

**Collier County Teen Court
Collier County Courthouse
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PETIT THEFT WORKBOOK

*Read and follow the instructions on each page. Complete ENTIRE packet.
Incomplete work will count as unsuccessful completion of your Teen Court Case
which will result in your case being brought back to court.*

MUST BE COMPLETED IN INK. DO NOT USE PENCIL !!

Name: _____

FACTS ABOUT SHOPLIFTING

1. Shoplifters in this country steal more merchandise in one day than all the cash stolen by bank robbers in a whole year. The FBI estimates that losses from retail theft are escalating by 20% each year. One survey shows that 150,000 people shoplift weekly, at a cost of over \$345 MILLION per year.
2. Shoplifters steal billions of dollars each year, forcing other shoppers to pay higher prices to make up for their losses and extra costs for security. Without these costs, retailers estimate that prices could be reduced by 15%. For example, a sweater costing \$30.00 includes approximately \$4.50 to cover replacement of stolen merchandise and security.
3. The time spent by law enforcement and the courts dealing with shoplifting cases means less time and money available for handling the more serious crimes which need more attention.
4. Everyone is hurt by paying higher taxes to help law enforcement and the courts deal with the shoplifting problem.
5. At least three of every four shoplifter have the money to pay for the stolen items(s). One person in every ten is a shoplifter. Primary shoplifting offenders are teenagers and housewives. Approximately half of all shoplifters are teenagers.
6. Shoplifting is a crime not a game. Retail theft is a second degree misdemeanor and (for an adult) can be punishable by a jail term not to exceed 60 days and/or a fine not to exceed \$500.00.

MYTHS ABOUT SHOPLIFTING

One very misleading myth is that you cannot be arrested until you leave the store with the merchandise you stole. The fact is, in many states you can be arrested inside the store if you have hidden merchandise on your body or in your bags.

Another common myth is that you cannot be arrested if you are not doing the actual stealing. The fact is, if you help in any way, such as holding something a friend steals, acting as a look-out or blocking a clerk's view while your friend is shoplifting, you may be charged as an accessory. Do not believe that you can't be arrested if you don't do the actual stealing.

Another myth is that most states will just let you pay for the items you took and let you go. The fact is, most stores will not let you pay for stolen items and then let you go. They will call law enforcement. Once the police arrive and find a crime has been committed, it is their duty to make an arrest (or report).

Many shoplifters are surprised when they are caught. They could have sworn nobody was even near them when they stole the item. The fact is that in many stores no one has to be around because of closed circuit cameras. This type of surveillance has become a popular way of detecting shoplifters. By detecting the theft on cameras, store security can make a video tape of the theft which can legally be used as evidence in court. Some stores even have cameras out in the open for shoppers to see.

Some stores use two way mirrors with security personnel behind them to watch for shoplifters. Many stores use "spotters"- security personnel disguised as shoppers to help detect shoplifters.

Electronic means are also used by stores to detect theft. The round or rectangular white tags seen on clothing set off an alarm when removed from the stores. With today's different technologies, other devices placed inside merchandise using microwave, electromagnetic and radio wave frequencies work the same way, setting off an alarm if a person leave the store without paying for the item.

What may seem like a trivial act affects the individual and many others. Shoplifters create problems for everyone. They cause problems for their families, such as the embarrassment the family feels and the tension and loss of trust that are consequences of the shoplifting. The problems they create for themselves include the risk of arrest, punishment and public disgrace, as well as the loss of trust of their families. Once someone has been caught and arrested for shoplifting, it is very hard to regain the family's trust and confidence.

Shoplifting creates problems for the community. Business tax revenues as well as employment income, are lost if stores are forced to close as a result of theft.

Shoplifting creates problems for the courts, overburdening them with time-consuming hearings and trials. It increases the demand on law enforcement agencies for the time, money and human energy used in pursuing shoplifting cases.

There are many reasons why people shoplift. According to psychologists, people shoplift because:

- Desire to get something for nothing
- Not enough money to purchase the desired item
- Way of life for family and friends
- Peer pressure, or to get attention
- Guilt- the need to be caught and punished
- Means of acting out resentment, pressure and/or personal problems

COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SURVEY

I have been charged with: _____

At the time of the incident, I was with: _____

If I was an adult, the penalty I could receive for this charge is: _____

I committed this offense because: _____

This incident has caused me the following problems: _____

Who was affected because of my actions ? _____

I can avoid breaking the law in the future by: _____

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Based on the information you have read, answer the following questions. Indicate whether these statements are true or false.

_____ 1. You must actually leave the store with stolen merchandise in order to be guilty of shoplifting.

_____ 2. A videotape of a shoplifting incident is considered legal for uses as evidence in court.

- _____ 3. If you intentionally block the view of a salesperson while a friend shoplifts, you are guilty of shoplifting.
- _____ 4. Electronic security devices are sometime placed inside merchandise.
- _____ 5. Shoplifting is not very risky.
- _____ 6. If you act as a “lookout” for a shoplifter but do not actually shoplift yourself, you are not guilty.
- _____ 7. Shoplifters fool themselves with the myth, nobody is watching.
- _____ 8. It is not possible for a store to go out of business as a direct result of shoplifting.
- _____ 9. Losses resulting from shoplifting are escalating at a rate of 5% per year.
- _____ 10. Shoplifting is a way of life for some people.
- _____ 11. One person out of every 20 is a shoplifter.

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING
QUESTIONS

(If more room is needed you may use additional paper)

If you were a store owner and someone shoplifted from your store, how would you feel? What would you expect the person’s punishment to be for depriving you, the owner?

If someone came into your home and stole from your room, how would you feel? What would you do?

What problems does shoplifting create for the police? For the courts:

How were you “caught” shoplifting and would you ever consider doing this again?

What would you tell a friend who is considering shoplifting?
