



Spot a Shoplifter—Cashier Edition

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Teach cashiers what to look for during checkout to prevent shoplifting incidents.

HOW TO USE: Distribute the worksheet. Have employees review each scenario and discuss the answers in pairs or as a group. It is a good idea for all employees to understand these shoplifting tactics, not just cashiers. If employees don't know the answers to the questions, this may be a good time to have them take NHPA's Loss Prevention course in External Theft.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Introductory Remarks: Not every shoplifter will walk out of the store without buying anything. In fact, some shoplifters will still go through the checkout process and buy a few items while stealing others. It's important for cashiers to be alert and aware of some of the common tactics shoplifters use. What is the best way to deal with each of these scenarios?

Scenario 1

A customer brings a large toolbox up to the counter. One tactic shoplifters use is to hide smaller items inside a larger item they are purchasing. How do you make sure this isn't happening to you?

Response: Don't assume that every customer buying a toolbox is shoplifting, but it's a good idea to make sure there's nothing inside that shouldn't be there. One approach is to open the toolbox to inspect, saying that you want to make sure all of the pieces are accounted for and that it is in good condition. If you do it correctly, the customer should appreciate you watching out for their best interest.

Scenario 2

A customer has pieced together several plumbing fittings as they try to figure out a complex plumbing problem. They bring the entire assembly to the checkout counter. What is the best way to cash them out?

Response: One shoplifting tactic is to pre-assemble products and then attempt to pay for them as one item instead of as individual pieces. But a lot of customers may pre-assemble because they are trying to figure out a problem, so always give customers the benefit of the doubt. Make sure you identify each individual piece. Scan each piece while the items are connected. Or, if you have to take the pieces apart, keep them in order so you can reassemble them after scanning. This is being courteous to the customer who may need to remember how the pieces go together after they are home.

Scenario 3

A customer comes to the checkout counter with a full cart. They start unloading everything onto the counter but stop before they take everything out of the cart. What is the most tactful way to make sure you scan everything?

Response: A shoplifter may present most of the items they want to purchase, but 'forget' to put everything on the counter. This could be an honest mistake, but it could also be a tactic to divert your attention. Always check to see if the cart is empty and always look on the bottom rack of the cart. You can tell the customer you would be happy to scan the larger items while they're still on the cart to make it easier for them. Or, you can say something non-accusing such as "Oops, looks like I forgot something," and scan the item left in the cart. Even if the customer was being dishonest, they are likely to play dumb and say it was a mistake.

FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING

To learn more about stopping shoplifters, take NRHA's course in Loss Prevention, External Theft. In this course, employees will get an in-depth look at shoplifting, including,

- Why people steal and the common methods they use
- How to prevent shoplifting before it happens
- How to confront a shoplifter.