

Top safety tips to prevent shoplifting

 By [Morné Stoltz](#)

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Despite the prevalence of security cameras and high-tech alarm systems, shoplifting continues to be a concern for retailers across the country, with well-versed thieves easily able to outwit these technological barriers.



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For business owners this alarming trend is especially unnerving, given their reliance on stock and increasing competition from online retail sites. Rather than simply accepting theft as part of business ownership, it is important that storeowners remain vigilant, enforcing appropriate preventative measures and learning to identify some of the key signs that could give a criminal away.

Here are a few top tips to bear in mind to avoid falling victim to shoplifting:

1. Know the signs

While not all shoplifters employ the same modus operandi, a few key behavioural traits should raise the alarm. Shoppers trying not to be noticed or walking around nervously are obvious candidates, as are those who loiter purposefully, picking up and putting back the same items repeatedly. Also, be on the lookout for customers wearing large coats or clothing items, especially in warm weather, or carrying oversized bags. Ensure your retail staff is well versed in the telltale signs of shoplifters, which will hopefully enable them to take action before it is too late.

2. Put in place shoplifting policies and procedures

Your employees might be able to spot a shoplifter but they might not be as certain of what to do once the suspect has been identified. It is vital that you educate your staff on how best to handle a potential shoplifting situation, giving them a clear breakdown of the policies and procedures to follow in the event of an incident.

3. Let customer service be your tool

Greeting your customers as they enter your store is not just great customer service. By acknowledging their presence, you send a clear sign that you are aware of your environment, something that could deter opportunistic criminals. So make sure

that your staff is ready with a welcoming smile if you want to throw would-be shoplifters off their game.

4. Use your store layout to your advantage

The layout of your store can make an enormous difference, as criminals are well versed in spotting those unmanned corners and dead spaces. By changing your store's appearance from time to time and keeping blind spots to a minimum, you will keep criminals on their toes and ensure that they will think twice about bringing out those sticky fingers.

5. Know your stock

If you do not monitor your stock, it will be difficult for you to identify theft in the first place, leaving you far more vulnerable to crime. By maintaining a detailed overview of your stock items, you will be able to identify thefts when they happen, picking up any patterns that might potentially enable you to stop thieves in their tracks.

6. Gear up with the correct security measures

Unfortunately, it is impossible for your staff members to monitor every customer at all times, particularly if you need them to drive sales. As such, it is important to make use of crime prevention tools such as security cameras, stock tags and additional alarms to act as a backup when your employees are otherwise occupied. Hiring additional security personnel can also act as a huge deterrent and if you are lucky enough to operate in an area with local community policing, be sure to partner up with them.

7. Be vigilant

It might seem obvious, but being on the ball can make all the difference when it comes to keeping your business protected. By equipping your team with the tools to pre-empt a crime, you will be far likelier to stop it before it happens. If you or your staff suspects someone is planning to rob you, consider offering them help or repacking shelves close by to demonstrate that you are watching. In most instances, this should be enough to send them away empty handed.

If you find your business has fallen victim to shoplifting, it is important to let police and security guards know of the incident. Loss of stock can cause serious damage to your cash flow – therefore it is an important consideration to add stock insurance cover to your business property policy to cover your losses caused by shoplifting.

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