



**HERTFORDSHIRE
CONSTABULARY**

PREVENTING RETAIL CRIME & SECURITY ADVICE





Common shoplifting techniques

Whilst each shoplifter will have their own preferred method of stealing items, there are some common techniques to look out for.

The techniques will vary according to many factors including the size/value of the item, the layout of the store, the motivation of the offender and the security measures in place.

Concealment

- Most shoplifters will seek to conceal items and then leave the store without generating attention. They may use bags or coats as identified above, but also hide items within or under a pushchair, dropping items into an umbrella or placing smaller items within larger items which are not detected during payment.
- Clothing shops with changing rooms are particularly attractive as items of clothing can be worn out of the store without generating attention.

Distraction

A lone offender may ask a member of staff to check for stock and then take items whilst the shop floor is empty. Sometimes offenders will work in groups where one will steal whilst others cause a distraction. This could be an apparent medical emergency, making a complaint or asking for directions or assistance.



Grab and Go

Some offenders will favour the brazen approach, relying on the element of surprise and slow reactions of staff. This is particularly effective in stores with large quantities of desirable items close to the exits.

Fraud

Shoplifters will change price tags or even remove items from the store and try to seek a refund, even though they have not paid for it.

Shoplifters will look for opportunities to steal when they are less likely to be caught. Key times include:

- When staff are busy with other customers.
- During a shift change when there may be less staff on duty.
- When a delivery is being unloaded.



How to deter shoplifting

The most effective security will be based on seeing your merchandise through the offender's eyes. Think about factors that would help make stealing easier – privacy, lack of supervision and easily accessible items are likely to be high on the list. Don't rely on one measure alone – the most effective protection is always to have several layers of security.

Carry out the following self-assessment at least once a year to check your level of security against shoplifters



Self-Assessment

Check	YES	NO	Further Information
Do you have a policy to Meet and Greet? Meet and greet people as they enter the store and ask them if they require help as they shop.	☐	☐	Genuine customers will enjoy that level of service and it may be enough to deter a shoplifter. <i>Alert and attentive staff who willingly engage with customers rather than chatting to fellow staff will send out a strong message that staff are more likely to notice and react to suspicious behaviour.</i> <i>Staff should be made aware how to identify risk factors and the company policy on dealing with shoplifters made clear to them.</i>
Do you have a code that can alert all staff to the presence of a potential shoplifter?	☐	☐	Experienced shoplifters will know many of the alerts used and will leave the store if they hear. You could have a word or sound and make use of the Tanoy system if you have one. Consider changing this every so often to make it more difficult for the potential offenders.
Do you have Red routes?	☐	☐	Identify routes where thefts (or concealment) are most likely to occur and advise staff that they must walk those routes as often as possible when they move around the store.



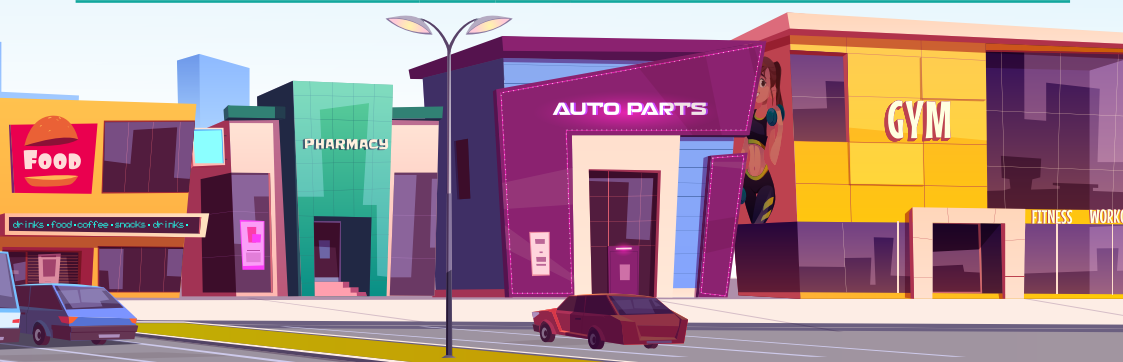
Check	YES	NO	Further Information
Are you a member of a Watch Scheme?	☐	☐	Find out if there is a business watch scheme in your area and join in. This may be something town wide where premises are linked by radios or something more informal with a few premises keeping each other alert via a What's app group. If there isn't a scheme, set one up yourself. Search for 'BID (<i>and the name of your town</i>)' (Business Improvement District) for details of formal schemes in your area. Display in a prominent position signage advertising you are part of Shop Watch and operate a banning system for offenders.



Check	YES	NO	Further Information
Do you have good CCTV and are you able to operate it effectively?	☐	☐	Well positioned, high quality CCTV that covers the whole store can be a valuable deterrent to potential shoplifters. Make regular checks to ensure that the CCTV is not obscured by changing store layouts and ensure there are no blind spots. Even if those areas contain low value items, shoplifters will take high value items to those black spots in order to conceal them. Make sure you always have a member of staff trained to download the images available. For further details on CCTV please see; www.ico.org.uk
Do you have Security staff and are they effective?	☐	☐	Whilst it is important to embed a security culture within the whole organisation, efficient security personnel can provide a deterrent specially to prolific offenders whom they will recognise and can ask to leave the shop immediately. The priority for security staff, as with all staff, is to deter and disrupt thefts rather than wait until a theft has occurred.



