



# RETAIL SECURITY HANDBOOK

## The Law

It is important to know where you and your staff stand in relation to shoplifters and your powers under the law.

**The Attorney General has issued the following guidelines:**

1) The only power which rests in a private citizen is a power to detain an offender until he can be handed over to the Police. There is a positive duty on the citizen exercising the power of detention, to contact the Police at the earliest opportunity, in order to effect a transfer. He has no right to detain an offender for longer than is necessary to achieve this objective. Thereafter, it is for the Police to decide whether to arrest the offender.

2) The power of detention only arises where the offence is committed in the presence of the private citizen concerned. I am not willing to see private citizens exercising a power of detention on reasonable suspicion of an offence having been committed at some other time, unless or until the Royal Court decides otherwise. (You must see the offence taking place)

3) The power of detention may only be exercised in respect of serious offences. As a matter of policy, I advise that the power should only be exercised in respect of offences where the maximum sentence is 12 months imprisonment or more.

N.B Store detectives are to follow best practice such as informing suspect as to why they are being detained & to caution suspect.

**“You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say may be put into writing and given in evidence.”**

Reply to caution to be noted & **must** be recorded as soon as practicable.



## What does this mean?

By detaining somebody you are effectively keeping them from their liberty. **It is essential the Police are called at the earliest opportunity**, If not you may leave yourself open to a charge of unlawful imprisonment, or perhaps being sued at a later date.

The Police will only arrest the thief if satisfied with the evidence you give to them of the event, so make sure to keep a record of all relevant information to hand.

Whenever you can, make a note of anything relevant the thief may say to you. Evidence is the means by which you establish the facts.

**When detaining someone you must advise the suspect of the following four points:**

1. Who you are
2. Where you are from
3. Confirm that they are being detained
4. Why they are being detained

## How do you give evidence?

**Evidence is given in three ways:**

1. Real evidence: actual goods stolen or item used to steal
2. Orally: as an eye witness account
3. Recorded evidence, such as CCTV, till rolls, price tags

For a successful prosecution the evidence you give must prove beyond reasonable doubt that the suspect is guilty of the theft they are accused of.

For a prosecution to take place under Common Law, you must have at least two pieces of evidence which support each other as fact.

## What should I say when detaining someone?

**An example of this would be:-**

“Excuse me. I work for ..... would you please return to the shop with me as I believe you have items in your possession for which you have not paid for”



## What if they resist?

You are only allowed to use the minimum amount of force to detain a person. The best advice is if they resist is let them go - it's not worth risking your personal safety or the reputation of your company

## Where should I detain someone?

The best place to get a conviction is to stop a thief as they have left your premises i.e. just outside the entrance door. This shows that they have intent to permanently deprive your business of the stolen property

## Power of Search

**Only the Police have the power of search.**

Do not search someone physically as you leave yourself open to the charge of assault. However, you can request the suspect to empty their bags or pockets onto the table, **but be extremely cautious in doing this**, as this is an occasion when a weapon can be produced from either pockets or bags.

If they refuse, you may inform them that the police can take action to search them. You may also prevent or deter theft by barring "would be" thieves from your premises. Your shop is private property and you have the right to bar anyone you do not wish to serve, i.e. known thieves, drunks or people causing fear or alarm to staff or other customers.

## Who is likely to steal from you?

Professional thieves, though of lesser numbers, steal a far greater volume and value of goods than other thieves, so look out for them.

These 20% or so of thieves steal 80% of the goods stolen from your store. There is no such thing as a stereotype shop thief. Not everyone that comes into your store is a welcome visitor. Anyone can be a shoplifter and from any age.

Do not assume anything and never judge a person by their looks.

### **Remember:**

It is not a thief's appearance that gives him/her away, but what they actually do. This is where your awareness of body language comes into play.



## Body Language

All shop thieves want to appear normal, but they subconsciously give away tell-tale signs, particularly their eye, head and hand movements.

### **Suspicious body language is what sharp-eyed shop staff should look for...**

Most normal customers look at the merchandise they are about to buy not the staff who are serving them unless they actually want help.

Yawning and jerky body movements are two forms of tension release a thief displays.

Your suspect avoiding eye contact but using mirrors to see what you are doing is another give away.

A suspect who holds a garment higher than a normal customer would to inspect it, and using it as a cover to look around.

Another variation is the “look at me I’m normal” when a thief stands over a fixture trying to make up their mind and exaggerating their stance.

Be careful of suspects who are exhibiting the same characteristics as a drug user. Pale and thin, staring eyes, nervous and easily spooked. Drug users are often dangerous and unstable. Users require anything up to £500 of goods a day to feed their habit, so treat them as if anything could happen.

