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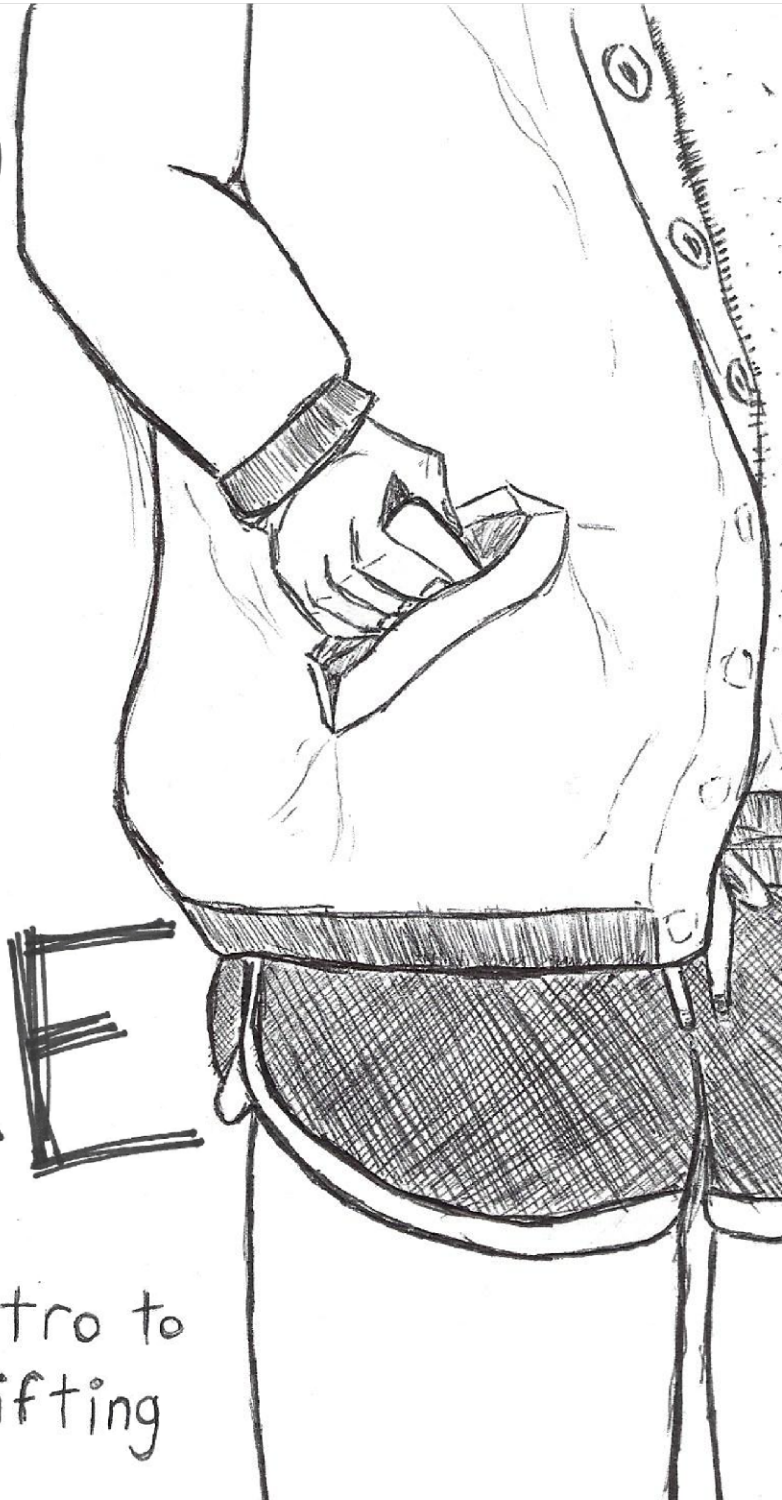
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STEAL

ME

An Intro to
Shoplifting



Why Shoplifting is Pretty Cool

It might seem weird to claim that shoplifting is a good thing, but really, shoplifting is just stealing from those who've stolen from all of us. Businesses and corporations make their money from screwing over their employees - the ones doing the real labor. Instead of going to the workers, that money that they're taking from you is going to buy yachts for the CEOs, or to fund bigoted politicians, or to further expand the corporation so they can steal even more money from all of us. Every dollar you take from them is a dollar that won't be supporting capitalism's endless mission to screw us over and exploit us.

