

- Never walk away from an ATM with cash still in hand. If you are going to count your money, do so at a secure spot.

Most of these tips may seem like common sense. But if you follow them you may ward off an encounter with a robber. If you are unfortunate enough to be accosted, stay calm and comply with the robber's instructions. In most situations it isn't worth it to fight back. Then, when he or she is gone, call law enforcement immediately.

(With thanks to the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department and the Walton County, FL, Sheriff's Office)



*Crime Prevention Tips From*

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# Robbers Are Equal Opportunity Criminals

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**NATIONAL CRIME  
PREVENTION COUNCIL**

It isn't that robbers are around every corner. But they do take us by surprise and they can target anyone.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics at the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, robberies have declined from 5.4 per 1,000 people in 1995 to 2.6 people per 1,000 people in 2005—better than a 50 percent decline. The biggest year for robberies since current records were kept was 7.4 robberies per 1,000 people in 1981. That means that the rate in 2005 was almost two-thirds less.

The FBI defines robbery as “the taking or attempting to take anything of value under confrontational circumstances from the control, custody, or care of another person by force or threat of force or violence and/or by putting the victim in fear of immediate harm.”

That's a pretty grim definition. However, there are lots of things you can do to reduce your chances of being robbed and there are ways to react while being robbed and after. The most important thing to do in all circumstances is give the robber what he or she wants: don't fight back and risk your life. It simply isn't worth it.

### **Personal Safety Tips for the Street**

- Don't walk alone during late-night hours. Walk in groups whenever you can—there is safety in numbers.
- Let a family member or friend know your destination and your estimated time of arrival or return. That way, the law enforcement can be notified as quickly as possible if there is a problem.
- Stay in well-lighted areas as much as possible. Avoid alleys, vacant lots, wooded areas, and shortcuts or secluded areas.
- Wear clothes and shoes that give you freedom of movement.

- Don't talk to strangers.
- If you are wearing headphones, don't turn up the volume so high that you cannot hear outside noises.
- Never hitchhike or accept rides from strangers.
- If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the person or leave.
- Don't display expensive jewelry in public.
- Know the neighborhoods where you live and work.
- Check out the locations of police and fire stations, public telephones, hospitals, and restaurants or stores that are open late.

### **Personal Safety Tips for Home**

- Don't allow strangers into your home, even if they are hurt or say they need help. Keep the door locked and call the police for them.
- Don't advertise that you live alone.
- Don't be afraid to call law enforcement to investigate suspicious circumstances, unusual people, or strange noises. It's better to be safe than sorry.
- When you move into a new home or apartment, change the locks if you own it or ask the manager to change them if you rent.
- Don't leave notes on your door announcing when you will be home.
- Keep outdoor lights on at night.
- If you arrive home and your door is open or things appear to be out of place, don't go in. Leave and call 911.

- If you are accosted by a robber, follow his or her instructions.
- Don't argue or attempt to fight with your assailant.

### **Automobile Safety**

- Always park in well-lighted areas.
- Always be alert to people just sitting in their cars.
- If you are alone at a shopping mall, ask a security guard to escort you to your car.
- After checking around your car, enter it quickly and lock all the doors. Teach your children to enter and exit the car quickly.
- If your car is bumped in traffic, don't get out of the car. Use your cell phone to call 911. Many times carjackers use this technique so that they can overpower you and steal your car.
- The last thing you should do is argue or fight with a carjacker. You could be seriously injured or killed. It isn't worth it.
- Never agree to be kidnapped. Either drop the keys or throw them away from the car as far as you can. When the carjacker goes for the keys, get out of there as fast as you can.

### **Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Tips**

- Try to use machines you are familiar with and try to use terminals located inside banks rather than independent terminals.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Look around before conducting a transaction. If you see anyone or anything suspicious, cancel your transaction and go to another ATM.
- If you must use an ATM after hours, make sure it's well-lighted.