## Where do shop thieves steal from?

Thieves steal from all shops but particularly those that appear easy touches, such as self-selection type shops or those that whose staff are indifferent or poor at offering service.

Shop thieves need seclusion and privacy to steal - e.g. when you are not looking or you are distracted.



## Vulnerable areas in shops

- Behind pillars
- Banks of fixtures that are close together
- Behind an in-house display
- At the back of a shop that is dimly lit
- At changing rooms
- At the back of a shop that is not staffed
- Near fitting rooms that are not staffed
- Behind till points where staff are looking the other way
- Beside stairwells or lifts
- At the end of a corridor or aisle in a supermarket
- Areas with particularly high grids or shelving

## When are we most vulnerable?

Most thieves dislike quiet shops where they become the centre of attention. The exception here is when the shops themselves are poorly staffed, with staff preoccupied doing other things.

Your shop is particularly vulnerable when you are under pressure to serve customers or put stock out. This is the time you should be especially vigilant of thieves at work.

Other times to be careful include the start and end of a day, shift changes, stock takes and during store deliveries. Thieves will often watch your shop to determine when it is easiest to steal from you.

The key thing to remember about how thieves steal from you is the speed and sleight of hand they employ to do so, and how they distract you from seeing their theft.



## What and how do thieves steal?

A professional thief will steal anything which is of value and easily sold, whereas the majority of thieves will steal anything that they can make use of. Be aware of the following actions thieves use to steal from your store.

- People wearing jackets with an elasticised waist and cuffs zipped at the bottom but open at the top to put items in.
- People putting dearer goods in cheaper goods' boxes, or changing the price labels.
- Thieves putting on new shoes, kicking their old ones under a fixture and walking out, after sending a sales assistant off the floor.
- A person putting their jacket over a fixture to lift items away.
- Thieves putting jewellery on and walking out with it.
- Thieves "palming" small items such as cosmetics and toiletries.
- Dropping small concealable items into an open glove, hat, motor cycle helmet, bag etc.
- A thief luring staff away from their area by asking for help while another customer comes in to steal from that area.

**It is important to be alert and aware of the ploys thieves use to steal and the body language and behaviour they use to commit the act.**

## Awareness and vigilance

The real secret to reducing your losses is down to how highly trained, visible, alert and motivated your management and staff are.

Thieves hate management and staff being around as they know they have a higher likelihood of being spotted and arrested.

Be careful that managers and staff do not become complacent when surrounded by a number of theft prevention aids, as this has dire consequences as far as their effectiveness is concerned.

The equipment is only as good as the staff that look after it. There is no substitute for awareness and vigilance.



## Service is security

**Legendary customer service means working closely with your staff and customers, and being aware and attentive to their needs.**

Your presence will discourage potential thieves, and a shop with a reputation for service and visible management and staff soon gets noticed by the professional thief.

The following actions will increase your staff visibility, alertness and theft deterrent ability.

- Never leave the floor or till unattended without ensuring that someone is keeping an eye on it.
- Make sure that a member of staff is covering the front of the store at all times.
- Make sure your staff double check prices if they are suspicious of marked down items or wrongly marked items.
- All staff should use locker facilities that have been allocated to them, so that they do not have to bring their bags, valuables and money onto the shop floor.
- Use the clock face method to direct your colleague's attention to the shoplifter, and a code word to warn other staff and management of suspicious behaviour.

## How to deter a shoplifter

- Let them know that you know they are there. Approach the suspect and offer assistance to help them buy. This is one of the most powerful deterrent actions you can take. A thief will often show signs of discomfort and desire to get away from you as quickly as possible.
- Get staff to pick up a telephone in view of their suspect and making it obvious they are looking in his/her general direction as they are talking into the phone.
- Position a member of staff near the exit looking at the suspect as they walk towards them will cause a thief to look for another exit or dump the goods.
- Bluffing a suspect into "dumping" can help avoid getting into a detention situation, especially if you are not sure a theft has taken place. It is also a much more practical course of action if you have insufficient staff available to cope with a detention.



## Keep the shoplifter under continuous observation

If you see a thief, you should observe their behaviour and actions while trying to alert another member of staff or management as discreetly as possible.

If the thief has seen you they may dump or put back the stolen items. If you take your eyes off them even for an instant this could lead to you detaining them without the evidence needed to get a conviction.

For this reason “continuous observation” is vital if you intend to detain someone.

**In an emergency always call the police on 112 or 999**

## Dealing with theft in practice

Although the first and most important point regarding theft is to stop it happening in the first place through team vigilance and customer service, it will from time to time still happen.

### **So what exactly should you do if you see a theft take place?**

Given the ratio of staff to management in most shops, it is more likely a member of staff will spot a potential thief before their manager. The manager therefore, has the responsibility to ensure that their staff are trained in theft prevention and detection techniques.

