

Safety First!

College is such an exciting time! You are moving away from home and beginning your new independent adult life. But through all the excitement you need to make sure you are taking every pre-caution to stay safe. When it comes to safety, there are some things you can do to help reduce risks. You should keep the following in mind:

Utilize locks/ locking devices/ security systems. Always lock your doors and windows. If locking your door is not enough to protect your valuables, you can get other locking devices such as a small safe or lock box. You may also want to consider installing a portable battery powered security camera.

Consider taking a self-defense course. Many campuses hold regular self-defense courses that emphasize awareness of your surroundings as well as basic defense techniques.

Check in with family and friends. They don't have to know where you are 24/7 but if you're going out of town with friends or going somewhere that is out of your normal routine, it is always a good idea to let people know where you'll be and when you plan to come back. If you encounter issues they will have an idea of where and how to reach you.

Become familiar with the campus environment. This is probably one of the most useful things that you can do! Spend some time walking around the campus and getting used to the locations of your classes, landmarks, and locate emergency systems.

Consider using campus security/escort service. They provide students a free, safe, and reliable way to travel on-campus after dark.

Try avoiding walking alone at night. One important safety tip for female college students is to avoid walking alone at night. Go with friends late at night and walk on designated pathways and well-lit areas. If there is no other options than to walk alone, get on the phone with someone and have them talk to you until you get to the safety of your car, dorm or apartment.

Campus safety apps. Many campuses support safety apps like CampusSafe, EmergenSee, etc. You can use these to report minor incidents to campus police through texting forms or push the emergency button if you feel unsafe on campus, notifying campus police dispatch of your GPS location.

Carry a whistle, alarm, or pepper spray. A whistle or phone app that acts as an alarm is a fast and loud way to help signal people in case of an emergency. Pepper spray can be purchased in discreet, portable containers, some that will even fit on your keychain.

Be careful getting in your car. According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, approximately 38,000 carjacking's occur each year in the US and a weapon was used in 74% of these occurrences. Before you open your car door, look into the backseat to see if there is anyone there. When it is dark at night, use a flashlight to look under the car and the backseat. Also be aware of people asking for directions, handing out fliers, etc. If someone makes you feel uneasy, listen to that gut feeling.

Don't accept substances from strangers. You should be aware that powders, pills, and liquids can be in absolutely anything. Don't accept any substances from casual acquaintances or strangers.

Be aware of your surroundings. Most students are immersed in their phones while walking on campus. This is an easy way for robbers to target you. The moment you find yourself becoming unaware of your

surroundings, it may be time for you to turn the music down, put your phone away and stay focused on what is happening.

Set your social media privacy settings. It is probably second nature to update your status with your current adventures. It's one thing to let friends and family know these things, but if your accounts are open to the public, everyone has access to this information. Adjust your privacy settings so that only those you trust know your information and whereabouts, and check these settings often- settings can often change automatically whenever updates happen.

Follow your intuition. This is probably one of the most important tips and could eliminate many potential incidents. Sometimes your intuition can be more than accurate. When you notice someone is acting off in the dorm, don't be afraid to report it to security. When you feel uncomfortable in certain places, leave right away and go to an area with lights and people. Don't hesitate to call the police for help if something seems really abnormal.

In the unfortunate case that you do become a victim of campus crime, it is important to know what to do and how to recover.

Stay calm and call the police. Don't panic in the event of an emergency. If possible, go to a safe place and call 911 or have someone call 911 for help.

Follow the instructions from the operator. 911 operators have received formal training to learn how to handle emergency events. So you can trust them and follow the instructions until police arrive.

Call your relatives and friends. Emotional support can be extremely important after you suffer from campus crimes. Having a companion with you will make you feel secure.

Take some time to recover. You can employ the free resources available to help you recover from the attack, such as your campus mental health services/counseling services.