

PRACTICAL SAFETY GUIDE

MALE (and those that identify as) UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE SAFETY

Stay aware • Make confident decisions • Get home safely

FOR STUDENTS AGED 16+

A practical guide to awareness, de-escalation, nights out, accommodation, consent, digital safety and what to do after an incident.

Welcome

Starting college or university should be exciting. It can bring new friendships, greater independence, nights out, unfamiliar places and experiences that stay with you for life.

This booklet is not about assuming every situation is dangerous or telling you not to enjoy yourself. It is about recognising risk earlier, making calm decisions and knowing when to leave, seek help or support someone else.

Personal safety is not about proving how tough you are. It is about making the decision most likely to get you and the people with you home safely.

A message specifically for young men

Young men are sometimes expected to appear fearless, handle trouble alone or respond when challenged. That pressure can turn a manageable disagreement into a serious incident.

Real confidence includes knowing when not to engage. Walking away, apologising to calm a situation, getting security or calling the police can require more self-control than fighting.

1. Awareness: your first line of defence

Awareness gives you time and options. Notice what is happening around you without becoming anxious or suspicious of everyone.

- Know where you are, where the exits are and where you could get help.
- Notice sudden changes in mood, volume, body language or group behaviour.
- Keep phone and headphone use sensible in unfamiliar or isolated places.
- If something feels wrong, create distance before you have perfect proof.

The earlier you notice a problem, the more choices you usually have.

2. Confidence without confrontation

Confident body language can show that you are alert. It does not mean staring people down, squaring up or accepting every challenge.

- Walk with purpose and keep your head up.
- Use brief, calm eye contact rather than a prolonged stare.
- Keep a comfortable distance and avoid being boxed in.
- Use a steady voice and short, clear sentences.
- Move towards people, staff, lighting and exits when concerned.

3. EGO: the hidden barrier to de-escalation

Ego can affect de-escalation because it shifts the objective. Instead of asking, ‘How do I keep everyone safe?’, you may start asking, ‘How do I avoid looking weak?’

How ego can show up

- Refusing to walk away after being insulted.
- Feeling you must have the last word.
- Staring back or stepping closer.
- Letting friends encourage you to confront someone.
- Mistaking an apology for submission.
- Believing you must defend your reputation in front of others.

Reset the objective

You do not have to win the conversation. You need to prevent injury, arrest, disciplinary action or a moment that changes several lives.

- Pause before responding.
- Lower your voice and slow your breathing.
- Create space rather than closing it.
- Use neutral phrases: ‘No problem’, ‘We’re leaving’, or ‘It’s not worth it’.
- Give the other person a face-saving route out.
- Leave with your friends before the group mood takes over.

Walking away does not mean they won. It means you stayed in control.

4. A simple de-escalation plan

When tension rises, use this sequence:

1 — CHECK

Notice hands, distance, numbers, exits, obstacles and whether weapons may be present.

2 — CALM

Keep your hands visible, voice level and language simple. Avoid threats, insults and sarcasm.

3 — CREATE SPACE

Angle your body, step back and place furniture, friends or staff between you and the problem where possible.

4 — EXIT

Leave as soon as you safely can. Do not remain to prove a point or film the confrontation.

5 — GET HELP

Use venue security, campus staff or police. In immediate danger, call 999.

**De-escalation is successful when nobody gets hurt — not
when everybody agrees with you.**

5. Starting university or college

Learn your environment before you need help.

- Save campus security and accommodation emergency numbers.
- Find the student wellbeing, safeguarding and Students' Union services.
- Identify well-lit routes, help points and late-night transport options.
- Know your address and how to describe your location to emergency services.
- Register with a GP or student health service.

6. Your safety network

Independence does not mean doing everything alone. Build a small network of flatmates, course friends, family or trusted contacts.

- Let someone know where you are going when plans involve unfamiliar people or places.
- Agree a simple 'home safe' message after late nights.
- Share journey details when travelling alone.
- Have a code word that means 'call me' or 'I need help'.
- Check in when plans change.

7. Walking, travelling and being followed

Choose well-lit, populated routes where possible. Keep your keys and phone accessible and avoid isolated shortcuts late at night.

If you think someone is following you

Do not automatically go home and reveal where you live.

- Cross the road or change direction to check.
- Enter a busy shop, hotel, café, pub or staffed building.
- Call someone and state your location clearly.
- Approach security or police.
- Call 999 if you believe you are in immediate danger.

Public transport

- Wait in visible, populated areas.
- Move carriage or seat if somebody worries you.
- Keep enough battery and money for an alternative route.
- Do not sleep if it could leave you isolated or carried beyond your stop.

8. Nights out: plan before the first drink

A few decisions made before going out can prevent difficult decisions later.

