

Self-Checkouts Are Not As Good As You Might Think



Some people thought that self-checkout machines were a great idea. The goal was to help customers save time because they wouldn't have to wait in line for a cashier; they could scan their items and pay by themselves. Stores also hoped to save money by not having to pay as many cashiers. However, recent research shows that this system has many unexpected problems.

Self-checkouts can often be slow and frustrating for customers. While some think the machines are faster, customers often struggle to find product codes, especially for fruits and vegetables. This causes them to feel pressure because other shoppers are waiting behind them. A major issue is technical problems: about 70% of customers have had a problem with a machine and needed an employee's help. Cashiers are much faster because they are trained to find barcodes instantly.

The biggest problem for stores is losing money. Although store owners at first liked the machines because they saved on employee costs, they soon found they were losing money because of theft and mistakes. It is easy for customers to forget to scan an item or to steal on purpose by pretending to scan expensive items. This issue is so common that it costs U.S. stores about \$10 billion a year.

Because of the stealing, stores have to hire more security guards, which can sometimes create trouble even for honest customers who accidentally forget to scan a small item. A woman was doing self-check out at a large store. She had about 15 products in her basket, but she forgot to scan a candy bar. A security guard noticed this and took her to a room in the back of the store. At first, they told her that they were going to take her to jail for not scanning the candy bar. But after a while, they let her leave.

In the end, many stores have decided that self-checkouts cause too many problems. The machines are expensive to buy and require staff with technology skills to fix them. Because of the issues with stealing and the high cost, some stores have removed the machines and returned to only having cashiers. A study also found that customers actually like having a chat with a cashier and are more likely to return to stores that have human checkouts.

Self-Checkouts Are Not As Good As You Might Think

Comprehension Exercise

Directions: Write T (true) or F (false) next to each sentence.

- ___ 1. When we use self-checkout, we pay a cashier for our purchases.
- ___ 2. The author thinks that self-checkouts are great.
- ___ 3. Cashier can usually scan items faster than customers.
- ___ 4. Some store owners think self-checkout machines will save them money.
- ___ 5. It's hard for customers to leave a store without paying at a self-checkout.
- ___ 6. Customers like to have a chat with cashiers.

Paraphrasing Exercise

Directions: Imagine that you have this conversation with a friend.

You: I just read this interesting article.

Friend: Oh yeah. What did it say?

Write what you would tell your friend. Include as many details as you can.

After you finish writing a first draft, you can re-read the article and revise your draft.

However, don't look at the article while you are writing. You can use some of these **key words** in your paraphrase.

Key Words

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• save time• scan• cashiers• bar codes• hurry up• 70% have had problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• need help• pretend to scan• a candy bar• workers with technology skills• chat with cashiers
--	---

Reflection Exercise

Directions: Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reflection, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /...)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*