



An Extended Guide · No. 1914

Customer Displays, Kiosks and QR Ordering — Do You Need Them?

What each screen adds, what it costs, and when to skip it

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★ You might not need any of these — and that's fine

Plenty of salespeople will tell you a kiosk or a QR system is a must. It isn't. For a lot of small shops, the honest answer is 'skip it.' This guide helps you tell when one of these actually earns its keep and when it's just shiny tech you'll pay for and never use.

Do you need a display, a kiosk, or QR ordering?

Customer-facing screens, self-order kiosks, and scan-at-the-table ordering are everywhere now. This guide sorts out what each one really does, what it costs, and whether it fits your business.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping folks with their technology, and a good part of that is steering small-business owners away from gear they don't need and toward the few things that genuinely help.

I don't sell any of this hardware and I earn no commission on it, so I can be straight with you. Some shops are transformed by a kiosk. Others would just be out a few thousand dollars and some floor space. Let's figure out which one you are.

✓ Buy for a real problem, not a trend

The right question is never 'should I get a kiosk?' It's 'what problem am I trying to solve?' Long lines, labor at peak, tip confusion — name the problem first, and the answer to the gadget question gets easy.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, you'll make a smart call on all three.

- ❑ A customer-facing display shows the order and total and handles tip prompts — more transparency, fewer disputes.
- ❑ A self-order kiosk lets customers order and pay themselves — shorter lines and bigger average orders, but real hardware cost and floor space.
- ❑ QR-code ordering lets diners scan at the table to order and pay from their phone — less running for staff, but it needs solid Wi-Fi.
- ❑ All three lean on your network and your POS — make sure both can handle it (see our register-network guide).
- ❑ Someone still assembles the order — a kiosk moves the ordering, not the cooking or the bagging.
- ❑ A small, simple shop often needs none of these. Don't buy tech you won't use.

✓ One rule to hold onto

Add one of these only when it solves a problem you can name and feel every week. If you can't point to the pain, you don't need the cure yet.

The customer-facing display

This is the smallest and often the most worthwhile of the three — a little screen that faces the customer at your counter.

It shows the customer their order building up, the running total, and the final amount before they pay. Many also handle the tip prompt and let the customer confirm, so the whole transaction is out in the open.

The payoff is trust and fewer arguments. When a customer can see every item and the total as it's rung, you get fewer 'that's not what I ordered' disputes and fewer surprises at the card reader. It's a modest cost for a real smoothing of the checkout.

A display tends to help when

- You ring up multi-item orders and want the customer to see them.
- You take tips and want the prompt handled clearly and consistently.
- You want fewer disputes about what was ordered or charged.

✓ Tips belong in their own guide

If the tip prompt is your main reason for a display, read our guide on tip screens first — it covers setting fair prompts and avoiding the awkward over-ask that annoys customers.

The self-order kiosk

A kiosk is the big one — a standing or counter screen where customers browse your menu, order, and pay without talking to a soul.

Done well, a kiosk does three things: it shortens the line at peak by letting several people order at once, it frees a staff member from the register to do other work, and it often lifts the average order, because a patient screen upsells and adds extras more consistently than a rushed cashier.

Those are real benefits. But a kiosk is also the most expensive and most demanding of the three, and it changes how your space and your staff work. The next page is the honest other side of the ledger.

A kiosk tends to help when

- You have real lines at predictable peaks — a lunch rush, a game day.
- Labor is tight or costly and you'd rather staff cook than cash out.
- Your menu lends itself to add-ons the screen can suggest.

! Someone still makes the order

A kiosk moves the ordering off your staff — it does not move the cooking, the bagging, or the handing-over. If your bottleneck is the kitchen, not the register, a kiosk just makes a line of people wait somewhere else.

What a kiosk really costs you

Before you fall for the demo, count the full price — not just the sticker, but the space and the upkeep.

