

**Your menu is your number one marketing tool. It is the one printed piece that everyone in your establishment is certain to read. A crowded menu that is cluttered and hard to read is not an effective Marketing tool.**

### Primacy and Recency

The theory of “Primacy and Recency” is a psychological concept that asserts that people are more likely to remember the first and last thing they read or hear. That theory can be applied to the psychology of a menu design by placing your most profitable menu items in places they are more likely to be seen and ordered, first or last. For example, you have 5 appetizers that you have entered into a menu engineering worksheet (refer to the Menu Engineering Business Building Tool for more information). That worksheet will help you determine the profitability and popularity of each appetizer on your menu by fitting them into one of the following categories: Star, Workhorse, Puzzle or Dog. Use that list to guide your placement decisions of your most profitable items (Stars and Workhorses) in the first and last positions of the appetizer section.

Primacy and Recency can also be used to de-emphasize certain items that may have low profit margins (Puzzlers and Dogs) or items that are labor intensive. Place such items in the middle of a list where they are, for practical purposes “hidden”.

### Menu Gaze Patterns

Studies have shown that the eye follows a certain critical path in the brief time that a guest holds the menu. In order to maximize profit potential, the position and placement of your most profitable items in eye-catching spots increases the likelihood of them being ordered. For a two-page menu fold-out, the eye would first fall on the top of the second page and then to the top of the first page as seen in the example below.

Since most customers order sequentially appetizers, salads or soups first, then entrees it makes sense to place the items in a traditional sequence. Items with higher profit margins (usually entrees) belong at the top of the second page, in the visual “sweet spot”.

Using the same theory, your less profitable categories can be “hidden” by placing them on the bottom of the second page or even on the back of the menu.

### Pop Boxes, Signature Icons & Other Eye Grabbing Tips

The eye can be drawn from the random gaze by the use of objects that attract attention. Some examples are pop boxes & signature icons. Pop boxes are graphic highlights that surround a specific menu item. Signature icons are symbols, such as a miniaturized logo or a graphic, placed next to a menu selection. Both of these draw attention to items that are considered house favorites or items with higher profit.

You can also use different fonts, colors and bold features to make profitable items stand out.

New Items - Consider highlighting new items on your menu with a “New” Icon.

### Quick Tips and Tricks

Leader Dots & Right Justifying – When menu descriptions are on the left side of a menu and there are dots leading out to the prices lined up down the right side of a menu, this is right justifying. Right justification allows your customers to focus on the price of each menu item instead of reading the description and appreciating what goes into the dish. Remove the leader dots and tuck the price behind the description.

End Prices in 9’s – Most consumers don’t recognize a price difference between \$7.95 and \$7.99, so take the extra four cents to your bottom line by ending all of your prices in 9’s.

Dessert Menu – Take desserts off your full menu to add more white space and direct the customer to more profitable menu selections. Create a separate dessert menu with tantalizing pictures and mouth-watering descriptions or better yet, utilize a dessert tray.

Separate Wine & Drink Menu – Take your wines and drinks off of your menu and create a separate menu with signature drinks and fun cocktails. Include colorful pictures and descriptions that no one can refuse.