient workspace in the wash area. Allow a minimum of 600mm behind a wash unit for the stylist to work. Don't forget, there should be a similar amount at the other end for the client's legs.

ADD A TOWEL STORE

Consider adding a towel store behind the wash point and making a functional feature with accent coloured towels.

Tips for designing your salon reception

MAKE SURE YOUR RECEPTION IS NOT AN AFTER-THOUGHT

It can be easy to be so totally focused on getting your working areas and wash spaces right that your reception becomes an after-thought, both in design and budgetary terms. That would be a big mistake because your reception is the first

physical contact your client has with the salon, so it needs to be memorable and also consistent with the look of the rest of the salon.

USE LIGHTING TO HIGHLIGHT OR DEFINE THE AREA

As well as the actual furniture, equipment or décor, think about what lighting is going to work best in this area. What sort of mood do you want to create - you might want the feel of a strong, brightly lit clinical "waiting area" or softer lighting that immediately creates a more relaxed ambience.

If you go for the latter, bear in mind the lighting still needs to be strong enough for clients to read their magazine or see their coffee, and for the receptionists to work by.

DON'T OVERPOWER THE SPACE

This is especially important for the reception desk. You want a desk that's big enough to accommodate everything the receptionist needs but it mustn't be so big that it takes up the whole reception space. Also, think what shape will work best: rectangular, round, square or even a more fluid shape?

You don't want clients to feel cramped in or unable to get through from reception to the salon area easily.



HIDE CLUTTER

Think about what your receptionists will need to have to hand on the reception and what's just going to end up as clutter. A cluttered reception area can give the impression of a disorganised, unprofessional salon so consider out-of-sight or under-desk storage.

THINK FLOORING

Along with lighting, another easy way to define the reception area is with different flooring to the main salon space. Laying floor tiles in a diamond pattern can increase their visual width, giving a greater sense of space.

THINK "STATEMENTS"

Bold, memorable colours can help to give your reception area something of a "signature" look. Similarly, statement features (perhaps a chandelier, a piece of artwork or mirrors) can all help to set this area apart. But you do also want to strike a balance between it being a bit different to the rest of the salon, but at the same time consistent with the general salon décor, atmosphere and brand identity.

KEEP YOUR RETAIL SEPARATE

We look in more detail at retail design later in this guide, but, while it can seem convenient, it can actually be a mistake

to locate your retail display behind your reception desk. This is because the desk creates a barrier, stopping your clients getting to the retail area so they'll feel less able to look at or handle products and therefore less comfortable browsing or buying.

CHAIR OR SOFA

You need to think carefully about what style of seating is going to work most effectively in the waiting area, and which will be consistent with the overall look or feel of the salon. A waiting sofa rather than individual chairs can be a more efficient use of the space.

BE CAREFUL WITH HEIGHTS

You don't want a coffee table in your reception area that is a lot lower than the seats of your sofas or chairs. The key is to think how different pieces of furniture are going to look and work together.

TRY TO JOIN UP THE RECEPTION SPACE

While zoning can often be a good idea generally, when it comes to your reception, rather than breaking up the space into lots of mini-zones – such as desk, waiting area and retail – try to join it all up. You also need to ensure the reception area leads seamlessly into the main salon area and ensuring it isn't so crowded that clients can't easily travel through the space.

STEP OUTSIDE

When designing your reception area, take a moment to step outside and see how it looks from the street. For example, reception waiting chairs placed against or next to the windows can give an impression of being busy and active.



Tips for planning and buying your salon furniture

For hair salons, the priority will be styling and backwash chairs, styling units and trolleys, while barbershops will probably want more bespoke barber's chairs and units. For a beauty salon you'll need items such as electric or manual massage couches, manicure units and mobile seating as well as trolleys and storage units.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

It's always advisable to try before you buy your salon furniture. Visit REM's showroom, the largest in the UK, or check out www.rem.co.uk/pages/distributors for details of distributors with showrooms. Sit in all chairs (backwash and regular) - are they comfortable and do they work as you want them to?

Also, make sure your salon furniture actually fits. Make cardboard cut-outs of your new stations before you buy them to see how much space they will take up.

ASK ABOUT SERVICING AGREEMENTS AND GUARANTEES

Any reputable salon supplier will be more than happy to discuss these with you.

GET EVERYTHING IN WRITING

Hopefully, there won't be any problems but you're in a much stronger legal position with written confirmations. This is especially true with imported furniture - ask for a declaration by the supplier, in writing.