The hardware itself is a real outlay. Square, Clover, and Toast all offer kiosk hardware, usually as a tablet in a stand or a larger floor-standing unit; expect it to be the priciest piece of gear in this guide. (Prices move — confirm current pricing with each company before you budget.)

Then there's floor space, which in a small shop is precious, and the ongoing care: keeping the screen clean, the menu updated, and the thing running. A kiosk that's down or shows last month's prices is worse than no kiosk at all.

What it costs	Why it matters
Hardware	The priciest gear here
Floor space	Scarce in a small shop
Setup time	Menu, photos, prices
Upkeep	Clean, update, repair
Order assembly	Still on your staff

✓ **Rent or pilot before you commit**

If you can, start with one kiosk and watch a few busy weeks before you buy a row of them. Let the real line — not the sales demo — tell you whether it earns its space.

QR-code ordering at the table

The third option skips the hardware almost entirely: a little square code on the table that diners scan to order and pay from their own phones.

The customer scans the code, your menu opens on their phone, and they order and pay without flagging anyone down. For a busy cafe or bar it can mean a lot less running back and forth — staff spend their time making and delivering, not taking orders and walking cards.

It's cheap to start, since the customer brings the device. But it leans hard on your Wi-Fi and cell signal, and — let's be honest — some customers simply dislike it. Older guests, big groups, and anyone whose phone is low on battery may want a person instead.

QR ordering tends to help when

- You run table service and staff spend a lot of time just taking orders.
- Your crowd is comfortable ordering on a phone.
- Your Wi-Fi and signal are genuinely strong throughout the room.

! Keep a human option open

Never make the QR code the only way to order. Keep menus and a friendly face available too, or you'll lose the guests who won't — or can't — use a phone to order their dinner.

What all three need from your network

Here's the part the brochures skip: every one of these runs on your internet and your POS. Weak infrastructure sinks good hardware.

A kiosk, a display, and QR ordering all talk constantly to your payment system over your network. If your Wi-Fi is spotty at the back of the room, or your internet drops at peak, these tools stutter exactly when you need them most. The gadget is only as good as the connection under it.

They also need your POS to support them. Not every plan on every system includes kiosk or QR features, and some charge extra. Confirm that your system offers the piece you want, on your plan, before you buy a screen for it.

! Fix the network first

Adding a kiosk to a shaky network is building on sand. Our guide on your register and network covers getting solid, reliable internet and Wi-Fi in place first — do that before you spend a dollar on any of these screens.

The honest 'do you need it' test

Here's the plain-spoken filter I use with owners. Run each option through it before you spend anything.

Three questions for any of the three

- **What problem does it solve?** Name the pain — long lines, tip confusion, staff run ragged. No pain, no purchase.
- **Will my customers actually use it?** A kiosk or QR code your crowd won't touch is money set on fire.
- **Can my network and POS handle it?** If the connection or the plan can't support it, fix that first or skip it.

If you can answer all three with confidence, the tool probably earns its keep. If any answer is a shrug, wait. There's no prize for being first on your block with a kiosk.

★ Talk it through with me first

Before you sign for a kiosk or a QR system, call me and we'll run your shop through these three questions together. Half the time I talk owners out of it — and they thank me later. (330) 200-8042

When a small shop should just say no

I want to make the case for 'none of the above,' because nobody selling these will make it for you.

If you're a one- or two-person shop, your lines are short, and your customers like being greeted by a human, a kiosk solves a problem you don't have. The display might still be worth it for clean tips and fewer disputes, but the big hardware is overkill.

There's nothing behind-the-times about skipping this. Your warmth and a quick, friendly counter are an advantage a kiosk can't copy. Spend the money on better coffee, a second reader, or solid Wi-Fi instead — things your customers will actually feel.

✓ Your personal touch is a feature

Big chains buy kiosks because they can't greet everyone by name. You can. Don't trade away the thing that makes a small shop worth visiting for a screen that makes you feel like every other place.