### **Always consider your circumstances when contemplating a detention.**

- Do you have sufficient evidence to ensure a lawful detention?
- Have you sufficient staff in the store to help make a detention peacefully and quietly?

### **Be aware that 50% of violent responses from a thief happen at the time of detention.**

Remaining calm and in control is key in defusing a confrontational situation with a shoplifter. Your attitude, demeanour, posture and positioning can all be used to de-escalate the situation. Think about your body language at all times.

**It must be re-emphasised that you should never put yourself in a position of danger— if a shoplifter wants to run then let them.**



## Things to watch for when detaining someone

Thieves may deliberately struggle in order to throw away items they have stolen. Watch out for this, as it is a favourite way of getting rid of evidence that you can use against them.

Watch a thief's hands all the time, as without their use it is hard to "dump anything without you knowing. One way of doing this is to ensure there is someone behind and to the side of the thief.

If you are detaining someone, ensure one of the staff is the same sex as the shop thief.

If you take someone to the toilet you may be putting yourself at risk and allowing them an opportunity to dump goods. Refuse or discourage this request until the police arrive, unless you are 100% confident that you have sufficient staff to deal with it.

Watch for ploys thieves use to try and compromise you and get away, such as a female thief shouting rape if left alone with a male member of staff while ripping or taking their clothes off!

Fortunately allegations of indecency and assault are extremely rare. However, it does not mean that they could not happen. One to one situations, be they male/male or female/female, also invite assault and an attempt to get away.

The rule is never to have less than two staff members in your holding area at any given time. Ensure one of them is always the same sex as the shop

## Procedure in shop "Holding Area"

Bring shop thieves back to a secure area away from the general public. Repeat to them why they have been detained, and ask them to produce the stolen goods if they are not already evident. e.g. "I am the store manager and I have detained you because I believe you have goods in your possession that you haven't paid for. Would you please empty your bags and pockets on the table in front of you?"

Be extremely cautious in doing this as this is an occasion when a weapon can be produced from either pockets or bags.

**Remember the thief must do this voluntarily; you are not allowed to search them.**

Should you be faced with a thief who does not voluntarily reveal goods in their possession, you should make it clear to them that you intend to call the police who have the power to physically search them and their property. Then ask them again to reveal the goods.



## Store policy

If the thief persists in not voluntarily revealing goods in their possession, you have the option to call the police, so that they may search the detained person.

If however goods are revealed and you are certain a theft has taken place, then you should call the police to deal with the matter.

**You should call the Police on all occasions unless your store policy states otherwise. (Make sure you have read and understood your store security policy).**

## Calling the police

When the police arrive in response to your call for assistance with a shop thief, they will ask you to repeat the circumstances of the arrest in the "presence and hearing of the thief" and themselves. In front of the police, you should repeat the allegation and describe exactly what happened, when, where, how and what was said. The police will decide whether there is sufficient evidence to arrest and caution the thieves themselves using the same or similar words to you.

**Call the police using the number 612612 for nonviolent arrests, or 112 or 999 for violent cases.**

## Statement

Make notes as soon as possible after the arrest of exactly what happened in your store incident book (or hand pocket book if you are a store detective), as you will be required to make a statement to the police based on these notes.

The importance of giving a complete and accurate statement of what happened cannot be underestimated, as it is the basis on which a decision to prosecute is taken. You may also be prosecuted for giving false, inaccurate or untruthful evidence.

The statement would consist of what you saw, did and said, what the thief did and said, the time date and place of the theft and detention, what was taken, its value and how it was stolen. Also included would be if any witnesses were involved, and how you would describe or recognise the thief for recognition or court purposes.

Your statement should be written in the first person, with you saying – I saw, I did, I was. It should be paragraphed at the end of each section and not have any blank spaces or lines between words. Any corrections you decide to make should be changed with single lines through the incorrect words and your initials beside them. Witnesses should state their own name, title, age and company, not private addresses.



## What happens if I make a mistake?

If you stop a person and have made a genuine mistake, you should apologise immediately for the error and release them.

**Admitting and apologising for a genuine error never makes a situation worse.**

Make a note of the incident including all witnesses and the person's name and address in the theft incident book, so that if there is any comeback (and experience shows it does not occur often), you have a clear record to refer to.

Half the battle in combating theft is knowing how and when it might happen and taking preventative measures.

## Final summary

In final summary, preventing, deterring and dealing with customer theft is not just about concentrating on one particular measure, but on understanding, coordinating and using a combination of them all.

Visible, motivated, security conscious management and staff are key. Combine these with carefully controlled security products and a layout which has theft "designed out" will all help to reduce the theft volume in your shop.

**Remember - 'Opportunity Makes the Thief'**