

Out and About Safety

Appear confident

When you are out and about, it is important to remember the core principles of personal safety, including confidence, body language, awareness of your surroundings, and trusting and acting on your instincts.

Offenders tend to target vulnerability. If you appear uneasy with your surroundings, you are more likely to attract their attention. You will appear more confident through positive body language, such as adopting good posture, walking with purpose and being aware of your surroundings. Looking people in the eye, even for a brief moment, indicates that you are not intimidated by them. The idea is to appear 'streetwise' rather than scared or uneasy.

Even if you don't feel comfortable, by using strong body language you will appear confident, rather than looking like an easy target. You are also likely to feel more confident.

Carrying bags or valuables

If you are carrying or transporting bags or valuables, keep the following tips in mind:

- When walking, hold your wallet or handbag close to you where it cannot be easily reached or snatched. It is also a good idea to carry your bag on the side near the buildings, away from the road. Bag snatching is a crime of opportunity. If an item appears difficult to snatch, you can reduce the risk of being targeted.
- Consider the necessity of the items you carry in your handbag or wallet, and try to keep valuables to a minimum. It is a good idea not to keep all of your identification in the one place. You may also find it handy to keep a list of the items you carry in your handbag / wallet to report if stolen.
- Avoid marking your house or car keys with your name, address or car registration number.
- When visiting restaurants, cafes or theatres, avoid putting your bag or wallet on the next seat or floor, or hanging it over the back of a chair. Instead try to keep it in front of you, on the table, on your lap or between your feet.
- While grocery shopping, avoid leaving your valuables in an unattended trolley, even for a brief moment.
- If you need to leave your valuables in the car, make sure they are out of sight, or, preferably, lock them in the boot or glove compartment. Even a pile of loose change may be enough to entice an offender to break in to your car.

Talking to strangers

If approached by someone you don't know and you choose to answer questions or give directions, try to maintain an arm's length distance. Trust your instincts – if you feel uncomfortable, be assertive and do not be afraid to say 'No' and to continue on your way.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs)

When using an ATM, take the following precautions:

- Try to stand where you have the best view of what's going on around you while you wait for the machine to process your transaction. This way you avoid looking like an easy target.
- If you notice someone suspicious loitering around the ATM, use your body to shield the keyboard and screen to prevent them from discovering your personal identification number. Consider cancelling the transaction or taking out a smaller amount of money. It is also a good idea to report this person to the police.

- If you think someone is following you after leaving the ATM, trust your instincts. Walk confidently and be prepared to carry out a safety plan, e.g. moving to a more heavily populated area. You may choose to confirm your suspicions by crossing the street or changing direction.
- Count your money where it cannot easily be seen.
- If you need to use an ATM at night, try to find one that is well lit and not isolated.

Public telephones

When using a public telephone, maintain awareness of your surroundings by casually turning around to face passers-by once you have dialled. This reduces the possibility of someone approaching you unnoticed, and gives you a 'streetwise' appearance.

Lifts

If you are waiting to board a lift and have a bad feeling about a person in or boarding the lift, wait for the next lift or take the stairs.

Maintain strong, confident body language and don't be afraid to look people in the eye for a brief moment to convey that you are not intimidated by them.

If you are harassed while in a lift, your options include the following.

- Make direct eye contact with the person who is harassing you and telling them in a definite, confident tone that you are not interested and to leave you alone.
- Yell or scream loudly in an angry, aggressive tone to shock and scare off your harasser and convince them that you are not afraid (even if you are). This could also alert other passengers (if there is any) to what is happening and discourage the harasser, who generally will not want to be noticed by others.
- Get out at the next safe floor or populated area.
- Do whatever else you believe will keep you safest at the time.

For further strategies to deal with confrontation, refer to General Personal Safety Advice go to <http://www.deakin.edu.au/fmsd/services/security/>.

Walking or jogging alone

Your level of confidence is reflected in your body language. Therefore if you *feel* comfortable engaging in a particular activity, you will appear so. The reverse will occur if you don't feel confident. Therefore, you are encouraged to participate in activities where you feel comfortable. On the other hand, you can reduce your exposure to danger.

Some strategies you may wish to consider include:

- if you don't feel safe walking or jogging alone, consider going with a friend, dog, taking public transport or making other arrangements
- if you continually use a particular route and this makes you feel uneasy, vary it
- be continuously aware of your surroundings while maintaining a 'streetwise' appearance
- ensure that your body language conveys confidence, including making brief eye contact with passers-by
- use well-lit roads and paths where you are visible and where surrounding areas and other people are visible to you
- consider moving in the direction that faces the traffic so a car cannot pull up behind you unnoticed
- carry some form of identification and change for a public telephone, phone card, or a mobile phone

- be aware that wearing headphones while exercising will decrease your ability to stay alert to your surroundings.

Being followed

If you believe you are being followed on foot, be prepared to carry out a personal safety plan. This may mean going to the nearest populated place such as a police station, shop, service station, hotel or even an occupied house. You may choose to confirm your suspicions by crossing the road or changing direction. If your suspicions are confirmed, call the police on 000 as soon as you get to a safe place.

If a car approaches you and you are threatened, it is suggested that you back away and run in the opposite direction. This will gain you vital seconds and make it more difficult for the car to follow. If you can, make a note of the registration number and description of the car, driver and any passengers. If this option is not available, do whatever you believe will best preserve your safety.

Hitchhiking

Hitchhiking and giving lifts to strangers are dangerous and should be avoided.