How to Open a Thrift Store: Costs & Steps

AdvisedSpaces

Print this checklist and check off each step as you complete it.

STEPS (7)

- [ ] **Step 1: Choose Your Inventory Model and Categories**
  Before you scout locations or buy fixtures, pick the model that matches your capital and tolerance for chaos. Your model determines your startup cost, your sourcing burden, and your margin structure.
- [ ] **Step 2: Form the Business and Lock Compliance**
  Sales tax permits, secondhand dealer licenses, zoning confirmation, and insurance — the unsexy stuff that protects you and prevents a lease-signing disaster.
- [ ] **Step 3: Find the Right Location**
  This is where most money is won or lost. Unlike cafes that optimize for foot traffic, thrift stores optimize for car traffic, donor convenience, and rent efficiency. Your best site is usually a value-retail corridor with easy access and strong visibility.
- [ ] **Step 4: Negotiate the Lease**
  Your lease can erase a great location. Push for NNN terms with transparency, free rent during buildout, and exit options that protect you if the model does not work.
- [ ] **Step 5: Build Out and Design the Layout**
  Your store should behave like a conveyor belt. Donations enter, get processed quickly, hit the floor fast, and stale items exit on schedule. Design a processing line, not a boutique.
- [ ] **Step 6: Build Your Donation Pipeline Before Opening**
  You are not a retailer who buys products. You are a logistics operator who acquires and processes a river of used goods. Treat donors like your supply chain — because they are.
- [ ] **Step 7: Startup Costs, Staffing, and Unit Economics**
  The real numbers — startup budget, monthly burn, staffing by phase, and the break-even math that determines whether you survive month 6.

NOTES

Read the full guide

https://advisedspaces.com/open/thriftstore

Scan the QR code or visit the link for the complete guide.