

Personal Safety Tips

As our city comes back to life and we find ourselves spending more time outside of our homes, we remind you to keep these tips in mind to practice personal safety and be situationally aware at all times.

SAFETY PRACTICES

Visualize

Being prepared can help you stay safe. Play out scenarios in your head and have an idea of what you will do if various situations arise. *"If there was a threat around that corner, how would I react? Where could I escape?"*

Intuition

Trust your gut. If something just doesn't feel right, do not ignore that feeling. Your instincts exist to protect you – it is better to be overcautious than to ignore potential warning signs.

Speak Up

The MTA is onto something when they advise *if you see something, say something*. Report safety hazards, concerns, or any suspicious persons, activity, or behavior in and around the perimeter of the school to the relevant authority. You can inform your instructor, supervisor, CUNY SPH Public Safety, or the appropriate authority at the train/subway station or local precinct.

TOOLS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Body Language

Walk with confidence and awareness of your surroundings. Do not acknowledge or respond to verbal harassment. Avoid eye contact with persons exhibiting erratic behavior.

Personal Space

If someone is crowding you or you think you're being followed, try to put distance between yourself and the individual by picking up your pace, changing directions abruptly, crossing the street, or stepping into a store where you can safely call 911.

Peripheral Vision

Being situationally aware includes observing what is going on around you, not just in your direct line of sight, but what is happening off to the side? Widen your range of observation as you walk. Practice noticing and remembering exits and barriers, dark corners and doorways, retail establishments that are open until late evening and those that close early.

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Reflective Surfaces

Use reflective surfaces to your advantage to increase your situational awareness. When your range of vision is limited, get creative about ways to expand it and give yourself an advantage. Utilize store windows, car windshields, or even other people's sunglasses to detect threats you might not be able to see directly.

Exits

Always be aware of your exits and have an exit strategy. If your immediate situation becomes compromised, have a plan ready for how you'll get out of it. In a building, notice where the nearest stairwells are. In an elevator, scan the buttons so you know which one to push in an emergency. On public transportation, be aware of traffic choke points and avoid exits that are not well-lit and have little pedestrian traffic.

USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- Opt to use entrances where you see more activity of where there is a manned booth/ticket counter
- Have your Metro-card ready so you can pass through the turnstyle swiftly
- The safest place to stand on a platform is away from the yellow line and the platform's edge, close to the wall
- Stand near others that are also waiting on the platform
- Avoid end cars when possible, especially during late night hours as they tend to be less populated with riders
- Opt to sit in the center of a car, away from the door when possible, to prevent "grab & run" crimes
- Sit in the "conductor car", which is usually in the middle of the train, during off-peak hours
- To find where the conductor will be when the train stops, look for a black and white, diagonally striped sign on the platform, parallel to the tracks
- Stay awake and alert when riding the train
- Keep with other passengers when exiting the platform
- Know where the HELP/EMERGENCY phones are located
- Use MTA, LIRR, and NJ Transit apps for current schedules, track, and delay information

ELECTRONIC DISTRACTIONS

Using electronics can seriously impair your awareness of what is going on around you.

- Be attentive and mindful of your surroundings and only use your devices after you have determined you are in an area or situation where it is safe to do so
- Avoid wearing both earphones/earbuds and keep the volume as low as possible so that you can still hear what is going on around you
- Look up occasionally to re-scan your surroundings

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MINIMIZE RISKS

- When possible, keep family and friends informed about your schedule and whereabouts.
- Always carry some form of personal identification (including medical ID bracelets, if applicable) that includes a point of contact in case of emergency.
- Carry a cell phone, whistle, or personal alarm to sound an alarm or summon emergency assistance.
- If your daily routine is the same, try varying your route periodically.
- Whenever possible, walk in well-lit areas and on the side of the sidewalk where there are open businesses.
- Walk in groups. But if you find yourself alone, tailgate a group if you can to give the appearance that you are not alone.
- Wear purses and backpacks to the front of you to prevent “grab & run” crimes.
- Keep your wallet out of sight and avoid keeping it in a rear pocket. Secure it in a closed bag or inside a coat pocket.
- Keep in mind that jewelry and watches can attract attention. When walking alone, consider turning gemstone rings inwards towards the palm side of your hand, and watches towards the inside of your wrists.