

## THE STREETWISE GUIDE TO HAVING A GOOD TIME

How do I stay safe in large crowds?  
How do I stay safe at smaller events and walking home at night?

What are the points to remember?



### Concerts, Football matches, Events . . .

There's a way of going to crowded events and enjoying yourself without taking unnecessary risks. It involves knowing that you and your property are safe, feeling confident, and taking a little bit of time out to plan ahead. You don't need anything special to become a relaxed, experienced crowd-member. All it takes are:

#### Friends

You feel more confident and relaxed with people you know. Travel with them if you can, or arrange to meet them at a well-known, public place near the venue. Don't choose the main entrance - it's likely to be a mass of people, all looking for one another. Once you've made contact, try to stay with them. Agree an easily recognisable point inside the venue where you'll meet if you do get separated.

#### Money

Work out in advance how much money you're going to need. Keep your cash in a secure inside pocket or money belt; if you take a bag, wear it with the strap pulled forward so that the bag itself is under your arm. (Bags slung over people's shoulders are a gift to pickpockets.) Put aside enough money to get you home and carry it separately so that if you are robbed, you won't be stranded. For the same reason, it's a good idea to keep your door-keys away from your purse.

#### Walkmans/cameras/accessories

Leave them at home. There'll be people on the look out for what they can steal. If you must take them, make sure they are as secure as your purse or wallet and never put them down. It takes only a split second for someone to take them.

#### Quick reactions

There's always a buzz of excitement in a crowd; usually it's just part of the atmosphere, but it can sometimes spill over into fights. Trouble can spread quickly. If you see a fight or a nasty situation building, don't stick around to watch. Get away. Notice where police/security are stationed and don't hesitate to report an incident or ask for help.

### **Sharp eyes**

Necessary for checking out souvenirs, tickets or anything else you're offered for sale. There are always things to buy at these events, and it's smart to have a hard look at the goods before you part with your money. Many will be fine, but don't let yourself be conned or ripped off with rubbish. Be very, very careful about buying tickets from touts - there are a lot of forgeries around - and don't pay more than you can sensibly afford.

### **Steady legs**

It's very rare that a crowd panics but if it happens, don't waste time trying to pick up anything you drop: the most important thing is to stay on your feet. If you feel the crowd begin to push in one direction, don't try to fight against the flow - go with it. When things settle down, try to move away to a safer area.

### **Emergency exits**

These are useful things to notice at any time and of course, they're vital in an emergency. They'll be clearly marked, usually in red lettering on white. Take time out to work out how you would get away if you had to.

### **Substances**

It's illegal for you to take them. Don't be confident about your ability to "handle" drugs. Drugs are dangerous and you need to stay in control. You enjoy an event more if you know what's going on around you.

### **The trip home**

Arranging the trip home is one of the tricks the experienced crowd member soon learns. Nothing can spoil an outing more than being stranded after it's over, along with a mass of other cold and increasingly fed up people. Find out when the event is going to end and what buses or trains will be running afterwards. They'll be crowded so leave the venue quickly and go straight to the transport. You may even get a seat.

### **Parties**

Even the best parties can go badly wrong. All the ways we have suggested for staying safe and problem-free at events also apply to parties.

And if you're being taken to a party held by someone you don't know, find out about it in advance. Where is it? Who else do you know who's going? How will you get there and back? Let someone know where you're going to be - it gives you and them confidence.

In a private home, there won't be emergency exits, but you can notice where the doors are and the telephone. Keep your money on you, rather than leaving it in your jacket.

Like organised events, parties have moods. Trust yourself to pick up on them even if you just feel uncomfortable but can't say why, then leave.

**At the Club/ in the Park/ on the Street . . .**

You're walking down a quiet street, going to your friend's place. You're wearing your personal stereo. The quickest way is through the car park, and you're just starting to go in when you see a group of people leaning against a car, chatting. You've got no reason to suspect them of doing anything wrong, but you feel wary. It will only take ten seconds to cross the car park.

**What do you do?**

Turn round and take another, more public route. Don't go into the car park. What's the point of looking for trouble? Take your headphones off and put them in your pocket - as long as you're wearing them, you can't hear what's going on around you and you're advertising the fact that you've got something to steal. Always walk away from the building line of a street. You do not know who is standing in the next shop door way. Give yourself a chance to run away by putting some distance between them and yourself. Always choose the the busiest and brightly lit route home even if it is longer. Think of your safety first.

**Remember****To have a good time in your free time**

Keep with your group.

Think about where you're going - is it smart to take your valuable possessions with you?

Take well-lit and well-used routes.

Carry money securely.

Keep your headphones off when you're alone.

Walk confidently - head up, arms swinging - even if you don't feel it.

Trust your instincts and don't do anything you don't want to.

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**If you are worried, frightened or think you may be in danger, call the police**