Two kinds of small business, two setups

Whether these screens help depends a lot on how you sell. A fixed counter or sit-down room is where kiosks and QR earn their keep; a seller on the go rarely needs any of them.

If you sell from a fixed counter or shop

You serve people in one place — a shop, cafe, or restaurant — and you hit real peaks. This is where a display, a kiosk, or QR ordering can genuinely cut lines and free up staff.

- A customer display is a small, low-cost win for transparency and tips.
- A kiosk can pay off if you have real lines and tight labor at peak.
- QR ordering suits table service with strong Wi-Fi throughout the room.
- Get your register and network solid first (see that guide).

If you sell on the go — markets, trucks, house calls

You sell from a booth, a truck, or house calls. You move light, your 'counter' is wherever you set up, and you rarely have a line in one fixed spot.

- A kiosk makes little sense — there's no fixed space to stand it in.
- QR ordering is usually overkill for a short mobile menu.
- A simple handheld with a clear screen the customer can see covers you.
- Spend on a reliable reader and signal, not on self-order hardware.

★ Somewhere in between?

A shop that also caters or works events is common, and the right answer is usually 'a display, maybe, and skip the rest.' Tell me how and where you sell and I'll help you spend only where it pays. Call (330) 200-8042.

If you choose a customer display

This is the easiest 'yes' of the three, so let's make it a clean one. A display is low cost and quick to set up.

Most systems offer a display as a small second screen or an add-on that pairs with your register — Square, Clover, Toast, and Shopify all have a version. Make sure the one you want works with your plan and your existing hardware before you buy it.

Set it up to actually help

- Face it squarely at the customer, at a height they can read.
- Show the itemized order and the running total, not just the final number.
- Set the tip prompt fairly — our tip-screens guide shows how to avoid the awkward over-ask.
- Keep the item names plain so a customer recognizes what they ordered.

✓ The cheapest trust-builder you can buy

A display is often under a couple hundred dollars and it quietly prevents disputes every day. For most counter shops, it's the one screen on this list I'd actually nudge you toward.

If you choose a kiosk

You've named a real problem and decided a kiosk fits. Good — now set it up so it earns its space instead of gathering dust.

Start with one, not a bank of them, and place it where the line naturally forms so people drift to it without being herded. Build the menu with clear photos and sensible add-on prompts, and price everything exactly as it is elsewhere so there are no surprises.

Plan for the hidden work

- Decide who keeps the menu and prices updated — stale info erodes trust.
- Keep the screen clean and have a plan for when it needs a repair.
- Make sure order assembly can keep up, or you've just moved the line.
- Keep a staffed register open for folks who won't use the screen.

! Watch the contract and the lease

Kiosk hardware is sometimes bundled into a longer processing contract or a lease. Read it the same way you'd read any other — term, exit fee, buy or lease — the way our choosing-a-system guide lays out.

If you choose QR ordering

QR ordering is cheap to start and easy to botch. The difference is almost always the network and the welcome.

Test your Wi-Fi and cell signal at every table, not just by the router. A dead corner means a guest staring at a spinning phone and waving for help — the opposite of what you wanted. Fix the signal before you print a single code.

Make it pleasant, not mandatory

- Keep paper menus and a friendly server as a real alternative.
- Put clear, simple instructions right by the code.
- Make the mobile menu easy to read and quick to pay from.
- Watch big groups and older guests — offer a hand before they struggle.

✓ Signal first, code second

Nine out of ten QR complaints are really Wi-Fi complaints. Our register-network guide covers getting strong, even coverage across the room — do that first and QR ordering suddenly feels effortless.

Measuring whether it actually paid off

Once a screen is in, don't just assume it's working. A few weeks later, check whether it solved the problem you bought it for.

Go back to the pain you named. If you got a kiosk for lines, are the lines shorter at peak? If you got a display for disputes, are there fewer arguments at the counter? If you got QR for staff running, are your people actually freed up? The honest answer tells you whether to keep, adjust, or pull it.

