Liquor Store Cycle Count Planner

Schedule and prioritize your inventory counts — by category, by risk

FREE RESOURCE · BOTTLE POS

Not every bottle carries the same risk — or the same value. Use this planner to assign every product category a count frequency based on two factors: **shrinkage risk** and **inventory value**. Products that score high on both get counted most frequently. Low-risk, low-value categories can wait for your full physical count.

THE TIER SYSTEM

TIER 1
Weekly
High value + high theft risk

TIER 2
Biweekly
High value OR moderate theft risk

TIER 3
Monthly
Moderate value, lower risk

TIER 4
Full count only
Low value, low velocity, low risk

CATEGORY TIER ASSIGNMENTS

S Spirits

CATEGORY	TIER	RATIONALE
Premium whiskey / bourbon ($40+)	Tier 1	High unit value; frequent target for shoplifting and internal theft
Premium tequila ($40+)	Tier 1	Fast-growing category; high value and high theft
Premium vodka ($30+)	Tier 1	High velocity + high theft risk, especially 750ml format
Cognac / brandy ($40+)	Tier 1	High unit value; significant loss exposure even at lower velocity
Entry-level spirits / well liquors	Tier 3	Lower unit value reduces per-unit loss exposure
Flavored spirits / liqueurs	Tier 3	Moderate value; lower theft rate

W Wine

CATEGORY	TIER	RATIONALE
Premium wine ($30+)	Tier 2	High value; moderate theft risk and spoilage exposure
Sparkling wine / Champagne	Tier 2	Seasonal velocity spikes; high value and breakage risk
Mid-tier wine ($15–$30)	Tier 3	Moderate value; worth monitoring for spoilage and shrinkage
Value wine (under $15)	Tier 4	Low unit value; catch discrepancies in full count

B Beer

CATEGORY	TIER	RATIONALE
Nips / small-format cans (individual)	Tier 1	Highest shoplifting rate in the store — small and easy to conceal
Craft six-packs and four-packs	Tier 2	Moderate-high value; mix-and-match complexity adds variance risk
Import six-packs	Tier 3	Moderate value; lower theft rate than craft
Domestic cases (bulk)	Tier 3	High volume but low per-unit value; variance caught at case level
Non-alcoholic beer	Tier 4	Low risk, low value

R RTD / Seltzers & Other

CATEGORY	TIER	RATIONALE
Tobacco / lottery (if applicable)	Tier 1	High theft risk across all retail formats — treat like premium spirits
Single-serve RTD cans	Tier 2	Easy to conceal; frequently sold as singles
Premium RTD cocktails ($12+ per 4-pack)	Tier 2	Fast-growing; higher value and frequent mix-and-match
Hard seltzers (variety packs)	Tier 3	High velocity; moderate value
Mixers, sodas, accessories	Tier 4	Low value, low risk

4-WEEK COUNT SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

Adjust based on your staff availability and delivery schedule. Never schedule counts on delivery days or the day after a major holiday.

WEEK	TIER 1 — WEEKLY	TIER 2 — BIWEEKLY	TIER 3 — MONTHLY
Week 1	☐ Monday open or close	☐ Wednesday open or close	☐ Schedule one Tier 3 category
Week 2	☐ Monday open or close	—	—
Week 3	☐ Monday open or close	☐ Wednesday open or close	—
Week 4	☐ Monday open or close	—	☐ Schedule one Tier 3 category

Tier 4 categories are counted during your semi-annual or annual full physical count only.

COUNT DAY CHECKLIST

24 HOURS BEFORE

- ☐ Pull count sheets from your POS for the SKUs being counted
- ☐ Confirm no deliveries are scheduled for count day
- ☐ Assign counters — two people required for all Tier 1 items
- ☐ Brief staff: no product should be moved during the count window

DAY OF COUNT

- ☐ Count at open or close — floor must be clear of customers
- ☐ Count shelf stock and back stock separately, then combine
- ☐ Record counts on the sheet — do not adjust on the fly
- ☐ Flag any product that appears damaged or out of place

AFTER THE COUNT

- ☐ Enter counts into your POS and pull the variance report
- ☐ Review every variance before closing out — document findings
- ☐ Adjust inventory records only after variance is explained
- ☐ Log count date, counter names, and total variance for records

FULL COUNT REMINDERS

- ☐ Schedule twice yearly — mid-year and year-end
- ☐ Freeze receiving 24–48 hours before the count
- ☐ Assign roles in advance: count teams, reconciliation lead, data entry
- ☐ Work section by section — front-to-back or back-to-front

VARIANCE LOG

Keep a running log of your cycle count results. Patterns in your variance data reveal where your biggest problems are hiding.

DATE	CATEGORY / SKU	EXPECTED	ACTUAL	VARIANCE	PROBABLE CAUSE	ACTION TAKEN

Receiving error
Product received but not entered into the system correctly

External theft
High-theft SKU in high-traffic area — review placement or security

Internal theft
Variance isolated to specific shifts or employees — investigate

System entry error
Return, discount, or case break entered incorrectly

Breakage / spoilage
Product damaged or expired and discarded without logging an adjustment

Vendor short ship
Delivery received short but not flagged at the dock

Shrinkage benchmark: Well-run liquor stores typically keep shrinkage below **1–2% of annual revenue.** If your full count reveals shrinkage above that threshold, use your variance log to identify which categories are driving the loss — and tighten cycle count frequency there first.