

If you find someone taking your property without your consent or committing a crime, you have the right as a citizen to take immediate action, even if you have to use force. You just have to know exactly what the law permits you to do.

What is an arrest?

An arrest is the detention of a person on grounds that he/she has committed a criminal offence.

When can a citizen effect an arrest?

A citizen **can** arrest a person if he sees the person committing a crime and is present at the crime scene. The citizen **cannot** arrest a person who he thinks has committed a crime regardless of how strong the evidence of his belief may be.

Therefore, you can arrest a shoplifter in your store if you witness the shoplifter leaving your store with merchandise not paid for. Do not approach the person until he/she has left the store with the goods.

How do you effect an arrest?

You may use reasonable force to stop the person from escaping, which includes putting your hand on his/her shoulder, holding on to his/her hand, bear-hugging him/her or any kind of force **as long as it does not exceed what is necessary to stop the person from escaping.**

What do you do after the arrest?

The law requires you to deliver the person to a peace officer without delay. So you should immediately call the police to attend while keeping watch on the person under arrest. If the person starts to be violent, call the police again. The violence, if made known to the police, will likely shorten the response time of the police.