Your POS reports help here — average order size, sales per hour at peak, how much is going through the kiosk versus the register. Let the numbers, not the novelty, decide whether it stays.

★ I'll help you read the numbers

If you're not sure how to tell whether a kiosk is pulling its weight, I can sit down with your reports and help you see it plainly. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Keeping customers happy with the tech

The best self-service feels like a convenience, not a cold shoulder. A few touches keep it warm.

The worry owners have — fairly — is that screens make a place feel impersonal. The fix is to keep a human in the loop: someone to greet, to help with the kiosk, to bring the food and say thanks. The screen handles the tedious part so your people can do the warm part.

And always leave a human path open. A customer who doesn't want to use the screen should never feel stuck. The option to be served by a person isn't a failure of your tech — it's good hospitality.

✓ Tech plus a smile, not instead of one

The shops that win with kiosks and QR use them to free staff FOR customers, not FROM them. Keep the smile at the door and the screen just makes the line move.

Questions to ask before you buy

Run these by the salesperson — or by me — before you spend a dime on any of these screens.

Q: Does my POS plan actually include this, or is it an add-on?

Not every plan supports kiosks or QR ordering, and some charge extra. Confirm it works on your system and your plan, in writing, before you buy the hardware.

Q: What's the all-in cost — hardware, setup, and any monthly fee?

Ask for the full picture: the device, the setup, and any recurring charge. A cheap screen with a fat monthly fee may cost more than it saves.

Q: Is the hardware tied to a contract or a lease?

Kiosk gear is sometimes bundled into a longer processing deal. Get the term, the exit fee, and whether you own or lease — same as any contract.

Q: Will my network and space really handle it?

Be honest about your Wi-Fi, your signal, and your floor space. If any of the three is weak, fix it first or pass.

✓ No rush to be first

There's no deadline on this decision. A screen will be just as available and a bit cheaper in six months, so there's no harm in waiting until the need is clear.

Common mistakes people make

The regret I hear about these almost always comes from one of these slip-ups. Now you'll see them coming.

- **Buying a kiosk for a problem you don't have** — no real line, no labor crunch, just a shiny demo.
- **Adding screens to a shaky network** so they stutter at the worst possible moment.
- **Making QR the only way to order** and losing the guests who won't use a phone.
- **Forgetting the kitchen** — moving the order faster when the bottleneck was always the cooking.
- **Letting the menu go stale** so the screen shows wrong items or old prices.
- **Signing a long hardware lease** without reading it like any other contract.

! The expensive mistake

The dearest one is buying big hardware you don't need. A kiosk you use once a day is a very costly coat rack. When in doubt, start with the cheap display or nothing at all.

A simple path through the three

If you want a rule of thumb to carry out the door, here it is — the order I'd think about these in.

First, a customer display, if you take tips or ring up multi-item orders — it's cheap and it prevents daily headaches. Second, QR ordering, only if you run table service and your Wi-Fi is genuinely strong. Last and most carefully, a kiosk, only when you have real lines and tight labor at predictable peaks.

For many small shops, that path ends at 'a display, and that's plenty.' And for the smallest, it ends at 'none, and I'm the better for it.' Either is a perfectly good answer.

★ Let's find your stopping point

Everyone's path ends in a different place, and that's the point. Tell me about your shop and I'll help you find exactly where yours stops — no further, no less. Call (330) 200-8042.

When a screen goes down at the worst time

Any screen will have a bad day. What matters is that a dead kiosk or a down network never stops you taking a payment.

Always keep a fallback. If the kiosk freezes, a staffed register takes over. If the Wi-Fi drops and QR ordering stalls, your servers step in with a pad and a reader. The screen is a helper, never your only way to do business.

Know how you reach support for the hardware, and keep a simple backup reader on hand. Our offline-mode and register-network guides cover keeping the register running when the connection wobbles.

