

# SHOPLIFTING

*the art and the science*

*This book is intended to raise consciousness of what shoplifting entails and what issues are linked to it. It is also intended to warn against traps for shoplifters. None of the suggestions are fool-proof. Shoplifting is also not completely sustainable.*

## Ethics

OK, so capitalism isn't the greatest. It means the rich get more and the poor get less. We have to work our lives away, often doing personally unfulfilling menial labor, to afford a place to live and food to eat. This isn't ok; this sucks. This makes us unhappy. There are ways to loosen the system's grip on us. There are ways to acquire what we need even when we cannot afford it.

Dumpster diving is a superb past-time and a sure fire way to get a lot of what you need (especially food) free of charge. I'm not going to go in depth here because that is not what this book is about. But, stores throw tons of goods away every day. They are all just tucked away in neat green metal boxes behind the stores. Find out when the thrash is picked up, go before then and check it out for yourself. Whatever food and other necessities I can't find in dumpsters, I often shoplift.

Shoplifting is often talked up as a sort of hyper-boycotting. The idea behind this notion is that if a corporation is really fucked up, by stealing from them you are directly hurting the company therefore doing a righteous deed. While this may be true to some extent, the majority of large powerful corporations compensate for stolen merchandise by raising prices, which only worsens the problem. The only businesses which 'hyper-boycotting' has the potential to harm are those independently run businesses who rely on every stitch of business they get to stay open. It is always important to steal from the corporation and not from the independent business.

A pitfall of shoplifting is that it leads to consumerism. Sometimes we think that just because we are stealing things instead of spending money on them, that it is ok. The thing is, it's still consumerism. Collecting a bunch of useless shit that you don't really need or even want because it's free and it makes you feel powerful and rich sucks. I try to resist the urge to steal things I know that I don't need, only want because of some warped perception of material possessions.

Another downfall of shoplifting is that it is more accessible to people depending upon race and other factors. White people may be automatically considered less suspicious. Single mothers may not be able to shoplift because of the consequences of getting caught, despite the fact that they may not be able to afford the necessities of themselves and their child/children (even pets). Because you shoplift, or can shoplift, doesn't mean you are radder or a better anticapitalist than the rest of us. I may just mean you have privileges which play into everything You do including stealing.

## How -To

### *Identify:*

Know what you are going to steal before you enter the store. When possible know where items are in the store and know where all exits are. In

search you. Even if they say they have you on camera stashing something, they could not prove that you didn't put it back before you tried to leave the store. You could also act like a complete nutcase and you honestly had no idea what you were doing. This worked for me once. I believe the trick to this one is that you must remain extremely friendly and comply with them, let them search you. They may confiscate what you were trying to steal and let you go. Some places just won't want to go through the trouble of prosecuting. Your other option, especially if you don't believe you will ever want to return to the store, is to run. Many stores have a no chasing policy, while at other stores some die-hard employees may take matters into their own hands and chase you. I've never tried this.

some cases I plan a route I will take through the store before I go in. This can minimize the amount of time you are in the store, possibly looking suspicious.

### ***Evaluate:***

You must evaluate whether the score is worth getting caught for. The implications of getting caught when you are a minor are relatively trivial as compared to the fines, etc. pinned to adults. Next you must evaluate the security system and take precautions.

## **Cameras**

At the point of entering you must discretely, and rapidly, check all logical and possible locations of major and minor video cameras. First you should glance and locate any obvious camera systems. This includes all blatant cameras, things resembling cameras, all black or silver half spheres on the ceiling or dangling full spheres (which conceal cameras). Note that many stores are replacing the standard camera with these full and half sphere ceiling and dangling cameras. These full and half spheres are advantageous over normal cameras because the camera itself exists inside the sphere. Some of these cameras move and look in multiple directions, but since you cannot see through the sphere, usually, you don't know where the camera is pointing. In other words, you can't just avoid the lens, you must avoid a 360 degree viewing sphere because it could be pointed anywhere.

After you've located these you should be aware of anything else which might be a camera. Any excessive or unusually placed lighting, unnecessary exit signs, and all mirrors, including ceiling mirrors in any place. These are places that sometimes hide cameras. Exit signs and lighting seldom conceal cameras, but they do exist. Mirrors, however, are more likely to conceal cameras. Mirrors on walls can be two-sided, meaning they can have cameras on the other side or employees watching you. Ceiling mirrors will sometimes hide cameras. Take a glance at the ceiling and notice any mirrors flat against the ceiling, many times these are above registers to watch clerks and film robberies. Sometimes mirror cameras dangle similar to full spheres except they are often rectangular. Once you feel you have successfully located all cameras you can now look for other security road blocks and also places in the store that have blind spots to their cameras.

