

# The Returns Backlog Audit

Run this with whoever actually works the returns table. It takes about seven minutes and tells you, honestly, whether your inventory numbers right now reflect what's on the shelf — or what you wish were on the shelf.

## WALK THE QUEUE

- ✓ **Count what's physically unprocessed right now.** Boxes, units, and how many distinct SKUs are affected — not an estimate, an actual count.
- ✓ **Find the oldest item in the pile.** How many days has it been sitting since it arrived back? If nobody knows, that's the first finding.
- ✓ **Check your system's status model.** A separate state for "physically received" versus "confirmed sellable" — or does one status cover both?
- ✓ **Cross-check against reorder points.** How many backlog SKUs show above their reorder point only because those units are counted as available?
- ✓ **Look back 30 days for a near-miss.** Did any order sell a unit that was actually still sitting unprocessed in returns?
- ✓ **Name an owner.** Is clearing this queue someone's actual job this week, or "whoever has a spare hour"? No owner means no deadline.
- ✓ **Set a dwell-time limit.** Decide now how many days is too many — so the next backlog gets flagged before it grows, not after.

**What this tells you:** if even one SKU showed the backlog quietly propping up an "in stock" number, that's not a one-time fix — it's a gap that refills itself next week unless something closes it structurally.

### Book a free 20-minute diagnostic

We'll look at your actual returns and inventory setup together