MAKE SURE YOUR PRICE IS "ALL IN"

There can often be hidden costs associated with furniture: delivery, installation, storage and so on. So make sure you get proper, detailed estimates from your salon dealer before signing any paperwork and specifically ask about what extra costs there may be.

MAKE USE OF ANY PLANNING OR DESIGN SERVICE OFFERED

A trained salon planner may come up with things you would never have thought of.

Check out REM's design planning and consultancy services which starts at £450 (refunded on orders over £3000). You'll get a visit from a consultant who will take building measurements, establish your requirements and produce a 3D photovisual.

Tips for designing your retail area

MAKE THE SPACE ATTRACTIVE

Obviously you'll want your retail space to be attractive, clean and looking full. If the space is too big, it's going to look like you don't sell much. But if it's too small it could look cluttered. Don't hide retail shelves in a corner or behind the reception desk. Your retail space needs to be a central part of the salon layout.

THINK SHELVING

Colourful shelving can make a feature of your retail display and can provide a welcome splash of colour if your colour shades are otherwise pale or pastel. The most important retail shelves are those at eye level, as that's where people will most often first look. So make sure you have shelves at that level and that you rotate stock from time to time on to those shelves. This will also help to ensure the retail display doesn't become stale and dusty.

MAKE TESTERS EASILY ACCESSIBLE

Testers can maximise the experience your clients have with the products and can really help with the retail "sell". So it is important any retail display is designed to encourage people to try out and interact with your product. If there's space, a "try me" table or shelf can be a good idea.

USE SIGNAGE EFFECTIVELY

Rather than just having rows and rows of stock on display, use the display to communicate with the client. So perhaps divide it up into different categories (colour, aftercare, skincare, make-up and so on). Display and clearly communicate prices so that clients do not have to ask. And, of course, highlight any promotions or offers that you are running.





BARBER
SHOP

Other things to think about

MAKE YOUR WINDOWS “WORK”

Your salon window display is a functional way to display your retail products or to show passing clients the services you offer, especially if you're located on a busy high street. It can also be used to create a tone or mood of what you feel your salon brand is all about, so make sure it has the “look” to match your salon interior.

Large windows will flood the salon with plenty of natural light but, don't forget, they can mean clients feel they have less privacy. If privacy is an issue, consider using or adding some frosted or coloured glass.

Don't overlook security. If you have big windows, will the salon be more at risk from burglars or vandals? But, obviously, you also don't want your salon to look like a shuttered-up fortress.

Do get your windows cleaned regularly, both inside and out, so there's always a pristine, blemish-free view.

DON'T OVERLOOK THE VALUE AND IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

TVs, tablets, in-mirror TVs, interactive hair colour displays, pedispa chairs - salon technology is changing rapidly, and clients are increasingly expecting the salon “experience” to include interactive technology. It can be worth investing in high-end technology which can become

a talking point. But, clearly, for some salon designs the latest technology isn't going to work with your look and feel or your target clients.

THINK BEYOND THE PHYSICAL DESIGN

Don't forget your salon “design” these days needs to include your website and social media profile as much as the physical salon space. So make sure these are all consistent with your look. Within this, don't forget the importance of small touches such as ensuring your stationery or appointment cards complement the salon look.

HAVE A BUDGET FOR MAINTENANCE, REPAIRS AND REPLACEMENTS

Cracks and scuffs on the walls or old, damaged or stained furniture can all quickly build up to create a negative, tired image. The problem is that, because you'll be in the salon every day, you may not notice this as easily as a client who is only coming in occasionally and looking at it with fresh eyes.

It is important to have an ongoing budget for maintenance, repairs or replacements. It can also be a good idea to build in a schedule - perhaps every six months - where you actively review what work is needed and go around the salon specifically checking for what's past its sell-by date.

Let's talk about money...

How long is a piece of string? All salons are different, and all salon owners have different budgets to play with.

So the cost of stocking and fitting out your salon is going to vary widely, especially when you take into account factors such as where you are in the country, the sort of spec or quality of finish you're going for, the size and complexity of the space and whether there are any building works that need to be sorted out first.

HAVE A PROPER, COSTED PLAN

As a brand new salon owner you need to keep your design and fit-out costs under control, so it is important to have a proper, costed-out plan and budget and to stick to it. There may be unexpected costs such as an issue with plumbing or the state of the walls or electrics. But keep a lid on your costs, especially when you're first starting out as there will be many other costs to cover while your income will be uncertain until you've been trading for a while.

