

Personal safety - a practical guide



Personal safety means looking after yourself. There are no set rules, just guidelines based on good practice and experience.

The fear of crime is greater than the actual threat and the chances of becoming a victim of crime are low. Dorset remains one of the safest counties to live and work in, according to the latest statistics from the Government.

The following information, much of it provided by Dorset Police and the Government's Home Office, aims to help you prepare and plan.

By thinking ahead you can reduce many of the risks. Simple, common sense steps can help you feel more confident and make you less likely to become a victim of crime. Be aware of your surroundings, try not to travel alone, use your judgment, and if you feel you are in danger leave the situation as quickly as possible.

At the end of this guide you will find links to further resources for more detailed information.

General personal safety precautions

- You will be safest in bright, well-lit, busy areas.
- Appear and act confident - look like you know where you're going and walk tall. Concentrate on where you are going, not on your mobile phone.
- You might like to spread your valuables around your body. For example, keep your phone in your bag, your house keys in your pocket and your money in your jacket.
- If someone tries to take something from you, it may be better to let them take it rather than get into a confrontation and risk injury.
- If you use a wheelchair, keep your things beside you rather than at the back of the wheelchair.
- Try not to advertise your valuables such as mobile phones, laptops, notebooks, tablet or iPod/MP3 player, jewellery or watch.
- When out walking, be careful not to make your personal items, as mentioned above, an easy target for robbers. Try to keep them hidden.
- Stay alert - your phone is a valuable item. When you are out, be aware of your surroundings and don't be distracted by it!
- If you feel anxious consider carrying a personal attack alarm. The trust offers a number of these for staff to use. These can be collected from the cash office on your site during normal office hours from 29 November. We ask for a £10 deposit, which is refunded when the device is returned when no longer required to ensure as many staff who wish to use one can do so.

Theft and robbery

Street robbery is generally known as mugging. It can also cover snatching bags.

Pick-pocketing is slightly different, as you will not be aware of the offence taking place.

Robbery is more likely to take place in quiet or dark areas, and pick-pocketing where it is busy, for example on a busy train in rush hour.

Tips to avoid becoming a victim:

- Remember - be aware of your surroundings. Concentrate on what and who is around you. Don't be distracted by using mobile gadgets and players. If you are listening to music, use just one headphone so that you are aware of someone approaching you
- Don't give thieves the chance to take your valuables from you. Don't put them on show
- Don't leave your bag, wallet, valuable jewellery, mobile phone or player on display to thieves
- Don't leave bags or pockets open or unzipped. It's easier for a thief to dip into an open bag. Purse bells are a great way of further protecting your purse.

Transport safety

This section offers some general tips on how to keep yourself safe and secure when making a journey - either catching a bus, taxi or train, or when you're in the car.

Public transport safety

- As with everything, you are safest where there are other people and where it is well lit
- Plan your route
- Try to wait in busy or well-lit areas
- Sit near other people, near the driver if you are on a bus or near the guard if you are on a train
- If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, get up and move away
- Take extra care at crowded bus stops and on crowded buses and trains. Keep your bag closed and make sure your pockets are not accessible

Using taxis

- If you are going to be out late, try to arrange a lift home or book a taxi in your name
- Always keep the number of a reliable firm handy. Avoid minicabs or private-hire cars that tout for business and are unlicensed
- If you can pre-book your taxi, make a note of the company you are using and the phone number and leave it with a friend
- When the taxi arrives, ask the driver to check it's the one that you booked
- Always sit behind the driver in the back seat. If you feel uneasy when you near your destination, ask to be let out in a well-lit area where there are plenty of people
- If in any doubt, don't get in the taxi.

Travelling by car

- Keep valuables out of sight
- Ensure your car is in a fit state with sufficient fuel for your journey
- Know where you are going, plan your route
- Don't keep driving document in the car
- Keep doors locked whilst in the vehicle

Car parks

- Reverse in so you can drive straight out
- Note where you have parked
- Return to your car in pairs or groups, where possible
- Have your keys ready as you approach your vehicle
- Get in, lock the doors and drive away promptly.

Further information

[Dorset Police](#)'s website has comprehensive information on staying safe – much of it is summarised here. Their website is www.dorset.police.uk

The [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](http://suzylamplugh.org) aims to reduce the risk of violence and aggression through campaigning, education and support, and their advice is endorsed by the police. Find more information at suzylamplugh.org