- Charge your phone and take your keys.
- Know how you are getting home and when transport ends.
- Keep emergency money separate.
- Agree who is looking out for whom.
- Do not abandon a friend who is unwell, heavily intoxicated or distressed.
- If tension develops, leave early rather than waiting to see what happens.

9. Alcohol, judgement and group behaviour

Alcohol can reduce awareness, balance, reaction speed and judgement. It can also make insults feel more important and consequences feel less real.

- Know your limits and pace your drinks.
- Eat beforehand and alternate with water or soft drinks.
- Do not pressure friends to drink or accept pressure yourself.
- Recognise when a friend is becoming confrontational and move the group away.
- Do not let an audience turn a disagreement into a performance.

If you are too intoxicated to think clearly, communicate clearly or get yourself somewhere safe, you are more vulnerable.

10. Drink spiking can happen to men

Spiking is giving someone alcohol, drugs or another substance without their knowledge or consent. It can happen through drinks, food, cigarettes or vapes. It is a crime and it is not the victim's fault.

Possible signs

- Feeling much more intoxicated than expected.
- Confusion, dizziness or poor coordination.
- Difficulty communicating or seeing clearly.
- Nausea, vomiting, unusual sleepiness or memory loss.

If you suspect spiking

- Tell a trusted friend, venue staff or security immediately.
- Do not leave alone or with someone you do not trust.
- Call 999 or NHS 111 if medical help is needed.
- Report promptly; some substances may leave the body quickly.
- Stay with a friend who may have been spiked and get help.

11. Conflict between groups

Many serious incidents begin with something small: a bump, spilled drink, comment, queue dispute or prolonged look.

- Do not let friends surround or crowd another group.
- Move the person most agitated away from the scene.
- Avoid filming, cheering or shouting advice.
- Do not chase someone who is leaving.
- Tell security early; that is prevention, not weakness.
- If weapons may be present, increase distance and call police.

One punch, one fall or one weapon can turn seconds of pride into lifelong consequences.

12. Helping a friend without joining the fight

Supporting a friend does not always mean standing beside them in a confrontation.

- Use their name and give one clear instruction: 'Come with me now.'
- Move them away physically only if it is safe and they accept your help.
- Ask another friend to get security or call police.
- Separate the audience from the disagreement.
- Do not return after leaving to continue the argument.
- Afterwards, check for injuries and make honest notes of what happened.

13. Robbery and property

Phones, wallets, bikes and laptops can be replaced. If someone threatens you for property, resistance may increase the danger.

- Prioritise distance, escape and personal safety.
- Do not chase a robber into an unknown area.
- Move somewhere safe and call police.
- Record descriptions, direction of travel and vehicle details when safe.
- Use device tracking remotely; do not confront a suspect yourself.

14. Taxis, rideshares and lifts

Use established operators or apps and avoid getting into an unsolicited vehicle.

- Check the registration, vehicle and driver details before entering.
- Share the journey where the app allows.
- Follow the route on your phone.
- Keep your phone accessible.
- Ask to stop in a safe public place if you become concerned.
- Never drive after drinking or accept a lift from an impaired driver.

15. Student accommodation

Your room or house should feel secure. Shared living works best when everyone agrees basic boundaries.

- Lock doors and accessible windows.
- Do not prop open communal security doors.
- Do not allow unknown people to follow you through secure entrances.
- Report broken locks, entry systems and lighting.
- Agree rules around parties, strangers, overnight guests and shared keys.
- Verify unexpected maintenance or official callers.

16. New people, dating and first meetings

Most new connections are positive, but trust should develop over time.

- Meet in public initially and arrange your own transport.
- Tell someone who you are meeting and where.
- Do not reveal your exact address immediately.
- Keep your phone charged and agree a check-in.
- Leave if boundaries are ignored or behaviour changes.
- Remember that men can also experience controlling, abusive or frightening behaviour.

17. Consent and boundaries

Consent applies to everyone. It should be freely given, informed, specific and ongoing.

- Past consent does not mean consent now.
- A relationship does not remove the need for consent.
- Someone can change their mind at any time.
- Someone who is incapacitated cannot meaningfully consent.
- Silence, uncertainty or lack of resistance is not a substitute for clear consent.
- Your own boundaries matter too; you are allowed to stop or leave.

If you are unsure, pause and ask. Clear consent protects dignity, trust and safety.

18. Harassment, stalking and controlling behaviour

Men can be victims of harassment, stalking, domestic abuse and coercive control. Embarrassment should not stop you seeking help.

- Save messages, usernames, dates, calls and screenshots.
- Record repeated unwanted contact and unexpected appearances.
- Review passwords, connected devices and location sharing.
- Tell someone you trust and contact university support.
- Contact police if you feel threatened or fear the behaviour may escalate.