## **Alarms**

Alarm systems are another means used to circumvent shoplifters. When you enter a store to shoplift, after all other precautionary actions are taken, but before you begin to steal, you must search out and find all sensor tags and alarm triggering devices. This is not always so simple though. Alarm tags come in dozens of shapes, sizes and forms. It will take time and experience to learn them. They sometimes appear as a thin or thick Sku (bar-code) which if peeled off reveals a metal strip on its flip side. Sometimes the price tag is the alarm tag (peel it off to be sure). Others use other stickers with store names on them or messages which if removed will expose the concealed silver alarm on its opposite side. Many retail stores

use white and black square patches, or long white strips, sometimes with silver spots showing on top or bottom. Others use plain black, white and silver strips, which blend in with the color of the product or its packaging. Many times the product has several alarm tags on it. For example, almost all video rental stores globally, both big and small, have two to three tags on rental movies. with at least one of those tags concealed. Clothing stores often use durable, plastic alarm clips which are sometimes difficult to remove from the product without damaging it and some of these, if removed, spill dark ink on the clothing and damage the material. And the worst of the worst, the single handed most threatening alarm tags are those on the inside of the product. Inside places where only manufacturers, distributors, and stores with shrink wrapping machines can place them. All of these alarm tags are very common. They must be located, torn off and disposed of (although some alarm tags can be made inactive simply by keeping your thumb over the tag). The growing and dangerous number of items with alarm tags inside of them (the future of all alarm tags) must be opened, tags must be found and removed, and, or the product must be stolen naked, taking the barest form of the product.

A good way of knowing whether or not the store uses alarm tags is to check for alarm gates at the entrance and exits of the store. Alarm gates are usually easy to spot, but sometimes are kept from public eye, just as cameras and other devices are disguised as decorations, to both catch shoplifters and to keep from annoying and offending normal customers who might be uncomfortable and turned away if they knew they're being watched, monitored and tested.

Most of you can recognize a normal alarm gate. They look like posts, walls, gates, and other chrome, vanilla and multi-colored wall or post set ups, but some of these are mounted as small boxes high up on the walls and are less noticeable. The majority of alarm systems are installed and manufactured by Sensormatic corporation. Sensormatic is the largest retail alarm system in the world; they exist in 85% of all retail industries internationally. The second biggest is Checkpoint corporation. These systems are usually installed in groups of two to three at each exit and entrance of the store. Some stores have them at the registers. They sometimes get in the way and are always accidentally being activated.

Other alarm gates are much more difficult to spot. These are the gates which are even more threatening to shoplifters. They're hidden in the walls, in the floor, and behind heavy marble slabs and other places you might not think they could be and where you have no way of seeing them. However, most of these alarm gates have a visible weakness that you, as a shoplifter, should take full advantage of. There is usually a control panel somewhere near the alarm gate. It is sometimes above the exit, or somewhere beside it. It's usually, but never limited to, brown, black or white and has digital light numbers on it. Look for any electrical or unusual devices with red, orange or flashing lights on it which could also be an alarm system. These are not always visible. It sometimes rests behind counters and out of public eye,

One of the most remarkable means of shoplifting, and my personal favorite, is the use of the armpit. To best take advantage of this method a sweater, flat, but stiff, jacket, or some other piece of clothing which flattens out and distorts the true shape and figure of the torso, without causing a "bulky" look, is recommended. To use the arm pit to hold and store product you need to slide the merchandise under your clothing and under your arm pit against your bare skin. It is important that the item be against the skin and not the clothing; the armpit is usually slightly moist with perspiration and items, especially plastic coated, which have a tendency to slide out of place against cotton will stay unbelievably well under the bare arm pit. This whole process should take less than one second. Ever, multiple items can be stored here. To prevent slippage when holding many items it is a good idea to rubber band together the items before concealing them, this keeps the it! from moving once they're in place (note that carrying, rubber bands with you when planning to shoplift is wise).

The use of the arm pit for shoplifting has other outstanding aspects. While holding several items under the armpit(s) you are able to maintain incredible versatility. You can look at magazines, pick up dropped goods, and wave good by all while storing goods under your arm pit. You'll be surprised at what your usually useless arm pit is capable of.

## Using a Bag

The use of bags, whether it be backpacks, purses or whatever, can be very useful if you learn to use these effectively. Using a bag by yourself is slightly dangerous. The use of a bag takes longer to conceal stolen merchandise than the use of your body. It may take only a second or two longer but when your shoplifting sometimes a second is two or three times longer than you have. So be quick if you use a bag alone.