Shoplifting gives a way for you to get what you need-or just want-without reinforcing capitalism, and instead hurting the bottom line of the corporations that exploit us and destroy our environment. It's rarely seen as a tool to fight against your oppression, though, because unlike other actions, like voting or going to peaceful protests, it can't be used and exploited by political parties or groups looking to convert your frustration and desire for a better world into support for their own self-serving goals. Instead, shoplifting affirms your own freedom. It shows that your needs aren't being met in the current system, and that you'll seize what you want instead of waiting for somebody else to free you.

step through and into the outside world, you realize that nothing has happened and it's just like any other time you've stepped out of a store. Over time, as you shoplift more, that guilty feeling in your stomach that you'll get caught or are doing something wrong will go away, because you aren't doing anything wrong. The stores deserve it, and you deserve your earnings. You'll get better, stop making rookie mistakes, hone your craft, and learn new tricks and skills to get more and get away with it. The way you see stores will begin to change, their shelves won't be imposing reminders of what all you need and can't afford. They're bountiful cornucopias just waiting for you to liberate the items, and each store becomes a puzzle to solve. I wish you luck in your criminal career. Stay safe, and stay dangerous.

Further resources

There's lots of online guides to shoplifting, and your research shouldn't stop here. Here's a few more sources to make you more prepared. Due to shoplifting being illegal, a lot of online resources are frequently taken down or banned.

tinyurl.com/liftingguide is somewhat outdated, but has lots of great tips and tricks, as well as info about individual stores.

theanarchistlibrary.org/library/crimethinc-recipes-for-disaster has guides on all sorts of fun things, including a shoplifting section.

reddit.com/r/shoplifting1 is mostly just images of hauls and memes, but has some decent advice.

linktr.ee/slhublinks has a variety of useful links.



you'll probably be fine. If you're in the process of stealing and get a bad feeling or suspect that employees are onto you, trust your gut and put items back or pay for them. On that note, it's often best to have enough money to pay for the items you intend to steal just in case. If a store employee is physically stopping you from leaving, try threatening a lawsuit to get them to back off. What you shouldn't do is fight them off, since the last thing you want is an assault charge. If you do unfortunately get arrested, don't say anything, know your rights, and demand a lawyer. Keep in mind that, no matter how good you are, you will be spotted shoplifting eventually. Most of the time, employees just don't care or do nothing due to store policy, but don't get cocky. You'll never be good enough to minimize all risk, and if you do it long enough the chances of getting caught will just get higher.

Your first time shoplifting

You've finally decided to start your career as a criminal. You're at a store and have decided to steal something small, maybe a stick of lipstick or a block of cheese. You try to keep your hands from shaking when you clumsily put it in your pocket or in your bag, and despite your best efforts, you can't help but nervously glance at security cameras or employees. Each time you pass an employee, you're scared they'll say something or that they're onto you. Finally, you reach the exit, the threshold that will determine whether you've succeeded. You ready yourself, scared that an alarm will go off, or an employee will tackle you, or something else will happen. As you

Shoplifting can also serve a role in social movements, and not just as an individual act. It turns out that creating a revolution requires a lot of stuff, and most anarchists and radicals interested in creating a world not based in exploitation and control are pretty broke. Alongside dumpster diving, upcycling, and making and growing things yourself, shoplifting is a great way to get resources for any anarchist, anti-authoritarian, or socialist project you have, if that's your thing.

But What if Stores Close Down From Shoplifting?

One common objection to shoplifting is that it causes stores to close down. This is largely a myth. Most of the stories of rampant crime waves causing stores to close down are just media hysteria meant to justify giving more money to cops and raising prices. Even if it did close down, so what? Why should we care about stores like Walmart and Target that underpay their workers and take money out of local communities to line the wallets of people living in completely different cities?

