

## A STREETWISE GUIDE TO SAFETY ON THE STREET

What should I do when I am walking on my own?  
How do I stay safe on trains and buses?  
Are Taxi's safe?  
Travel Tips



### Safety on the street

#### Here are some Streetwise tips for going places easily and safely . . .

Look confident. Walk with your head up, as if you know where you are going. Keep your hands free - don't walk about with them in your pockets.

Stay alert. Leave your personal stereos off - they stop you being aware of what's going on around you.

Keep to well-used roads. Don't use alleyways or short cuts.

Walk against the flow of traffic, to avoid kerb crawlers.

In the dark, always stick to well-lit areas.

If you think you are being followed, cross the road.

If the person follows you, cross it again. If you are still worried, go at once to a place where there are lots of people, such as a busy shop, and tell someone what's going on. If you can, choose a police officer; if not, go to a family group rather than a single adult and tell them. Always report this kind of thing to the police, even if it's now over. You won't be wasting police time.

Carry a torch or a whistle, or better still, a very noisy screech or shrill alarm. They are not expensive and if you carry a personal alarm, you will feel more confident.

If you start to be frightened, try not to panic. Always try to think around situations.

### Public Transport, Trains and tubes - Carriages on trains

Go into open ones, where people can walk through, rather than closed compartments. Older British Rail trains have closed compartment carriages marked with a red line on the side above the windows. **Avoid these if you are on your own.** There will be open-style carriages somewhere else on the train. Look for a carriage with several other passengers in it, preferably not all in the same group: it's always safer to have a mix of people around you.

### On the Tube (The Underground)

Go into the front or middle carriages. They are less likely to empty suddenly. Try to choose a carriage which will stop near the exit at the station you are travelling to.

### **Pickpockets**

They like stations and trains, where people are often in a hurry and slightly careless of their possessions. Keep your valuables secure on you - wallets and purses in inside pockets; bags carried forward, with your hand on them.

If you have a heavy bag or box, don't dump it several feet away from you. It will get in the way of other people and may cause an accident. Also, you run a greater risk of having it stolen - it only takes seconds to snatch something when the train stops at a station.

Put big or heavy items on the rack above your head (if there's room) or on an empty seat, where you can keep an eye on them.

### **Rush hours and peak times**

When it's crowded and you have to stand, try and find yourself a strap or partition to hold onto, to save getting thrown about.

Be especially careful when you are joining a tube or train from a crowded platform. Also take extra care when getting off crowded trains. Look before you step and "mind the gap".

If you are in a crowd and someone is touching you or rubbing against you in a way you don't like, don't put up with it. Either tell them to move back a little or, if you can't face it or aren't sure who's doing it, stick your elbows out to create some more space for yourself. As soon as you can, move to a different part of the carriage. Even in a thick crowd, if you keep saying "excuse me" politely but determinedly, people will make way for you. If you are frightened, **TELL** someone immediately. Choose a family group rather than a single person, and ask if you can stay with them until you feel safe. And **ALWAYS** report this kind of thing to the police - even if your information is vague, it will still be useful.

### **Emergency handles**

Notice them. They are marked out in red. If the nearest one is too high, look for another one nearby which you can reach by climbing on a seat. Tubes have pull down handles and push buttons. Some BR trains have emergency chains to pull rather than handles. They all have the same effect.

If you find yourself alone in a carriage with people who frighten you, get next to the emergency handle/button/chain, stand straight and let them see you're prepared to use it if there's trouble. Don't be afraid of changing carriages when the train gets in to the next station, if it makes you feel more comfortable.

### **Platforms**

If the platform is empty or there are people on it who make you uncomfortable, you can usually stay near the ticket office, or the ticket collector, until the train appears.

### **Underground platforms**

Usually near escalators, stairs or lifts, where people will be coming and going. If someone on the platform makes you anxious, go to wherever there are people around who make you feel safe. It's better to miss a tube and get the next one than put yourself at risk.

Always stay in well-lit areas. Many tube station platforms now have Help Points with both emergency and information buttons which you can push. Many also have public telephones.

### **Buses and coaches**

#### **Top Deck**

Avoid it, especially if you're alone. You're cut off up there. Stay downstairs and if the bus isn't very full, sit as near to the driver as possible. Choose an aisle seat if there's one free.

#### **Bus Stops**

If you can, do use one in a busy, well-lit place - even if it means a longer queue. If you need to ask someone for directions, go to a transport official if you can. If you're asking strangers, **don't tell them the exact address you're going to:** give the name of the district or the nearest main road. If they ask how you're going to get home from there, say you'll be met at the bus stop.

#### **Bus Stations**

Busy, confusing places. Even experienced bus travellers sometimes have problems working out which route they need and where to find it.

Always ask the transport officials and at the information desk - don't worry about repeating your questions if the answers still aren't clear. And when you board the bus, check with the driver that it goes to the right destination (it means you can relax on the journey, instead of gazing anxiously out of the window wondering if you're heading in the wrong direction).

**Always plan your route before you set off, so you don't have these difficulties.**

#### **Taxis, Women and Safety On the street**

Choose black cabs rather than mini cabs - unless it's a local minicab company you recognise and trust.

If a car stops without you asking it to and the driver says "this is a taxi, hop in" - **DON'T**, even if you can see that it's a black cab. Taxi drivers are only supposed to stop when asked. And minicabs are not supposed to stop in the street at all - they are only ever allowed to pick up prearranged bookings.

**By phone**

Choose a firm whose name you know and trust.

When you're ordering a taxi to come for you, give the address and your surname, and ask the driver to give your name when he arrives. When the taxi comes, wait for him to identify himself. Ask "who are you for?" rather than "Are you the taxi for Robertson?"

Ask the firm to quote you a price for the journey over the phone, so you can check that you have enough money.

**In the taxi**

Always sit in the back, not next to the driver.

Share the taxi with a friend if possible - you'll feel better and it's cheaper.

Don't chat to the driver. If you do talk, keep to general topics and don't give any personal information about yourself.

**Travel Tips**

Plan your journeys - work out how to get there AND back.

Put aside enough money for the return fare.

Always let someone know where you're going - preferably your parents or the adult who normally looks after you.

Invest in a phone card and always carry it with you, so if you get stranded you can phone home.

If you don't have a phone card or any money, remember that you can always make a phone call by reversing the charges.

If you lose your fare money or ticket, speak to the driver/guard/ticket officer and explain. Give your name and address and say that the transport company can write to your home for payment. Carry some identification on you to prove that you are genuine.

Never be tempted to walk home alone, especially if it's dark or you are unsure of the area.

Never hitch a lift. You don't know who will stop and you don't want to get into a frightening situation.

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

And if you have had a bad experience, or seen someone else having one ALWAYS report it to the police. You will not only be helping yourself, you will also be helping to stop other people getting hurt.