



Guiding's Guide to... **Street Safety**

Knowing how to protect ourselves on the streets is a life skill which can be learnt. If we are sensible and know how to deal with potential dangers there is no reason to feel afraid when out and about. Although you are very unlikely to be attacked, this guide gives you a few helpful tips on what precautions to take and how to make sensible decisions about your safety.

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SAFE**

suzy lamplugh
trust



Girlguiding UK

girls in the lead

1. Be confident – you have no reason not to be

If you are prepared and sensible when walking the streets, there is no reason not to look and feel confident:

- Walk with your hands by your sides and stride out confidently.
- Look ahead rather than down at the ground so that you are aware of what is going on around you.
- Find comfortable and secure ways to carry your bags – such as wearing the handle over your shoulder and across your body.

2. If in doubt, act – it's better to be safe than sorry

If someone is making you feel uncomfortable or you suspect that you are being followed, don't ignore it. Instead you can:

- Cross the road if you think you are being followed.
- If the person continues to follow you, go to a shop, garage or somewhere where there are lots of people and tell someone what is happening. You should then either phone home and ask to be picked up or call the police.

3. Get organised – think ahead about what you'll need on the way home

- Don't wear heels walking home – it makes it harder to run. Carry a pair of ballet pumps or trainers in your bag to change into.
- Have your keys to hand before you arrive home so that you can enter the house quickly.

4. Stay alert – if you appear distracted, you are more likely to be targeted

Attackers will target people who look less able to defend themselves:

- Stay awake on public transport – sometimes it is tempting to close your eyes or catch forty winks but this will leave you very vulnerable. If you feel yourself dozing off, open a window to get some fresh air.
- Don't listen to music or talk on your mobile as you walk home as this will reduce your awareness of what is going on around you. It will also show potential muggers that you have something valuable.



5. Plan ahead – have a strategy for what to do if you're confronted

We are often frozen with fear under pressure but if you have already thought about what to do, you are much more likely to be able to react appropriately. A few recommended tactics for dealing with an attacker include:

- Identify a shop, restaurant or other place in the area where there will be people around and head for it as quickly as possible.
- Shout clear instructions for passers by to respond to such as, 'Hey you with the green jacket, call the police!'

- If a mugger wants your bag, slowly drop it to the side of you so as to give you the opportunity to get away while they go for what they want.

6. Don't take unnecessary risks – they are not worth it

It is often tempting to take the easy option particularly when you are tired and have been out late, but this is never a good idea:

- Never take unlicensed cabs – you would never consider getting into a stranger's car if they drove up to you, so why do it just because the driver claims his car is a minicab? Always carry the numbers of some reliable licensed taxi firms with you and try to call them from a place where you will not be overheard giving them personal information such as your name and address.
- Never take short cuts – although they are familiar or quicker, if they are also darker and more deserted, then they will present a better opportunity to a potential attacker, as there will be fewer witnesses or people to stop them.

7. Stay in touch – making sure that people know where you are is vital to staying safe on the streets

Ensure that:

- Someone knows where you are and when you are due home so that they can raise the alarm if you are not home by the time you specified.
- If you and your friends are travelling home late at night, text each other when you get home. If someone doesn't 'check in' when expected, tell an adult.

8. Get equipped – a few tools of the personal safety trade

There are a few things you can carry that can assist you if you are being followed or are attacked:

- An emergency phonecard – even if you have a mobile, keeping a phonecard on you is a good way to ensure that if your mobile is taken you can contact home.
- Loose change – so that you can always make a phone call or catch a bus if you are feeling anxious.
- Emergency phone numbers – these are something that we often store on mobiles or on computers, but make sure you also have them written down.
- A personal alarm – make sure it is charged for use and that you know how to use it. Personal alarms may attract help but this is not their primary aim. They should actually be used to shock and disorientate an attacker, giving you vital seconds to get away. Therefore, in order to be effective they should be loud enough to do this. Ensure yours is 130 decibels.

9. Seek out crowds – opt for well-lit and populated areas wherever possible

- Use main roads with good street lighting as much as possible when walking home after dark – by being in sight of others you are less likely to be an obvious target.
- Meet friends in a familiar and safe environment that you all know. If one of you might be waiting alone, it is much better to do so in a busy place than in a dark park or on a street corner.

10. Ensure your safety first and foremost – every situation is different but your security must always be the priority

It is hard to say definitively what you should do if you are confronted or attacked – so you will sometimes have to rely on your judgement to know what is best:

- It is always better to give someone who is determined to mug you what they want rather than risk getting into a fight with them.
- If an attacker is carrying a weapon, it is more important to be safe than be concerned about pride or your belongings.