

A Woman's Guide to Personal Safety

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In today's world, women can never be too careful about their safety and security. The [best home security systems](#) can help you stay safe inside your home, but it's important to stay proactive about your safety when you're outside.

"Safety and security are paramount during these turbulent times," says Carrie Pasquarello, a victim's advocate with vast overseas experience in the State Department. Pasquarello's company, Global Secure Resources Inc., helps others navigate personal safety. She explained that "Gender violence is in the news daily...[which is] something that we cannot look away from. Instead, it needs to be highlighted if we want to prevent similar criminal acts from happening in the future."

Being proactive is the key to staying in control of your safety, according to auto expert and The Car Coach®, Lauren Fix. "Plan ahead and think about your reactions to 'what if?' scenarios. What would you do if the car in front of you slammed on the brakes or if a threatening person approached your car while stopped at a traffic light?"

"To improve your safety today, start by strategizing your safety with the 3P's: Proactive, Prepared, and Protected"

– Carrie Pasquarello, Global Secure Resources, Inc.

Pasquarello had similar advice. "To improve your safety today, start by strategizing your safety with the 3P's: proactive, prepared, and protected. Each of these has a component connected to strategies, tools, and techniques. By utilizing these methods and developing a proactive approach, you can be one step ahead of the criminals and the chaos they bring. This method will reduce, mitigate, and prevent victimization and prepare women with needed resources if a violent event does occur."

Obviously, these problems aren't strictly "women's problems," and overall solutions require conversations and preventative measures from all genders. But in the meantime, here are a few practical tips to help you stay safe.

10 Personal Safety Tips

1. 1

Be aware of your surroundings.

It's happened to all of us before where we zone out and lose track of our surroundings, but that can make us a target. "The best place to start is with awareness," advises Pasquarello. "Identifying your personal safety gaps is critical when you are traveling solo around your neighborhood or the world."

"Much of the prevention is simply the awareness of the threat and thinking about what you would do if something happened," says Fix. "Fear shouldn't rule your life, but you should always be aware of your security and surroundings the same way you keep an eye on the road. As you walk to your car, be alert to suspicious persons sitting in cars. Pay attention to who and what is around you."

She shares some quick tips to use when you are on the go:

- “As you approach your vehicle, look under, around, and inside your car.”
- “If safe, open the door, enter quickly, and lock the doors.”
- “Don’t be a target by turning your back while loading packages into the car.”
- “Make it your habit to always start your car and drive away immediately.”
- “Teach your children to enter and exit the car quickly and practice.”

2. 2

Make eye contact.

If you find yourself confronted, “speak up,” says Bennet. “Speak with confidence.”

Eye contact correlates with confidence, and by asserting confidence, you project strength and are less likely to be seen as a potential victim.

3. 3

Stay hands-free.

Our phones are an enormous distraction, actually raising the risk of danger when we’re caught in public unawares.

Gas stations and parking lots are two places where women can be especially vulnerable, according to Fix. “Take your earphones out when pumping gas, walking to and from your vehicle.” Keeping your hands free and eyes active reduces the chances of you being seen as a target.

4. 4

Trust your instincts.

Tracy Vega, co-founder of Simple Self Defense for Women put it simply: “If you think something isn’t right, it probably isn’t. Be aware of your surroundings.”

By following that nagging feeling of danger, you have nothing to lose and yet everything to gain. Fix added, “If you feel threatened or alarmed, be cautious and stay alert.”

5. 5

Store unattended valuables.

Your valuables can potentially make you a victim when left out in plain view, said Lauren Fix, the Car Coach. Instead, she says, “Keep computers, purses, wallets and other valuables on the floor of the car and out of sight”.

“We all have a tendency to get into our cars after shopping, eating, working, etc., and just stay in the vehicle checking their cell phone. Fix explained, “If the predator is

watching you, this is the perfect opportunity for [them] to get in on the passenger side, put a gun to your head, and tell you where to go.” Instead, “As soon as you get into the car, lock the doors and leave.”

6. 6

Never pull over.

A common tactic is for criminals to point out something wrong with your vehicle in an attempt to persuade you to pull over. As a solo driver alone on the road, it can be an incredibly scary thing to think that something could be wrong with your car, and despite your better judgment, fear could have you pulling over on the side of the road.

“Do not roll your window down for anyone except those you know and law enforcement officers. Always drive with your car doors locked and windows rolled up,” warned Fix. “If you are bumped in traffic, drive to a busy well-lit area or a police station. Be suspicious of the accident, and beware of the Good Samaritan who offers to repair your car or a flat tire. It’s OK to get help, just be alert.”

7. 7

Ditch the solo mentality.

Experts widely agree that criminals are less likely to attack a woman who is in a group.

“Walk from offices or other buildings to vehicles in pairs or larger groups,” Fix advised, “or find a security guard to assist you if available. Ask for a security escort if you are alone at a shopping center.”

You may feel like it’s an imposition, but these professionals are there to help, and it’s always better to be safe than sorry.

8. 8

Scan the area.

You’re most vulnerable outside of your vehicle, so that’s when you should be most on-guard.

Fix recommended several tips to keep you safe when going to and from your vehicle.

- Look around and under your car before getting in or out.
- Avoid isolated places where you are alone.
- Always park in well-lighted areas if you plan to arrive or leave after dark.

- Don't park in visually-obstructed areas near walls or heavy foliage. Watch out for people loitering in the area or handing out items.
 - Use an attended garage, if you're driving alone.
 - If someone tries to approach, change direction or run to a busy store.
- Your keys can be both a deterrent or a tool, depending on how you use them. "Have your keys in your hand when you go to your car," advised Right Response Consulting's Marsh. "You don't want to be digging through your purse."

