



Fighting Back Institute

Making A Difference...One Life at a Time



Shopping Safety

Stores of every kind spend millions of dollars every year developing creative ways to capture and hold our attention. So, it should come as no surprise that most shoppers sometimes forget about security while they're shopping. It should also come as no surprise that shopping malls are a prime location for predators looking for victims.

Regardless of where you are or what you are doing, you need to *always* keep a heightened awareness of your surroundings; particularly in areas where you're more likely to be victimized.

Defensive Countermeasures

- Shop during the daylight hours. If you shop at night, park in a well-lit area close to the entrance.
- Take a friend or relative shopping with you. There is safety in numbers.
- Walk confidently, keeping aware of the people in front of you, behind you, and to your sides.
- Avoid talking to strangers. As elementary as it seems, openly talking to strangers makes you an easier target.
- Carry as little cash as possible. If you must carry a large amount of money, be careful not to let others see it.
- Keep your purse held tightly against your body with the flap facing toward you. Avoid carrying large purses.
- When dining, keep your purse on your lap or on the ground between your feet.
- Try not to carry a large number of shopping bags or packages.
- If shopping with a cart, do not set your purse inside the cart. Keep it on your shoulder or in your hand at all times.
- Never go into isolated areas or down poorly lit corridors of shopping centers and *absolutely* avoid restrooms that are off the beaten path.
- Never send a small child into a restroom alone. Instead, go in with the child and use family restrooms if they are available.



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- Never leave your purse or wallet open while making a purchase. Cell phone cameras and small hidden cameras located in hats, ties, sunglasses, purses, briefcases, umbrellas, and jackets are now being used by predators to take pictures of your identification. Items such as a driver's license, social security card and credit card can be easily photographed and duplicated within minutes by way of wireless transmissions.
- Never wear expensive looking jewelry or display a large amount of money. Also, never make an expensive purchase when there are many others that can see the transaction. Predators are constantly on the hunt for people who make a good size purchase and/or display large sums of money. A predator may follow their intended victim to the parking lot or to their home, if necessary, to relieve them of their valuables or money.
- Never stop to offer any information about yourself or others to anyone asking to take a survey.
- When trying on clothing or testing a product, never leave or set down your purse or other valuables.
- If someone suddenly bumps into you or directs your attention towards something, immediately put yourself into a high security mode as this person may be attempting to harm you.
- Never go with anyone posing as a clerk or store detective unless you're absolutely sure they are legitimate. And then, never go anywhere isolated from others.
- If the store requires picking up the item you have purchased from an isolated area of the store, ask that they provide security for you while in this area.
- Before leaving the store to go to your car, have your keys at the ready. Look around to see if the parking lot is populated so you're not isolated. If you feel unsafe, have someone from security or the store walk out with you.
- As you approach your car, look around it, under it, and in it to make sure no one is hiding or waiting for you. Also, look at the cars next to yours. If someone is sitting in the car next to yours, or near enough to quickly jump out and grab you, or if a van or truck is parked on the driver's side of your car, go back to the store and get a security guard or employee to walk you out to your car. If none of this is possible, look in the back seat of your car to make sure no one is hiding in it and then get into the car from the passenger's side and lock the car right away.
- Carry a second diversionary money fold that consists of several singles covered by one larger bill, such as a twenty. Should someone attempt to rob you of your money and/or valuables throw your diversionary money fold one way and run the other. Should they ignore this, and proceed to come after you, it wasn't the money they were after, so be prepared to use other countermeasures including screaming for help as loud as you can.