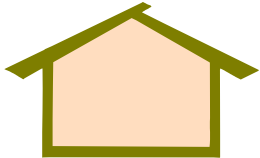


Basic Safety Strategies

The following safety strategies are suggestions, rather than absolutes. They are based on common sense and what we know about how assaults happen. Self-defense has many elements; these safety strategies being important among them. Remember, though, that relying solely on a long list of “do’s and don’t’s” is not a guarantee of safety. Not all of these suggestions will be appropriate for every woman, and we encourage you to come up with your own ideas about how to best protect yourself in the situations you encounter.

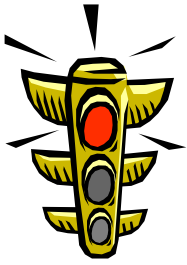


Home Safety

- ▶ Avoid indicating that you are home alone, either on the telephone or to someone at the door.
- ▶ Ask who is at the door before opening it; if possible, use a peephole rather than a chain lock, which can be easily broken.
- ▶ Ask for identification from any repair person before opening the door; call the company if you have any questions.
- ▶ If someone comes to the door requesting to use your telephone, ask them to stay outside while you place the call.
- ▶ Teach children about answering the door and telephone safety.
- ▶ Avoid hiding house keys in places they might be found; if you lose your keys, have the locks changed as soon as possible.
- ▶ Get to know your neighbors and determine which ones to call on in an emergency; consider developing an emergency signal system such as flashing lights or noisemakers.
- ▶ Ask your landlord/lady to provide safe conditions on rental property.

Home Checklist

- ☛ Lights at all entrances
- ☛ Deadbolt locks on all regular doors; special locks on all sliding doors
- ☛ A peephole or wide-angle viewer in the front door
- ☛ Replacement or barring of louvre windows, or gluing the glass into their metal slots
- ☛ Interior lights on timer
- ☛ Locks in addition to latches on all windows
- ☛ Coverings over windows for privacy
- ☛ Use of last name only on the mailbox and the front door buzzer
- ☛ Telephone book listing with first initial only and no address, or consider being unlisted

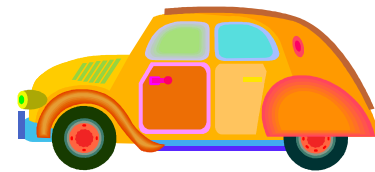


On the Street

- ▶ If you are carrying things, try to keep one hand free.
- ▶ Consider wearing clothes that do not restrict movement.
- ▶ Carry change for bus or cab fare.
- ▶ When possible, go around groups of men rather than through them.
- ▶ If you are followed by someone on foot, check over your shoulder then consider crossing the street.
- ▶ If you are followed by someone in a car, consider turning around and going in the opposite direction. Try to get a description of the car and the license number.
- ▶ In either case, if you continue to be followed, go towards people. A good thing to yell is “Fire!”
- ▶ Do not hesitate to get attention however you can if you are in trouble. Do not be afraid to make a scene.
- ▶ If someone asks for the time or directions, remember you have the right not to reply.
- ▶ Whenever possible at night, use well-lighted streets, staying near the curb unless a car pulls up.
- ▶ Remember that it is easier to fight back on the street than once you have been pulled into a car.
- ▶ Avoid being on the street alone at night if you are upset or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- ▶ If you travel a regular route at night, become familiar with stores that stay open, gas stations, and other places where there will be people.
- ▶ If you use a wheelchair, try and check your destinations ahead of time for accessible entrances.
- ▶ Try to take walks and runs with friends or neighbors.

Driving a Car

- ▶ As much as possible, keep your car in good running order and avoid driving with a near-empty gas tank.
- ▶ Keep doors locked and the windows rolled up as far as comfortable.
- ▶ If your car breaks down, use your cell phone to call the police, a tow truck or someone else who can help you. Turn on the emergency flashers, lift the hood and stay in your car with the doors locked until help arrives. If someone stops to help, thank them, but tell them help is already on the way.
- ▶ If you are followed while driving, good alternatives are to drive to the nearest police station, fire station, or hospital emergency entrance, or to go to an open gas station or store and call the police on your cell phone from your locked car; do not pull over on the street or drive home if you can avoid it.