If you can find a friend to shoplift with you you'll find that using a bag can be much safer. This friend will become your shoplifting teammate. The teammate can walk behind the shoplifter carrying a bag and can very quickly and easily drop goods into the bag and close it. Neither of you have to stop walking to steal and persons behind you are blind to the concealment by the second shoplifter's body. Bags can hold merchandise such as frozen foods which are extremely cold when they're smashed under a bare arm pit.

The more you steal from a store the more they may suspect you.

## Caught!

Basically, when you are caught, the alarm goes off or you are confronted by an employee, you have two options. Either attempt to play it off or run. If you play off, you have two ways to go. You can act like a respectable consumer who hasn't got anything on them. When and if they ask to search your bags and such you can be upset or outraged that they would even suspect you and subject you to humiliation. Stores have no legal right to

watching at that moment. Often you can find blind spots in aisles with tall shelves, near product that sells at a relatively slow rate or has a low loss history, or on aisles where merchandise is large and difficult to shoplift. To find blind spots you can stroll by aisles noting which aisles are visible to any form of security and which are not, or at least which portions of the aisle are not. Some stores will have very big blind spots everywhere, others will have only scant blind spots where only tiny sections are blind.

Once the area's blind spots are located then you must find and utilize the blind spots with the least number of people. Some shoplifters claim to like a lot of customers around them; they say it's effective camouflage.

## Concealment

After finding prime blind spots in the area you can then conceal the product you plan to steal. A method that is used frequently works best if you can get your hands on a long sleeved, preferably loose sized but heavy duty, jacket, shirt, or similar clothing with strong elastic wrists. This is a sleeve insertion technique. This includes, aside from knowing no one is watching, carefully picking up two items, pretending to glance at them while sliding one of the two items into the sleeve. Then the remaining item is placed back on the shelf. From a distance, if you are seen, and you're smooth in this procedure, it looks as if though you picked up the merchandise and simply put it back if you're uninterested.

A very common tactic uses the waist as a primary spot for storing stolen product. This, aside from blatantly sticking merchandise in pockets, purses, bags, and backpacks, is one of the most often used, best and basic shoplifting techniques. To effectively use your waist, excluding the use of custom clothing, women and men both should wear a belt, or tight underwear or snug pants. The belt must also be covered by an overhanging upper body garment, in other words a slightly long blouse or shirt, preferably one that isn't too tight. In the process of using your waist you need to quickly shove the merchandise into a safe storage area along the waist. The belt, if used, should be used to tighten or loosen the grip. But you can also add more product to the front of the waist to tighten up the product along the backside. The front and the back of the waist are the most popular but the hips can be used as well.

The front of the waist gives you the most versatility. You can bend easiest and keep control of the product. The back of the waist gives you less mobility. Bending causes longer product to protrude and the sense of central control over the merchandise is less. However, concealing the product during shoplifting can be slightly more graceful when using the back side of the waist. You can stand with your back to the wall and slide merchandise into place, giving you full view of oncoming opposition. The back of the waist is, however, a much slower process than is using the front of the waist. Quick concealment can be very important while shoplifting. They both have their advantages.

but it is found visible more often than not. If alarm gates are not present always look for a panel or device similar to this, it may mean the difference between getting caught and getting merchandise.

These alarms are set off by magnetic devices in the alarm tags. They are usually deactivated by magnet strips or guns which circumvent their triggering effect. If you don't see the employee actually deactivating alarm tags, this does not mean they don't exist. These deactivators are being installed and used in an unrevealing manner. The scanners you see at pharmacies and grocery stores, when the product is dragged across it, many times have built in alarm deactivators, so the process of ringing up an item and deactivating its alarm is done in one movement. Thus, the customer or potential shoplifter is fooled into thinking the alarm gates are nonfunctional and are used only for intimidation.

Although many stores use these alarm deactivators, and expect you to remain ignorant of the fact that they deactivate the product as people buy it, you should not let alarm systems, in general, intimidate you. Many retailers actually do use their alarm gates as an intimidation factor, and not much more. Food stores are well known for this. Although alarm tags can be and are used on hundreds of pieces of store product, the very large majority of their goods remain alarm tag free. This is because food is usually not an item easy to tag with alarms. They usually stick out and are hard on soft packaging, produce cannot be tagged, and with the massive number of goods food stores sell daily, and the high price of active alarm tags, they would be losing thousands of dollars alone on alarm tags (this is also why non-functional tags are used, because they cost less). As a result they install alarm systems chiefly to scare away potential shoplifters. It works.