You may point out the example of food deserts, where people may only have one store as an option to get food or other essentials within walking distance. This framing implies that stores provide a needed service, when really, it's the opposite; corporations take away our ability to live without them. Big stores will choke out all competition until they're the only option available to you, while the government plans out our cities in ways that prevent our ability to

provide for ourselves. And then, when people steal out of desperation, the media will shame those people and blame them for the problem that capitalism and the state created.

What About the Employees?

Another common objection to shoplifting is that it hurts the employees. This is very rarely true. Retail workers will get paid the same shitty wage regardless of profit, and rarely get in trouble if somebody shoplifts while they're working. In fact, many stores explicitly tell employees not to intervene if they see a shoplifter to avoid liability if the shoplifter fights back. Objecting to shoplifting on behalf of employees also ignores that employees are, overwhelmingly, the biggest thieves from any store. And they should be - they're getting screwed over by their employers more than anyone. They deserve to take from their stores when their stores take their labor from them.

What About Small Business Owners?

What about them? Plenty of small business owners suck too, and make their money by leeching off communities and exploiting their employees. They're simply tyrants with a smaller castle, and deserve to be stolen from as well. Small business owners overwhelmingly support increasing police presence, brutalizing houseless people and other "undesirables", and will step on others' necks to get a bigger slice of the pie. Some small business owners are fine, don't screw over their customers, and do most of the work

Having people to shoplift with can be a massive help. You play the role of an affectionate couple, kissing and hugging in the store and concealing items on each other's bodies while you do so. Employees will likely look away at the PDA and be less suspicious. You can also have a partner come in before you and avert attention, either by asking employees near you a question to draw focus away from you, acting like a suspicious shoplifter while not actually stealing anything, or create a big distraction. A lot of the above tricks, like the item return scam, are easier with a partner.

These are just a few different tactics and strategies, and I've chosen not to give too many details on any of them. I'd recommend doing some more research and strategizing before using any of these techniques. There are far more tactics to use, too, and you can get quite creative. Research other tricks and scams and figure ones out on your own, the process of innovation is half the fun.

What to Do if You Get Caught

Just leave. Not kidding, that's the number one piece of advice. Most stores, especially corporate stores, have policies against employees physically detaining customers. If someone confronts you for stealing, just rush out of there and don't go back to the store. Similarly, if someone asks to see in your bag or to see your receipt, just refuse and leave, there's nothing they can do about it. As long as you're gone before cops are called or arrive,

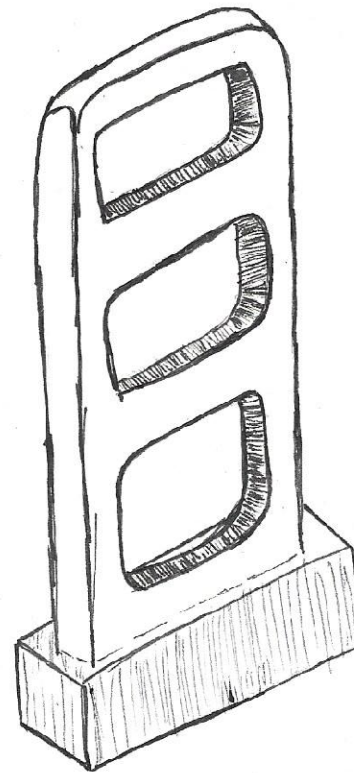
yourself with which stores don't require receipts. Another form of the return scam is to buy an item, keep the receipt, then go back to the store, and either bring the empty box of the item and hope they don't check what's inside (which might be risky and difficult) or get the same item off the shelf and bring it to be returned. This can be easier with a partner to take the item, since a discerning LPO will see you walk in with nothing and come to the return desk with an item. Something to keep in mind for this scam is that most electronics and some other products will have serial numbers specific to each item sold, so taking the item from the store shelves won't work.

You can also simply walk out with items. This works better with stores that have multiple exits and registers, and also if you have a receipt of some sort in your hand. You can play the role of a distracted customer and pretend to take a phone call to make loss prevention less likely to approach you, and just get to your escape vehicle and leave quickly. This works better if your escape vehicle is close to the interest, and if you do this, you should probably avoid going back to that store for a while.