✓ A local hand for the hiccups

Phone support can't see your counter at Friday lunch. That's where I come in — I'll get these set up right and be a call away when one acts up, in plain English, same day when I can.

Setting honest expectations

These screens are tools, not miracles. Knowing what they will and won't do keeps you happy with your choice.

A display will smooth your checkout and tips. A kiosk will shorten lines and free a hand at peak. QR ordering will cut the running in a busy room. None of them will cook faster, fix a weak network, or replace a warm welcome — and none will pay for itself if the need wasn't there to begin with.

Expect a short learning stretch for staff and customers, a little fiddling to get the menu and prompts right, and the odd hiccup. Give it a few real weeks before you judge. If it solved the problem you named, it stays; if it didn't, there's no shame in pulling it.

✓ Judge it by the problem, not the novelty

The thrill of new hardware fades in a week. What should decide its fate is whether the line is shorter, the tips are clearer, or the staff are freer — the problem you bought it to solve.

Common Questions

The questions owners ask me most about displays, kiosks, and QR ordering, answered plainly.

Q: Does a small shop really need a kiosk?

Usually not. Kiosks earn their keep when you have real lines and tight labor at predictable peaks. A one- or two-person shop with short lines is better off skipping it — maybe add a cheap customer display instead.

Q: Which is the best value of the three?

For most counter shops, the customer-facing display — it's the cheapest, smooths tips and disputes, and asks almost nothing of your space. Kiosks and QR only pay off in the right setting.

Q: Do customers actually like QR ordering?

Some do, some don't. Younger, tech-comfortable crowds take to it; older guests and big groups often prefer a person. Never make it the only option, and keep a server available.

Q: What's the one thing that sinks these?

A weak network. All three lean on your Wi-Fi and internet, and a shaky connection makes them stutter at your busiest moment. Get your register and network solid first — see that guide.

★ Still weighing it up?

I love this kind of question, because the honest answer is often 'save your money.' Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll figure out which of these, if any, actually fits your shop — with nothing to sell you.

You don't have to figure this out alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person who speaks plain English is one call away.

I hope this guide made displays, kiosks, and QR ordering feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it with your other business papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't feel you have to memorize a thing.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your shop or your kitchen table, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't sell payment processing and I earn no commission from any company — so the advice you get is just honest advice. For the tax and legal fine points, I'll point you to your accountant or attorney.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Three Ways to Add a Screen

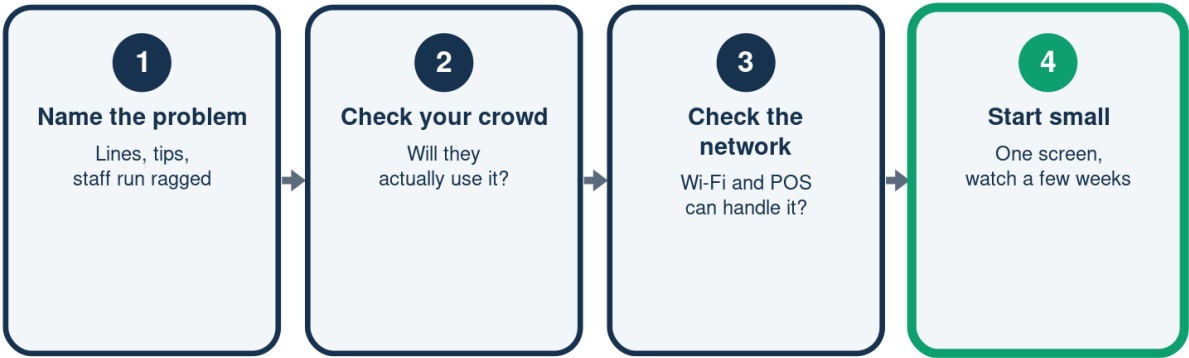
What each adds and what it asks of you

	What it adds	What it needs
Display	Clear order, tips	Small, cheap
Kiosk	Shorter lines	Hardware, space
QR ordering	Less running	Strong Wi-Fi

Someone still assembles the order -- these move ordering, not cooking.