Check	YES	NO	Further Information
Are goods stored close to entrances and exits?	☐	☐	Never store high value, high risk or new stock close to the door. These are the items most likely to be taken and it is too easy for shoplifters to walk in, grab a load of items and run out before staff have even noticed their presence.
Are you managing your fitting rooms properly?	☐	☐	If you are unable to have a member of staff in the fitting rooms at all times, consider locking the room and advise customers that staff will be happy to assist if they require the changing rooms. If you can have an attendant on the door, they should monitor the items being taken in and out and be wary of shoplifters either wearing shop items when they leave or attempting to conceal non-clothing items in the changing rooms. A pre-numbered tagging system will prevent disputes over the number of items that have been taken into the room.
Are your entrances and exits managed correctly?	☐	☐	Turn-styles at the entrance and exits will delay someone trying to exit the store quickly without paying. Remote control entry lock systems can assist in deterring unwanted customers. It will also let you position your CCTV camera to capture the best possible facial image of all customers.



Check	YES	NO	Further Information
Have you considered the area outside your premises?	☐	☐	Don't forget to review what goes on outside your premises too. For example, a passageway beside your premises may facilitate concealment and /or escape. Investigate if you can install gates on the passageway or consider CCTV.
Our top tips for displaying valuable and desirable items	☐	☐	High value and desirable items should be placed in areas of maximum surveillance by staff. This may include behind the till area.
	☐	☐	Consider using empty boxes and locked cabinets for display purposes. Laminated glass will increase the protection for valuable items and keys should be limited to specific staff.
	☐	☐	Only display what you can realistically expect to sell during trading hours and replenish as necessary.
	☐	☐	Tagging items that activate an alarm at the final exits - only effective if staff respond to the alarm.



Check	YES	NO	Further Information
	☐	☐	Make it hard for someone to grab numerous items and leave the store quickly. This could be something as simple as hanging clothes with the hangers pointing in alternating directions or clear plastic restrictors on the shelves. Advise staff to be aware of anyone who might be tampering with the display to make it easier to return and grab a quantity of items.
Do you have a policy for civil recovery and enforcement? Have you made customers and staff aware?	☐	☐	Use signs to let potential shoplifters know that you have a policy on theft and make sure you enforce it. Make use of civil recovery options and simply ask people if they can pay for the item and then ban them from the store. <i>Always call police if the offender is under 18, a prolific offender, has mental health issues or is in any way violent.</i>



Check	YES	NO	Further Information
Have you taken steps to control access within the store?	☐	☐	Ensure that stock rooms, offices, staff rest areas and anywhere else that is private is secure except to those with a genuine need. Make sure that fire exits are alarmed and make sure that staff adhere to those rules too. For example, if doors are left insecure after staff use them as a short cut to leave the store, shoplifters will also take advantage of them as escape routes or secluded locations to conceal goods.
Do you have a policy to report all incidents of crime and ASB to police?	☐	☐	Unless it is an emergency, this is best done on line herts.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime This allows us to direct resources most efficiently but also sends a message out to the criminal community that the risks are higher at your store. Consider the use of a proforma to encourage staff to record as many details as possible about the incident and offender.
If you have CCTV – have you displayed the correct signage?	☐	☐	If you have CCTV in store you must display signs to let everyone in the premises know it is present. Use the CCTV checklist to make sure you can use your system effectively.



CCTV Checklist

If you use a CCTV System in your business, you will find more information on our website under the 1st Principle advice section

You can also complete the following simple check to make sure your CCTV is effective

Is the video signal from cameras recorded at a minimum of 6 frames per second?	☐	☐
Do you have a nominated person available at all times who is trained and able to replay recordings and produce copies for the police?	☐	☐
Does the nominated person know the retention period of recordings?	☐	☐
Is your system able to quickly export video and stills onto a removable storage medium e.g. CD/DVD with the time and date integral to the relevant picture and without any drop-in quality?	☐	☐
Do your exported images include any software needed to view or replay the pictures?	☐	☐
Is your equipment and installation compliant with BS EN 50132-7?	☐	☐



CCTV Checklist

Is your system capable of saving and securing recorded images for review or export at a later date?

☐
☐

Information should be kept secure and retained for no longer than is necessary for the purpose of the system. A minimum of 14 days is recommended for small CCTV systems.

Do you check your system clock?

☐
☐

The system clock should be set correctly and kept accurate (taking account of GMT and BST). This will be very important if a police investigation is carried out.

Is your system Password Protected?

☐
☐

Do you know the make and model of your CCTV?

☐
☐

Would you like advice on how to use/upgrade/improve your system?

☐
☐


Self-assessment Action Plan

Date	Proposed Actions	Carried out by



Top Tips



Train all staff in non-confrontational deterrent techniques – it is always better to deter a potential thief

Keep high value products under close surveillance and away from the exits

Ensure there is good natural surveillance in all areas of the premises

Ban known offenders from your premises

Work with partners to stay alert to potential offenders

Have a policy for fitting room security.

This guide is designed to help businesses create a hostile environment for criminals by identifying key characteristics of shoplifting behaviour and explaining a range of techniques that can be used to reduce the risk of shoplifting. Take a more proactive approach to tackling shoplifting before it occurs in order to make your shop a safer working environment for staff, a safer experience for customers and to reduce the demand on police resources.



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Official Police Security Initiative

More security products can be found at

www.soldsecure.com

You can always report intelligence or information anonymously to Crimestoppers

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

CrimeStoppers.

0800 555 111

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In an emergency always dial 999





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