## Leverage Against Alarms

You should be cautious of alarm gates because they almost always work when a tagged product is near (Sensormatic systems have a 96-97% activity rate), but you shouldn't fear them because you do have some leverage against them. Remember that the merchandise you shoplift is not actually stolen until you walk outside of the store. Alarm gates are inside the store and usually a good one or two feet from the door. When we walk through alarm gates you should walk slowly, listening for an alarm. Some alarm gates have a full two second delay, so make sure your walk

is slow. If you take these items from your pockets, and you never actually walked out of the store, you still haven't stolen anything, and in most cases you will not be charged with shoplifting because you did not actually leave the building. No penalties will usually be enforced and they normally cannot, legally, execute any prosecution.



## LOSS PREVENTION

You'll often see security guards at the exit or entrance of a store. These people are obviously there to stop people from stealing. However, there are undercover people lurking in a handful of stores. They're called loss prevention (LP) and their job is to walk around looking like a normal customer but actually try to bust shoplifters. The good thing is that they're fairly easy to recognize.

When you learn to recognize LP, avoiding them becomes much more simple. The time will come, as it has for many shoplifters, when you can walk into a retailer and immediately pick out the store LP. They're always the sore thumb on the painless hand. They're usually doing something which gives themselves away in seconds. They almost always look out of place, and it shows. They start following and standing around you the moment they see you, they just happen to always be shopping in the same area you are, and they just happen to keep looking at what you're doing. Many times they give themselves away by doing things like walking, into restricted areas, behind registers and other places.

You can also test the LP to find out if they're trailing you. Moving from aisle to aisle and looking at things totally irrelevant to the last, and seeing how many times LP changes aisles and seems to be always looking at the same section as you will usually tell you if they're LP. Customers don't follow you and they seldom have all the same shopping needs as you. Furthermore customers very rarely walk into restricted areas nonchalantly.

## Decide

Next you must decide whether or not you are going to steal what you are thinking about stealing. This should be a quick final decision. If you have a gut instinct or bad feeling or are unsure of how good the security is, you might not want to do it. There are other occasions and other corporations.

## Lingering

Standing around debating and trying to overcome your fear of shoplifting while shoplifting is the worst of times to do so. Thousands of shoplifters do this annually and thousands of shoplifters are caught because of this. When you shoplift you should never linger. Lingering stands out dramatically to store security.

## Execute

Everybody has their own technique or style they feel comfortable with. Some people prefer to keep moving or walking around while they are stashing the score to distract from what they are doing. Some people prefer to find a blindspot and relax while in the act. Some people stash in their clothes, pants or sweatshirts, others like using bags. Others use still more imaginative modes of item relocation. A friend of mine once shoved a few onions inside a bundle of collards. Some people like to mix things up. This

is the part where you can really get creative. I like to put on a performance. I dress up and sometimes put on makeup and carry a nice inconspicuously large purse. Guys might find it advantageous to wear a suit and tie. A lot of times no matter how obvious it is that you are stealing something, as long as you look confident in the process people won't think anything of it. If you think an employee is getting suspicious of you, don't be afraid to talk to them or act confused and ask them questions. Chances are they will be much less wary of you after you talk to them normally. The employees aren't your enemy. At some stores, employees may be held responsible for goods stolen during their hours. They may be looking after their jobs, because they need the money to survive. If you feel this is the case at a store where you are stealing, you may want to consider another store.

## Clothing

Look for these types of clothing to aid you as a shoplifter: long sleeved shirts, bulky and a little too large, with elastic or button-close wrists are useful. If the situation permits it, jackets, sweaters, and women's and men's suit coats can aid you. Tight underwear can easily store product in places ensuring success. A belt, used with pants, especially pants with multiple pockets as are found on some men's pants, can be useful. Tall, oversized around the calf boots are good. Long underwear and baggy skirts firmly hold product in place and conceal it as well.

There are also clothes that should not be worn when shoplifting. It is helpful to wear more appropriate clothing when shoplifting, but is harmful to wear clothing which will more easily alert the attention of security. This means huge jackets and shirts, trench coats or oversized bags are not necessary, they only stand out.

## Bulk Reduction

You should always take advantage of your clothing and the true size and shape of what you are planning to steal. This means if the item is awkward shaped because of its packaging, you should discard its wrapping and steal the actual good only.

If your clothing permits it, you can steal multiple items, even if you've dressed lightly. That same item that you've ripped from its bulky packaging can now be stolen in quantity.

## Blindspots

To better understand and learn the techniques necessary for product concealment you need to understand basic tactics concerning the shoplifting environment. In order to successfully remove merchandise from the shelves and onto your body you must first find proper places within the area to employ that activity.

The first order of business is to locate what's known as blind spots. All stores have blind spots and it is essential you find these. Blind spots are areas where cameras, authority, and security are visually incapable of