Another strategy is printing out a fake barcode. This works best for items that differ in price but would show up similarly when scanned. For example, many lego sets are just differentiated by the line of set and then the ID number for the specific set, but employees obviously don't bother memorizing the number.

themselves. The vendor selling bracelets at a flea market probably isn't exploiting anyone. I'll leave it up to the reader to decide who could manage without a bit of merchandise. It's not my business who someone steals from, and it's not your business either. If you see someone stealing from a store, even a store you like,

don't be a snitch.



On a practical level, it might be best to avoid small businesses. Often, the store is smaller, so each shopper is given more attention, and small business owners don't have corporate policy telling them to avoid shoplifters. A lot of small business owners will aggressively pursue or even attack shoplifters to defend their castle, so you might as well go where the employees are apathetic.

How to Shoplift

Scouting the Location

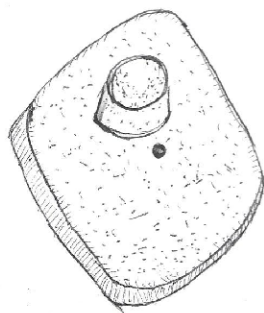
So, there's quite a few ways to shoplift and different techniques one can use. First, you should identify your target. Are you stealing some groceries? Getting some needed electronics goods? Grabbing some clothes you think look cool? Especially early on, it's best to research the store a bit beforehand to hear what others have said about shoplifting from there. That being said, as an avid shoplifter, I rarely do much research unless I'm wanting to steal something big. Some of the best stores to steal from are drug stores like Walgreens or CVS, which typically have few employees and no dedicated loss prevention. On the other side of the spectrum, Target is notorious for spending a ton on loss prevention, having LPOs disguised as shoppers, and waiting until they've documented you stealing enough over multiple trips for them to charge you with a felony. It's not impossible to steal from Target or other difficult stores, but it's best to do so sparingly and not to hit the same store multiple times very often, and be extra careful when doing so. If you can get an item from an easier to steal from store, go for the easier option. In general, it's a good idea to avoid making a pattern of hitting the same store very often. Another important thing to keep in mind is going to a store when it's at its most busy, and you'll get lost in a sea of other shoppers. Also, go to stores in nicer areas, loss prevention will be much more lax there.

acquired skill, but you'll get better at it and learn more concealing spots over time. If you can safely conceal near where the item is in the store, then do so. Otherwise, try to hide the item in your cart behind other bulkier items. Another good trick is to take two of an item, conceal one, then put the other back. Stores will rarely pay enough attention to see the exact quantity of an item, especially if it's small. You can also conceal a smaller, more expensive item inside a bigger item which you purchase. One of the most common and straightforward ways to shoplift is to not scan items in the self checkout, or to grab an item and pretend to scan it. This is somewhat risky as self checkout has a ton of cameras and employees dedicated to watching you at most stores. Another difficulty with pretending to scan items is that most self checkouts have weighted bagging areas now, so it'll notice the extra weight. One way to get around this is to lift the weighted platform up at the same time as you put an item down to make it not detect the weight, or not scan the last item and just deposit it straight to your cart. Oftentimes, it's useful to buy a cheaper item when shoplifting to make it look not as suspicious when you walk out with nothing. You can also ask employees for an item the store definitely won't have, to give a pretext for why you haven't bought anything.

Another common tactic is the return scam. There's pretty much two forms this can take. One tactic is attempting to return an item you stole. The problem with this is that most places require a receipt. There's some ways around this, and you can familiarize

cameras in aisles with bulky, low value, hard to steal items like gardening or cleaning supplies, so that's a good place to pocket items. It's helpful to try to identify any blind spots where cameras won't see you, often store displays will give partial coverage.

The other major loss prevention tools are magnetic sensors, monitors, RFID devices, and other theft prevention devices on items. There's a few ways to get around these. For clothes, you can purchase magnets online that remove them. You can also simply remove items from the packaging, discard the packaging somewhere, and conceal the item. You could also try putting the item in a faraday pouch. Faraday pouches are bags that block emissions of electromagnetic signals, which would prevent the tags from triggering the sensors at the exit.