- ▶ If this is not possible, honk your horn and turn on the emergency flashers; try to get the license number of the car following you.
- ▶ Consider the potential risk carefully before picking up hitchhikers. Giving a ride to a stranger can be very dangerous. Some women pick no one up; others will only give rides to women.
- ▶ Be aware that hitchhiking yourself can be very dangerous. [See the section below on “Risky Activities” for more information.]
- ▶ If someone forces his way into your car, take the keys if you can and jump out.
- ▶ Whenever possible, park in well-lighted areas and always lock the car when you leave it. Be aware of where you park your car so it is easy to find when you return.
- ▶ Avoid parking next to vans, as you can be pulled in through the sliding door.
- ▶ Check around, under, and inside your car as you approach it.
- ▶ Try to be especially alert in parking structures.
- ▶ Carry your keys in your hand, ready to use. If there is a parking attendant, give him or her *only* your ignition key.
- ▶ Make sure a friend is safely inside her home, or that the car has started, before driving away. Ask friends to do the same for you!

On Public Transportation

- ▶ When waiting for public transportation, assume a balanced position behind the bench (so you cannot be pulled into a passing car).
- ▶ Try to sit near the driver, and stay awake.
- ▶ If someone harasses you, tell the driver immediately.
- ▶ If you feel someone is following you when you get off, walk towards a populated area. Avoid walking directly home.



At Work

- ▶ If you are uncomfortable about getting on an elevator with a lone man or a group of men, wait for the next one. If you are made uncomfortable once on the elevator, you can get off at the next floor, or press the emergency/fire button.
- ▶ Check the identification of service, delivery, or repair people if you have any doubts about them.
- ▶ Know the routes of escape in your work area.
- ▶ If you work late, find out who else is in the building; when you leave, ask someone (perhaps a security guard) to accompany you to your car.
- ▶ Consider talking with co-workers and your employer about improving safety conditions in the workplace.



Risky Activities

We emphasize that an assault is never the fault of the survivor, but it is also true that certain activities carry a greater risk than others. As long as assault remains a real possibility in our lives, we should try to minimize those risky activities. For example, hitchhiking is a very risky activity. Many women have been assaulted while hitchhiking. The best response is to minimize the need to hitchhike in the first place:

- ▶ Create a buddy system with a co-worker, so that both are sure of the ride in case of car trouble.
- ▶ Whether or not you own a car, make sure you always carry bus or cab fare with you.
- ▶ As much as possible, keep your car in good working order to minimize the possibility of breakdown.
- ▶ If you use public transportation, become familiar with routes and timetables in your area.
- ▶ If you are a teenager or adolescent, it may be even more difficult to avoid the temptation to hitchhike. It is important to remember that by exercising patience and good judgment, you may be able to avoid putting yourself in a very dangerous situation.

Before we make judgments about other people's behavior, we should remember to put it into perspective. After all, some very common activities, such as accepting a date from a man, can be among the most statistically risky!

Safety Strategies for Deaf Women

- ❑ Make full use of your vision (eyesight) and check your environment constantly, looking behind yourself if necessary.
- ❑ When you are approached by a hearing person, make sure that communication is very clear, even if it means insisting on writing as a means of communication.
- ❑ When communicating with a stranger, feel free to use facial expressions and body language to express your feelings or intent.
- ❑ Get acquainted with neighbors, co-workers and other people you are in daily contact with, so they will know that there's a deaf woman in their environment and routine.
- ❑ Keep TDD numbers of emergency services handy at all times.
- ❑ If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, do not be afraid to scream or yell. In general, deaf people have a distinct vocal quality to which hearing people are not accustomed.

Safety Strategies for Battered Women

- ❑ Keep an extra set of house and car keys hidden somewhere safe so you can leave quickly if necessary.
- ❑ In a safe place that is accessible to you 24-hours a day (but probably not in your home), keep some money, important phone numbers, copies of essential legal papers for your self and your children, a change of clothes, needed medications, and anything else you would want if you left your home.
- ❑ Keep emergency telephone numbers handy, including:
 - National Domestic Violence Hotline**
1.800.799.7233 (SAFE) and 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)
 - National Sexual Assault Hotline**
1.800.656.4673 (HOPE)
- ❑ Find a trustworthy person you can call on in an emergency, and develop some plans together about contacting the police for you, and finding a safe place to stay.



Planning for Self-Defense

Some studies indicate that if a woman knows her assailant, he is more likely to be able to complete the rape. This might be due to the much more complicated feelings involved in an acquaintance rape. There are some questions that can be considered ahead of time:

- ▶ Would you hurt an assailant you know?
- ▶ Under what circumstances would you hurt him?
- ▶ When would you treat him just as you would a stranger trying to rape you?
- ▶ Would you yell or are you worried about others' reactions?
- ▶ Would you report the incident? If so, to whom?
- ▶ How would you handle the reactions of mutual friends, relatives, co-workers if you report?

Knowing the answers to these questions can help you act more decisively in a coercive situation or an assault.

– Excerpted from *Women's Self-Defense: A Complete Guide to Assault Prevention*,
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