

# UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE SAFETY

A practical guide to staying safer,  
more aware and more confident

**FOR STUDENTS AGED 16+**

**BE AWARE • BE CONFIDENT • BE PREPARED • BE SAFE**

# WELCOME

*Independence should feel exciting - not frightening.*

Starting college or university can mean new friendships, greater independence, living away from home, nights out, new relationships and experiences that stay with you for the rest of your life.

Greater independence also means taking more responsibility for your personal safety. This booklet is not about telling you not to go out, meet people or enjoy yourself. It is about giving you practical strategies so you can recognise potential problems earlier, make confident decisions and know what to do when something does not feel right.

**Personal safety is not about living in fear. It is about being prepared, aware and confident enough to act when something does not feel right.**

## YOUR SAFETY MINDSET

- Notice what is happening around you.
- Trust your instincts when something feels wrong.
- Create distance early rather than waiting for a situation to escalate.
- Know where your exits and sources of help are.
- Remember: being polite is never more important than being safe.

# 1. AWARENESS: YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

One of the most effective personal safety skills does not require physical strength. It is awareness.

- Who is around you and what they are doing.
- Where you are and where you are going.
- Where the nearest exits, staffed areas or busy places are.
- Whether somebody appears to be following or watching you.
- Changes in behaviour, atmosphere or circumstances.
- Anything that simply does not feel right.

Phones and headphones can reduce awareness. You do not need to stop using them, but avoid becoming completely absorbed when you are somewhere unfamiliar, isolated or potentially vulnerable.

**You do not need proof that something is wrong before taking action to make yourself safer.**

## CONFIDENCE & BODY LANGUAGE

- Walk with your head up and look where you are going.
- Know your route where possible.
- Avoid appearing completely distracted.
- Use brief eye contact when appropriate.
- Move with purpose and confidence.

## 2. ARRIVING AT UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

During your first few days, learn the safety resources around you before you need them.

- ☐ Save the university or college security number.
- ☐ Find out whether there is a safe-walk or security escort service.
- ☐ Locate the Students' Union and student welfare team.
- ☐ Find your GP/student health service and nearest A&E.
- ☐ Identify well-lit routes between accommodation, campus and town.
- ☐ Find reputable taxi/private-hire options and transport hubs.
- ☐ Know where campus help points or staffed buildings are.

## BUILD A PERSONAL SAFETY NETWORK

A small group of trusted people can look out for one another. When going somewhere unfamiliar, meeting somebody new or travelling home late, consider sharing:

- WHERE you are going
- WHO you are meeting
- WHEN you expect to return
- HOW you plan to get home

**Agree a simple check-in: 'I'll message when I'm home.'**

### 3. WALKING AROUND CAMPUS & TOWN

- Use well-lit, populated routes where possible.
- Avoid isolated shortcuts at night.
- Walk with friends after late events when practical.
- Keep valuables discreet and your phone accessible.
- Have your keys ready before reaching your accommodation.
- Know where you could go for immediate help.

### IF YOU THINK SOMEONE IS FOLLOWING YOU

Do not automatically go home - you may reveal where you live.

1. Cross the road or change direction and observe what happens.
2. Move towards a busy, staffed place such as a shop, hotel, café or venue.
3. Call someone and clearly tell them where you are.
4. Approach security staff or other trusted people.
5. If you believe you are in immediate danger, call 999.

**Personal safety situations are not the time to worry about embarrassment.**

## 4. FRESHERS' WEEK & NIGHTS OUT

Freshers' Week should be enjoyable. A little planning can make a big difference.

### BEFORE GOING OUT

- ☐ Phone charged and emergency battery/power bank available.
- ☐ Keys with you.
- ☐ Journey home planned before drinking.
- ☐ Last bus/train time checked.
- ☐ Enough money for an alternative journey home.
- ☐ Trusted friends know the plan.
- ☐ Buddy/check-in arrangement agreed.

### ALCOHOL

Alcohol can affect judgement, balance, awareness, reaction speed and memory. Know your own limits and remember that you never have to keep drinking because somebody else is.

**Try to remain capable of thinking clearly, communicating clearly and getting yourself somewhere safe.**

## 5. DRINK SPIKING

Spiking means giving somebody a substance without their consent. This can include adding alcohol or drugs to drinks or administering a substance in another way. Spiking is a crime.

### POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS

- Feeling suddenly much more intoxicated than expected.
- Confusion, dizziness or unusual drowsiness.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Difficulty communicating or standing.
- Problems with vision, memory loss or blackouts.

### REDUCE THE OPPORTUNITY

- Buy or collect your own drink where possible.
- Watch drinks being prepared.
- Do not accept open drinks from strangers.
- Do not leave your drink unattended; if you do, consider replacing it.
- Tell venue staff if somebody is behaving suspiciously.