How to shoplift

So, there's a ton of different tricks and techniques for shoplifting, way too many for this zine to cover them all. I'll try to cover the broad strokes and some of the best/easiest ways, though. Concealment is often the first thing people think of. You can get quite creative on where and how to hide items. When concealing, make sure that nobody is looking at you and move quickly and confidently without drawing much attention to yourself. It's an

If you want to be especially thorough, it could be a good idea to scout out the store before the day of shoplifting to note security, where cameras are, what kind of loss prevention devices are on products, and other potentially useful information. This is another practice I rarely do because I'm lazy, and I've never gotten caught, so it's not totally necessary. Regardless, it's important to act natural during every step of the process. Don't nervously dart your eyes around looking at all the cameras and employees, or be jumpy if an employee approaches you. Act like you belong there.

Dressing for the Job

The way you present is an important part of shoplifting. The best way to not get caught shoplifting is to dress and act like someone who wouldn't shoplift - in other words, like a mild mannered middle class person. It's best to try to blend in, and dress like others at the store likely will. You don't want to stick out like a sore thumb. It might seem tempting to wear a hoodie and huge baggy pants to shove shit in, but if you're dressed in multiple layers in the middle of summer, the suspicion you'll gather will outweigh the benefit of the extra large pockets. There's a lot of ways to shoplift that don't involve putting things in pockets, so that shouldn't be your highest priority. That being said, if you do have looser clothes with bigger pockets that look natural, it can come in handy. Similarly, bringing a purse or shopping bags is helpful. Of course, the idea of what looks natural, nonthreatening, and middle class has

a lot to do with racist and classist assumptions, which shouldn't be ignored.

Shoplifting and Privilege

Shoplifting, like everything else in our society, is impacted by privilege and systems of oppression. People of color, people that look poor, and young people are much more likely to be suspected of shoplifting and searched, and are more likely to receive harsher punishments for doing so. If you're white, look middle class, and don't fit into the stereotype of who usually shoplifts, you should acknowledge your privilege, use it to steal even more, especially for those who can't as easily get away with it. Obviously, shoplifting should only be done if you feel the risks aren't too great. For many people of color and other people who are used to the constant gaze of people suspecting them of wrongdoing and not belonging, the risk is far higher.

Think like an LPO

An important part of shoplifting is understanding loss prevention officers and the loss prevention techniques that stores use. LPOs will sometimes be obvious and look like security guards, or be dressed to look like another shopper. As mentioned earlier, they'll prioritize people who look suspicious, either because they act jumpy and like they're about to shoplift or because they look like a shoplifter, so it's good to take steps to avoid looking suspicious. One good way to do so is by greeting employees or by asking

employees where items are. Shoplifters usually try to avoid talking to employees.

It's also helpful to learn how LPOs are trained. Typically at big corporate stores, LPOs are instructed to only apprehend someone if they were seen concealing an item, a constant line of sight is maintained on them to ensure that they didn't put the item back, they passed registers without paying, and they're approaching the exit of the store. They're also often told not to approach people unless they're stealing larger amounts, and are instructed not to physically apprehend somebody to avoid a lawsuit (this part will come back later). Understanding all this will help you know what to do to make it less likely that LPOs will target you. Try to disrupt one or more of the steps necessary for them to apprehend you. Steal smaller amounts at a time so you aren't seen as worth the effort, and space out your big hauls without hitting the same stores too often. On that note, you should also look up the shoplifting laws in your state and learn what the penalty is for stealing various values of goods. It's best to stick to lesser crimes when possible.

There's other LP tools to keep in mind. Cameras are a quite pervasive tool. It's best to try to avoid them when possible, but don't be too scared of them. Typically, there's only one person watching all the cameras in the store, so unless they have a reason to track you and as long as you aren't too obvious, you'll likely go unnoticed. Still, it's best to minimize the risk. Usually, there will be fewer