19. Digital safety

Your online activity can reveal your address, routines, location and periods when you are alone.

- Use unique passwords and two-factor authentication.
- Check who can see your live location.
- Avoid posting room numbers, timetables or exact travel plans publicly.
- Do not share intimate images without clear consent.

- Do not threaten, shame or join online pile-ons.
- Save evidence before blocking or reporting harassment.

20. Physical self-defence

Physical self-defence is not about winning a fight, punishing someone or protecting pride. It is about creating an opportunity to escape when avoidance and de-escalation are no longer possible.

- Protect yourself, keep moving and look for an exit.
- Use your voice to attract attention and direct help.
- Keep techniques simple and proportionate to the threat.
- Avoid going to the ground, especially where others may join in.
- Escape as soon as the opportunity exists; do not continue after the danger ends.
- Train with a suitably qualified instructor if you want practical skills.

**Awareness → Avoidance → Boundaries → De-escalation →
Escape**

21. After an incident

Your immediate priorities are safety, health and support. Shock can affect memory, emotion and decision-making.

- Move somewhere safe and check for injuries.
- Get medical assistance if needed.
- Contact someone you trust and police when appropriate.
- Write down what you genuinely remember: time, place, words, descriptions, witnesses and direction of travel.
- Preserve messages, photographs, video and clothing that may be relevant.
- Do not compare or coordinate accounts with other witnesses.
- Accept that anger, shame, numbness or disturbed sleep can be normal responses; seek support if you are struggling.

22. Sexual assault: men can seek help too

Men and boys can experience rape and sexual assault. It is not your fault, it does not define your sexuality or masculinity, and there is no correct way to react.

- Move somewhere safe and seek urgent medical help when needed.
- A Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) can provide specialist medical, practical and emotional support.
- You can seek SARC support even if you are unsure about reporting to police.
- Tell someone you trust when you are ready.
- Preserve possible evidence if you may want a forensic examination, but seek help even if you have washed or changed.

Asking for specialist support is an act of strength, not an admission of weakness.

23. If a friend tells you something happened

How you respond matters.

- Listen without interrogating.
- Believe them and avoid blame.
- Ask what they need rather than taking control.
- Help them reach medical, university or specialist support.
- Respect their privacy, except where immediate safeguarding action is necessary.
- Stay calm and do not turn their disclosure into your confrontation with the alleged offender.

24. Your 60-second safety plan

Complete this before you need it.

Campus security

Accommodation emergency number

Trusted contact

Licensed taxi/private-hire service

Nearest late-night safe location

GP/student health service

Backup route home

25. Night-out checklist

- Phone charged and keys with me.
- Journey home and backup plan known.
- Emergency money available.
- Someone knows my plans.
- Friends have agreed to look out for one another.
- I know when to stop drinking.
- I will leave early if the mood changes.
- I will not let ego keep me in a dangerous situation.

26. Ten rules to remember

1. Awareness gives you options.
2. Trust concern early and create distance.
3. Walking away is control, not cowardice.
4. Do not let ego choose the outcome.
5. A friend needs help leaving trouble, not an extra fighter.
6. Know how you are getting home before going out.
7. Consent and boundaries apply to everyone.
8. Property can be replaced.
9. Physical self-defence is for creating an escape.
10. Ask for help early.

Emergency information — UK

Immediate danger

Call 999 and ask for the police, ambulance or other emergency service required.

Non-emergency police

Call 101 or use your local police force's online reporting service.

Medical advice

Call NHS 111 or use NHS 111 online. In a medical emergency, call 999.

Sexual Assault Referral Centres

SARCs provide specialist care and support to anyone who has been raped, sexually assaulted or abused. Find your nearest centre through the NHS website.

University or college support

Support may be available through campus security, safeguarding, student wellbeing, accommodation teams, counselling, personal tutors, the Students' Union and report-and-support services.

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

Useful official information

- [GOV.UK — Spiking: advice and support](#)
- [NHS — Help after rape and sexual assault](#)
- [NHS — Find a Sexual Assault Referral Centre](#)

FINAL MESSAGE

University and college should be a time for independence, friendship, learning and memorable experiences. Personal safety should help you enjoy those experiences with greater confidence — not stop you living your life.

You cannot control every person or situation. You can improve your ability to notice change, recognise risk, make a clear decision and act before the situation becomes harder to manage.

**You never have to accept a challenge simply because
someone offers one.**

Confidence is not measured by how quickly you confront somebody. It is shown in your awareness, judgement, self-control and willingness to protect your future.

BE AWARE • STAY IN CONTROL • GET HOME SAFELY