9. 9

Change it up.

"Change your routine from time to time," urged Bennett.

It's well-known that criminals and vandals like to scope out a target before attacking, so one way to deter their efforts is to regularly change your routine. This isn't just where you park at work but also the route that you take to and from home, where you grab your morning coffee, and where you dine for lunch.

10. 10

Keep emergency items handy.

If you find yourself in an emergency, it's important to have the right kind of clothes, shoes and other items to help you escape.

"Dress in comfortable clothes and always have an extra pair of comfortable shoes with you," suggested Bennett. "If you drive, always try to have more than half a tank of gas. Keep an external charger with you and check it from time to time."

He also provided a helpful checklist of emergency items to keep in your vehicle in case of an emergency.

- Small shovel
- Flashlight
- Jumper cables
- Flares
- Tow rope
- Extra headlight bulbs
- Blanket
- Hand warmers
- Batteries

What to do if you are attacked

Despite our best efforts, we can't always guarantee that we'll be able to stay out of harm's way. If you find yourself in a dangerous situation, how you handle it could be the difference between life and death.

Here is what Car Coach® Lauren Fix recommends you do if you are attacked.

- **Don't resist:** "If you are ever confronted by an armed carjacker don't resist. Look to escape, and give them the car."
- **Hand over the cash:** "Give up your keys or money without resistance."
- **Let the assailant go:** "Don't argue, fight or chase the robber. You can be seriously injured."
- **Be proactive:** "If you are forced to drive, consider crashing your car near a busy intersection to attract attention, so bystanders can come to your aid and call the police."

Consider Self-Defense Classes

We can never be too prepared for all that we encounter in life, and a critical part of that is education. Carrie Pasquarello of Global Secure Resources Inc. recommends self-defense classes. "A great self-defense program is the RadProgram. The course includes lectures, discussions, and self-defense techniques suitable for women of all ages and abilities." Pasquarello herself is a graduate. "I attended this class along with my daughter," she said, adding, "You are only as good as your weakest link. Think about 'What if' scenarios and develop a backup plan to get to safety. Talk about safety with your friends. If you are out with a group, make sure to talk about safety and make sure everyone has a safety plan. Learn about bystander intervention and develop awareness.

At Positive Self Defense, Bennett dedicates his time to helping women take control of their personal safety. "Take a basic self-defense class. If you can, take a few."

"If you just learn one thing that keeps you out of harm's way, it was more than worth it."

– Zurriane Bennett

Positive Self-Defense

When it comes to the type of training, there isn't a bad option. "The type of training depends more on the person. All of the different types of training are good," Bennett told us, emphasizing that "the main thing is to find a training that is a good fit for the person." "Each person is an individual," he explains. "There is no one size fits all. I would recommend a self-defense class to start and then if the person wants more, look into a good martial arts school. Karate, Jujutsu, and Judo are good places to start."

Whatever you choose, the skills you learn can save your life one day.

Top Safety Tools

There are a ton of safety tools that women can use to protect themselves on the move. This can include anything from pepper spray and lipstick tasers to personal safety alarms. For Vega, it's simple: "Keep pepper spray with you, and know how to use it."

Bennett recommended some other tools that you can use. He pointed to small flashlight models that are easy to carry, hold in the hand, and conceal. "This can be used to blind and strike," he told us. Tactical pens are also good tools. "Some of these also have flashlights on them and can be used for writing," Bennett said.

Another product worth consideration is Nathan's SaferRun Personal Alarm and Strobe, a product developed by Nathan's female-led product design team. Designed to help women to feel safe on runs, the alarm features a one-handed quick-pull cord with a deafening 125-decibel siren and blinding LED strobe light to alert help.

"My favorite tool to keep me safe is the WanderSafe beacon," said Pasquarello. "It is a non-violent safety solution, made to fit discreetly in the palm of your hand. The beacon has four powerful functions to assist in de-escalating a potentially unsafe situation. We need tools to stay safe, and this is a great one."

No matter what you choose, Bennett urges you to find something that works for you. "With just a little practice, these items can be lifesavers," he said.

Thanks to the digital revolution, there are a ton of tools that women can use to ensure their safety.

These are just a few of the many options available to help today.

Top Safety Apps for Women



BSafe

The touch of a button activates SOS messages to pre-set emergency contacts



SafetiPin

This app relies on user data to identify and score areas based on their safety and security – especially for women



Noonlight

Connect the app to all of your devices, even integrating with Tinder to keep you safe on blind dates



CitizenCOP

Report crime that happens to you or others for real-time criminal reporting in your area



SaferWatch

When you are in danger, it will send an emergency alert to 911 call centers with your GPS coordinates and security camera feed with two-way communication with law enforcement



Life360

This app serves as a modern GPS tracker for families and friends, even detecting car crashes and summoning emergency services



Conclusion

In today's world, women can never be too careful about their safety and security. Nonetheless, our experts empower women to take control by arming themselves with the tools they need to protect themselves and their families. Pasquarello encourages women to be proactive about their safety. "We need to work together to bring awareness. Make sure to talk with your loved ones to Deter, Alert, Detect, and Defend," she urged. "Together, we can make a difference and stop gender violence."



Contributing Writer

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Lena Borrelli is a freelance journalist who has covered home security, safety, and other topics for Safety.com, TIME, Microsoft News, ADT, and Home Advisor.

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