HAVE A CONTINGENCY FUND

As with any building or refurbishment project, have a "contingency fund", ideally 10% of the total budgeted cost. If it doesn't get used there will always be something to spend it on later on! Having this money as a back-up can also come in handy if there are "snagging" issues - things that have gone wrong or haven't quite worked - that need to be sorted out later.

BE CLEAR WHAT'S INCLUDED

When getting quotes it's important to ensure they are as detailed as possible to reduce the risk of nasty surprises later. Also, don't forget to clarify if the quoted figures include VAT or not, as that can make a big difference.



BE REALISTIC WITH THE DESIGN

For example, REM estimates that a ratio of one backwash to three styling positions is the recommended minimum when you're calculating your salon budget.

Decide what you're prepared to lose. Are there things that are essential to your salon look and so cannot be compromised on, even if they may seem extravagant in themselves? If so, write them down and make them a non-negotiable part of your budget. But, at the same time, identify things you're less fussed about where you could go for a lower spec or even cut out of the design altogether.

REMEMBER UNGLAMOROUS THINGS

Have you costed out buying and installing a new boiler? Taps? Sockets? Any staff or backroom areas? The toilet? Even door furniture such as drawer fixings or door handles? Will there be any issues with access that you need to adjust, especially for clients with disabilities or small children? What about ventilation, especially in areas where chemicals are being used or colour mixed?

RECOGNISE THERE WILL BE SOME BIG-TICKET INVESTMENT ITEMS

The typical price for a chair can be anything from £200 to £500 upwards, a wash basin can be £500 to £2500 while the cost of a high-spec electric massage couch can run into four figures.

If you're not careful, costs can quickly escalate. It's important therefore to keep a close eye on what's going out but also to be realistic in allocating your budget. Some items will be expensive, there's no getting around that, but if you want your salon to look the proper part, you'll need to budget for that.

TRY NOT TO LEAVE THINGS UNFINISHED OR "FOR LATER"

Anyone who's ever decorated a house will recognise the moment when you either run out of money or you just run out of steam, so you never get round to doing jobs you meant to do originally. While it's understandable, and maybe unavoidable if you've run out of cash, do try and finish what you started so that the whole fit-out and design comes together without looking slightly unfinished.

How the NHF can help

- Health and safety toolkit contains everything you need, literally in a box
- Business training courses and business coaching
- Commercial helpline available Monday to Friday 9-5 to advise on contracts or leases
- 20% discount on Coversure's Salonsure insurance policy, backed by a price promise if you can find a like for like quote cheaper elsewhere
- Free employment contracts, apprenticeship contracts and staff handbooks as well as chair renting, treatment room/area renting agreements
- Round the clock employment law support
- NHF Trade Members provide a wide range of services to salons and barbershops, often with a discount for NHF members so check it out at nhf.info/online-directory

Budget Planner

ITEM	BUDGET	COST
LEASE/MORTGAGE DEPOSIT/BUILD/REFURBISHMENT COSTS:		
Building works	£	£
Plumbing	£	£
Electrical	£	£
Flooring	£	£
Architect/surveyor	£	£
Shop front	£	£
Planning permissions & building regulations	£	£
Salon design	£	£
Salon furniture	£	£
Other furniture	£	£
SERVICE INSTALLATION/ UPGRADE:		
Gas	£	£
Electric	£	£
Plumbing	£	£
Water (sewage)	£	£
Air con / heating	£	£
KEY EQUIPMENT:		
Telephone system	£	£
Computers & software	£	£
Appliances	£	£
Fire & burglar alarm	£	£
Entertainment systems	£	£
STOCK		
Sundries and supplies - general	£	£
Sundries and supplies - salon	£	£

ITEM	BUDGET	COST
MARKETING & ADVERTISING:		
Logo, signage and artwork design	£	£
Salon stationary	£	£
Advertising - salon	£	£
Advertising - staff	£	£
Photography - fashion	£	£
Photography - salon	£	£
Website	£	£
PR	£	£
Opening party	£	£
OPERATIONS:		
Legal - employment contracts	£	£
Procedure/training	£	£
Health & safety documents	£	£
Contract cleaning	£	£
Staff training	£	£
MISC:		
	£	£
	£	£
	£	£
	£	£
	£	£
	£	£
TOTAL	£	£



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