

# For retailers this year, a holiday decorating dilemma

[marketplace.org/2020/11/24/retailers-holiday-decorations-covid-lockdowns-online-shopping](https://marketplace.org/2020/11/24/retailers-holiday-decorations-covid-lockdowns-online-shopping)



COVID-19

Andy Uhler Nov 24, 2020

Heard on: Marketplace Morning Report

▶ Listen Now



COVID-19

Andy Uhler Nov 24, 2020



A festive window display at Macy's Herald Square in New York on Thursday. Will retailers direct more resources to e-commerce this holiday season? Eugene Gologursky/Getty Images for Macy's

► [Listen Now](#)



In a normal year, retailers would be dressing up their stores with holiday-themed window scenes, lights and all the trimmings.

But this year, with a pandemic, new lockdowns and people ordering online instead of making in-store gift buying a family excursion, what are stores to do?

Decorating a store for the holidays takes time and money. Bob Phibbs, who runs the Retail Doctor consultancy, said businesses are, generally, of two minds about it this year.

Latest Updates : COVID-19

“Independents seem to be going stronger with nurturing the customer wonder and amazement,” he said. Think Will Ferrell’s decoration extravaganza in the movie “Elf.”

Other retailers are going cheap and “saying, ‘Oh, people aren’t gonna be here anyway. What difference does it make?’ ” Phibbs said.

Usually, it would make a lot of difference, said branding consultant Denise Lee Yohn. She said decorations help get shoppers in the holiday spirit. But during a pandemic, store owners are grappling with a new question: “Are we being responsible by attracting people to our locations?”

In lieu of big displays, she said, many retailers are diverting resources to giving consumers a virtual holiday experience and making sure their search functions and e-commerce platforms can handle the heavy load.