Deciding in Four Steps

The calm way to tell need from novelty



If any step is a shrug, wait -- there's no prize for being first.

Do You Need It, or Not?

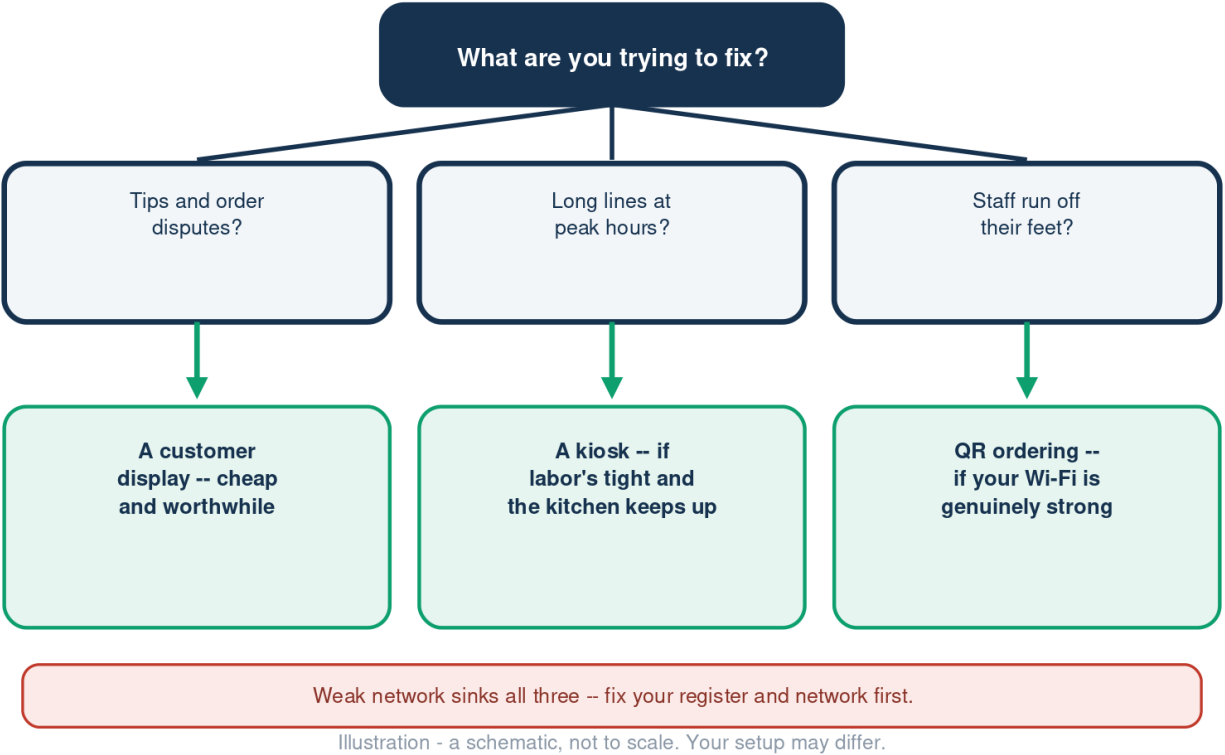
An honest look before you spend

	Worth a look	Probably skip
Display	Take tips	Cash only, 1 item
Kiosk	Real peak lines	Short lines
QR ordering	Table service	Counter only

A small, simple shop often needs none of these -- and that's fine.

Which Screen, If Any?

Let your real problem point the way





Need a Real Person?

You do not have to remember all of it.
You just have to remember you can call.
Friendly, in-person tech help -- I come to you.

BILL'S PROMISE

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make it right -- or refund it. No awkwardness,
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— Bill

Prefer help without a visit?

Bill can screen-share and fix many things remotely — a flat \$49, free for Support Plan members.



A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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