**The responsibility for spiking always belongs to the person who commits the offence.**

## IF YOU THINK YOU OR A FRIEND HAS BEEN SPIKED

- Tell a trusted friend, venue staff or security immediately.
- Do not leave alone or go home with somebody you do not know or trust.
- Get medical assistance if needed.
- Call 999 if the person is seriously unwell or in immediate danger.

## 6. TAXIS, RIDESHARES & TRAVELLING HOME

### BEFORE GETTING IN

- Use an established operator or app.
- Check the vehicle registration, make/model and driver details where provided.
- Do not accept an unsolicited lift simply because somebody offers.
- Share journey details with someone you trust.

### DURING THE JOURNEY

- Follow the route on your phone if helpful.
- Sit where you feel most comfortable.
- Keep your phone accessible.
- If concerned, ask to leave at a safe, populated location.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Check times and connections before leaving.
- Keep enough battery and emergency money.
- Wait somewhere visible and reasonably populated.
- Move seat or carriage if another passenger makes you uncomfortable.

**Changing your seat, route or plans is not rude. It is a safety decision.**



## 7. STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

- Lock your door when you leave and when appropriate while inside.
- Lock accessible windows at night.
- Do not prop communal security doors open.
- Do not allow unknown people to follow you through secure entrances.
- Do not casually lend access cards or keys.
- Report broken locks, doors or security lighting promptly.
- Do not hide spare keys outside.

### SOMEONE AT THE DOOR?

You do not have to open it. If someone claims to be maintenance staff, security or another official and you are unsure, verify their identity with accommodation management first.

### FLATMATES & HOUSE PARTIES

Agree expectations around locking doors, strangers, overnight guests, parties and shared access. You have the right to feel safe in your own accommodation.

## 8. DATING, NEW PEOPLE & BOUNDARIES

Most new friendships and relationships will be positive. Trust, however, should develop over time.

### BE ALERT TO SOMEONE WHO:

- Repeatedly ignores your boundaries.
- Becomes possessive or controlling very quickly.
- Pressures you to drink or use substances.
- Tries to isolate you from friends.
- Becomes angry when you say no.
- Demands access to your phone or location.
- Pressures you sexually.
- Makes you frightened of upsetting them.

### FIRST DATES

- ☐ Meet somewhere public.
- ☐ Tell somebody who you are meeting and where.
- ☐ Share the person's profile with a trusted friend.
- ☐ Arrange your own transport.
- ☐ Keep your phone charged.
- ☐ Agree a check-in time with a friend.
- ☐ Leave whenever you want to.

**A date, a meal, a kiss or inviting someone inside never creates an obligation to do anything else.**

## 9. CONSENT & PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Consent should be freely given, informed, mutual, specific and ongoing. Someone can change their mind. Being in a relationship does not remove the need for consent, and an incapacitated person cannot meaningfully consent.

### CLEAR BOUNDARY PHRASES

**NO. • STOP. • I'M LEAVING. • DON'T TOUCH ME. • MOVE AWAY FROM ME.**

You do not have to soften a clear boundary to protect another person's feelings.

## 10. DIGITAL SAFETY

- Review privacy settings on social media and dating apps.
- Think before publicly sharing your accommodation, timetable or regular routes.
- Avoid broadcasting that you are home alone.
- Check who can see your live location.
- Use strong, unique passwords and two-factor authentication.
- Do not casually share passwords with partners or friends.

If a relationship ends, review passwords, shared accounts, location sharing, cloud access and connected devices.

## 11. ONLINE HARASSMENT & STALKING

Repeated unwanted contact, threats, sexual messages, monitoring or unwanted appearances should not simply be dismissed as 'online drama'.

### KEEP A RECORD

- Save messages and screenshots.
- Record usernames, dates and times.
- Keep a simple incident log.
- Tell somebody you trust.
- Report concerning behaviour to your institution or police when appropriate.

### STALKING CAN INCLUDE

- Repeated unwanted messages or calls.
- Following you or repeatedly appearing where you study or socialise.
- Monitoring social media.
- Sending unwanted gifts.
- Contacting friends to obtain information about you.

**One incident may appear insignificant. A pattern of behaviour can tell a very different story.**

## 12. PERSONAL ALARMS & CASH MACHINES

### PERSONAL ALARMS

A personal alarm may attract attention, startle somebody and create an opportunity to move away. Keep it somewhere immediately accessible rather than buried at the bottom of a bag.

### CASH MACHINES

- Look around before approaching.
- Avoid isolated machines late at night where possible.
- Shield your PIN.
- Do not count cash openly.
- Put your money away before walking off.
- If somebody stands unnecessarily close, cancel the transaction and leave.

