

# HOW TO SPOT A SHOPLIFTER



A shoplifter may exhibit certain behaviour and body language which can arouse suspicion.

## Things to look out for are:

- Attempting to avoid attention
- Sweating / looking flushed / anxious
- Repeatedly browsing
- Eyes wandering / looking elsewhere than the products
- Wearing clothing which is not appropriate for the weather e.g. larger clothes to conceal stolen items
- Carrying large bags

## Common Shoplifting tactics

**Distraction Theft** – A group of people will enter the store and distract staff in order to steal.

**Staff Collusion** – Staff and thieves working together to steal.

**Bagging** – Items will be hidden within bags. Metal lined bags can prevent any exit tagging alarm systems.

**Hiding Merchandise** – Goods are hidden in prams, within clothing, handbags or packaging of less expensive goods.

**Price swapping** - Changing price tags to pay less.

**'Accidental' Stealing** – Stealing goods but claiming it was an accident.

**Fake Returns** – Thieves will select an item in store and take it to the returns desk claiming they've lost the receipt.

## Powers when detaining a 'Shoplifter'

Please ensure that staff are trained in procedures for dealing with shoplifting incidents. Employees' personal safety should **ALWAYS** be your first concern.

### To detain a shoplifter you must:

**KNOW** an offence has taken place and **REASONABLY SUSPECT** the person has committed it.

You can detain a shoplifter when it is not reasonably practical for a police officer to make the arrest for you. Additionally the arrest must be necessary to prevent the person in question:

- Causing damage to a property or making off before an officer can assume responsibility
- Causing physical injury to themselves or another individual

If an offender leaves the scene, make note of the direction they are travelling in, and any other details including description of the offender and details of any vehicles or associates.

**Lancashire Constabulary is committed to the prevention and detection of crime including shoplifting.**

# A GUIDE FOR RETAILERS PREVENTING SHOPLIFTERS



## IN AN EMERGENCY

always call 999 with the business name and full address.

Alternatively, contact 101  
(non-emergency)

or 0800 555 111

(CrimeStoppers, *anonymously*)

Website - [www.lancashire.police.uk](http://www.lancashire.police.uk)

Twitter @LancPolBusCrime



# A GUIDE FOR RETAILERS PREVENTING SHOPLIFTERS



## HOW TO PREVENT SHOPLIFTING

The primary goal of businesses is to deter shoplifters and prevent theft from occurring. Possible deterrents include:

### Customer Service and Greeters:

By greeting genuine shoppers, not only does this provide a positive impression of your store, it also deters potential shoplifters. An offender is less likely to shoplift if they sense that they are to be seen and noticed by staff.

**Invest in Security Personnel:** Consider employing security on a full time basis or alternatively part time during the vulnerable times of the day/week.

**Disruption Tactics:** If an individual is displaying odd or suspicious behaviour, employees should be encouraged to approach and offer assistance. Other disruption tactics include tidying/rearranging stocks and aisles nearby the potential shoplifter.

**Signage:** Make it clear that shoplifting will not be tolerated and any perpetrators shall be reported.

**Install CCTV:** CCTV should cover entrances and exits, capturing images of people entering and leaving the store. Additionally CCTV should cover high value and known targeted stock.

**Working in Partnership:** If available, consider joining a local retail crime initiative (Business Improvement District, Shopwatch, Business Crime Reduction Partnership etc.) and joining their retail radio link. If you are part of a scheme, liaise with CCTV, the police and other stores to deter shoplifters.

**Electronic Article Surveillance:** Consider attaching EAS to high value and known targeted stock. These are known to be a deterrent for potential shoplifters

**Store Layout:** Store design and layout can be a large contributing factor to shoplifting especially when an employee's vision can be blocked. Store layout can be designed to prevent blind spots.

### Summary of good management practices:

- Reduce blind spots
- Place expensive goods away from doors
- Increase space around high risk items to avoid theft
- Move high risk items into higher security zones with higher staff surveillance
- Carry out regular stock and inventory checks to ensure that stock losses are noticed promptly

*This guide has been produced to help assist retailers reduce and minimise incidents of shoplifting*

*The advice and guidance provided within the document will not be suitable for every store. Recommendations should be read and considered within the context of your business and with reference to the goods you sell.*

### What is shoplifting?

Shoplifting is Theft: a person who dishonestly takes property belonging to another, with the intention of permanently depriving the other of that property.

### What are the risks?

Many shoplifters are opportunistic and therefore the risk of theft is not preventable.

### It is important to know:

- Your top targeted items and vulnerable stock
- Vulnerable times of the day
- Vulnerable times of the week
- Vulnerable times of the year

**Businesses need to be aware of three things which need to occur simultaneously for a crime to take place:**

- A suitable target e.g. the items sold
- A motivated offender
- Lack of a capable guardian – the absence of anyone seeing or being able to prevent the theft

Overall, if an opportunity arises for an offender to steal valuable or desirable goods, with little chance or no chance of being caught, losses will occur.