**Property can be replaced. Your safety comes first.**

## 13. CONFRONTATION & PHYSICAL SELF-DEFENCE

Your objective is not to 'win a fight'. Your objective is to get away safely.

- Create distance.
- Move towards other people or an exit.
- Use a clear, confident voice.
- Attract attention.
- Put obstacles between you and the person.
- Escape as soon as an opportunity appears.

### USE YOUR VOICE

**STOP! • BACK OFF! • LEAVE ME ALONE! • CALL THE POLICE!**

Physical self-defence is generally a last resort when avoidance, boundaries, de-escalation or escape are not possible. The aim is to create an opportunity to escape, not to punish or take revenge.

**AWARENESS → AVOIDANCE → BOUNDARIES → DE-ESCALATION → ESCAPE**

## 14. AFTER AN INCIDENT

After a frightening incident, thoughts and memory can feel confused. Your immediate priorities are safety and wellbeing.

6. Move somewhere safe.
7. Check yourself for injuries and seek medical help if needed.
8. Contact somebody you trust.
9. Contact the police when appropriate.
10. As soon as reasonably possible, write down what you remember.

## USEFUL DETAILS TO RECORD

- Date, approximate time and location.
- What happened and what was said.
- Descriptions of people.
- Vehicle details.
- Witnesses.
- Direction somebody travelled.
- Relevant messages, photographs, videos or social-media details.

Preserve relevant evidence rather than deleting it.

## 15. AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted, specialist support is available. Your immediate priorities are your safety, health and wellbeing.

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) provide specialist medical, practical and emotional support. Depending on circumstances, services may include medical care, crisis support, forensic examination, emergency contraception, STI testing and information about your options.

**You can seek specialist support even if you are unsure whether you want to report what happened to the police.**

## IF A FRIEND TELLS YOU SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED

- Listen.
- Believe them.
- Remain calm.
- Ask what they need.
- Help them access professional support.
- Respect their decisions where possible.

**A helpful question can be: 'I'm here. What would you like me to do?'**



## 16. YOUR 60-SECOND SAFETY PLAN

University/college security number:

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Accommodation emergency number:

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Trusted contact:

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Local licensed taxi/private-hire service:

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Nearest safe late-night location:

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GP/student health service:

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Emergency route home:

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Person I will contact if something feels wrong:

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## 17. QUICK CHECKLISTS

### NIGHT OUT

- ☐ Phone charged.
- ☐ Keys with me.
- ☐ Journey home planned.
- ☐ Someone knows where I am going.
- ☐ Emergency money available.
- ☐ Going with people I trust.
- ☐ Buddy/check-in plan agreed.
- ☐ Last bus/train checked.
- ☐ Backup journey home considered.

### FIRST DATE

- ☐ Meet somewhere public.
- ☐ Tell somebody who I am meeting.
- ☐ Share the person's profile with a trusted friend.
- ☐ Arrange my own transport.
- ☐ Keep my phone charged.
- ☐ Agree a check-in time.
- ☐ Trust my instincts.
- ☐ Leave whenever I want to.

## 18. EMERGENCY INFORMATION - UK

**IMMEDIATE DANGER: CALL 999**

For non-emergency police matters, call 101.

For urgent medical advice when it is not a 999 emergency, use NHS 111.

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) provide specialist support following rape or sexual assault. Search the NHS website for your nearest centre.

Your university or college may also provide support through campus security, student welfare, safeguarding teams, accommodation services, counselling, personal tutors, student health services and Students' Union services.

**If you are unsure whether something is serious enough to ask for help, ask anyway.**

## TEN RULES TO REMEMBER

11. Trust your instincts.
12. Awareness gives you options.
13. You do not have to be polite to somebody who is frightening you.
14. Create distance when something feels wrong.
15. Know how you are getting home before you go out.
16. Look after your friends - and let them look after you.
17. Your boundaries do not require somebody else's approval.
18. Property can be replaced.
19. Physical self-defence is about creating an opportunity to escape.
20. Ask for help early.

## FINAL MESSAGE

University and college should be a time for discovering who you are, building friendships, gaining independence and creating memories.

Personal safety should not prevent you from enjoying those experiences. It should help you enjoy them with greater confidence.

**NOTICE** what is happening. **RECOGNISE** when something feels wrong.  
**DECIDE** what will make you safer. **ACT** before the situation becomes more difficult.

You cannot control every situation or every other person's behaviour. But you can develop awareness, confidence, boundaries and a plan.

**BE AWARE • BE CONFIDENT • BE PREPARED • BE SAFE**

**Important:** This booklet provides general personal-safety information and is not a substitute for emergency, medical, legal or specialist safeguarding advice. Services and procedures can change, so check current official guidance when needed.