



Safe Insight



Safe Steps

**Crime Prevention
Guide**

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PREFACE

This book is not intended to be a complete list of security measures that an individual can take to prevent becoming a victim of crime. The intent is to provide people with ideas on ways to better secure themselves. Security is multi-layered. There is no one thing that you can do to protect yourself. So it is our hope that you will find many different things that you can apply to your situation.

What Does A Criminal Look Like?



Criminals are not easy to identify by their appearance. The only way to identify a criminal is by their behavior. What are some common characteristics of criminals?

Selfish – By the very nature of the acts they perform, criminals are selfish. They think only of the immediate reward(s) to themselves, not the suffering they are causing others.

Lack of conscience – Everybody can comprehend the painful effects explicitly negative actions will have upon another human being. For criminals, they simply do not care.

See kindness as vulnerability – One of the most common traits among criminals is that they prey upon the

kindness of human nature. They will “test” for kindness as a measure of how vulnerable a potential victim is.

Opportunist – While some criminals enjoy scheming elaborate plots to pull off a major heist, as seen in the movies, the majority are simply opportunists. They look for crimes with minimal risk and maximum reward.

While all of these characteristics may not be present in each criminal, they provide a good understanding of how the average criminal thinks and operates. This is a necessary step to take before learning how to prevent yourself from becoming a victim. Only by understanding their behavior can you take steps to successfully deter their attacks.



Securing Your Home

The best way to secure your home is to examine it from a criminal's point of view. The first step is to make sure your home does not appear to be an easy target. How can you do this?



- 🔒 **Examine Your Routine:** Do you leave your house at the same time every morning and return home at the same time every night? While you might not be able to change your schedule, you can change your routine.

Once or twice a week, try driving a vehicle typically used by another member of your household. Leave early to get a coffee one day. Come home for lunch another day. Have others in your house mix up their routine. Anything you can do that makes it difficult to

“predict” when nobody will be home will be a huge advantage to you.

🔒 **Examine Access Points:** In order to access your home, criminals need to find a way in. You need to find ways to make these access points difficult for unauthorized persons.

You can use decorative shrubbery directly in front of a ground floor window. This can make accessing the window a challenging task.

🔒 **Examine Locks:** How secure are they? All locks should have a minimum 1-inch screw securing them to the door jamb. Entry doors should have a deadbolt as well.



If you have glass on your door, you may want to consider a double-barrel lock (keys required on both sides). Make sure that if you utilize this option you

keep a key readily accessible nearby to open the door in case of a fire or other emergency. You could also consider installing a keyless lock.

Many locks now use keypads or even smartphones to unlock them. Don't forget to put locks on your windows as well.

🔒 Examine Lighting: This should be an examination of both your indoor and outdoor lighting systems. Indoors you should consider putting a few lights on timers to give the appearance of somebody being home. Outdoors you want to make sure that you have adequate lighting to prevent criminals from using shadows to conceal themselves while they work to open a window or door. Lights with motion sensors or photocells (automatically turned on in the evening) are both cheap and effective measures.

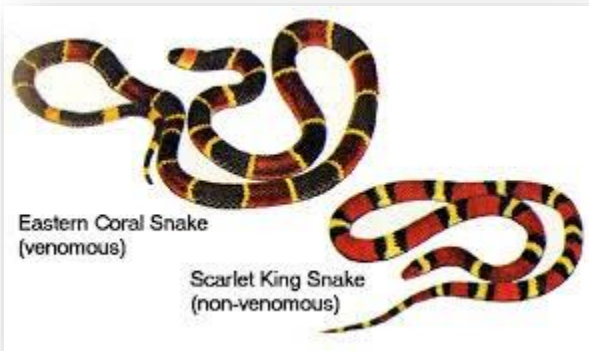


The Pufferfish gulps water or air to make itself "appear" to be a difficult target for predators. You can use tricks to make your home appear even more secure.

Your goal should be to create barriers that make unauthorized access as difficult as possible. These can

be both physical barriers, as well as security illusions. Security illusions are frequently used in nature by animals that have no real defense against attack. Just like the pufferfish gulps water or air to make itself appear larger to potential predators, you will want to make your home appear secure, even in areas that you cannot physically secure.

Deception also works well. A common practice is to install fake security cameras or alarm signs. You could



make it appear that you have a large dog by placing some dog toys or other items on your property

where they are visible. In nature, the non-venomous Scarlet King Snake mimics the markings of the Eastern Coral Snake to make predators think that it is venomous.

If you are alone in your house, you can also use deception to make it appear that there are others in the house. If you get an unexpected visitor at the door, you could call out to “your roommate” prior to going to the door, loudly enough for the person to hear.

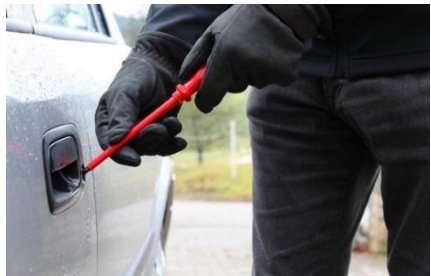
Vehicle Safety



Vehicle safety comes in many forms. We are going to discuss just a few ways that you can protect yourself and your vehicle.

- 🔒 **Protecting Against Theft / Prowling:** The first step in protecting against crimes to your vehicle is a simple one...**LOCK YOUR VEHICLE.**

While this may sound like common sense, the practice is not so common. In fact, well over half of all vehicle prowls occur to unlocked vehicles. Insurance companies are aware of this. This is the reason police reports are required to state whether the vehicle was locked or unlocked at the time of the crime.





SCAM – Traffic Accident: A common trick used by criminals is to “accidentally” have a minor traffic collision. Then when you pull over, they use this opportunity to either steal your vehicle, or other property you have on your person.

Because of these scams, there are a few precautions that you should take if you are involved in a collision.



Pull to a heavily populated area



Stay in vehicle until police arrive



Exchange information through window

SCAM – Vehicle Issue: A variation of this scam has been a driver flagging down another motorist to let them know there is some problem with the motorist’s vehicle. Then they “happen” to have a tool to evaluate the problem free of charge. But this is how they gain “trust” and lure their victims into a compromising situation.



Pull into a business such as a gas station



Advise that somebody is on the way



Thank them for their time

SCAM – Traffic Stop: Another scam used by criminals is impersonating police officers. While you are required to yield to a law enforcement officer, you can legally take the following precautions if you are stopped for a routine traffic violation:

- ✪ Roll window down partially
- ✪ Provide documents through window

If something feels suspicious about the traffic stop, do not argue with the officer. Instead, politely explain that you want to cooperate fully, but you have heard reports of people impersonating police. Then you can do the following:

- ✪ Request a second officer
- ✪ Request a marked unit
- ✪ Call 911 to verify that this is an officer



Preventing ID Theft



ID Theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the world. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice, over 17 million people were victims of ID Theft in 2014. How can you prevent yourself from becoming a victim?

In order to protect your identity, it is important to know how criminals obtain the information they need to compromise your ID. There are two main sources that are used; mail and online information.

- 🔒 **Secure Your Mail:** Mailboxes are a good source of personal information for criminals. They can readily find material with your name and address. At times there is even correspondence that includes your date of birth or other personal identifying information.

A good way to prevent unwanted individuals from accessing your mail is to get a locking mailbox. You



may also get a post office box for mail delivery. This secures your mail, while having the added bonus of not overflowing while you are on vacation, indicating to criminals that there is nobody home.

Keeping incoming mail out of the hands of criminals is only half the battle though. You must also make sure that any mail you throw away does not have personal information listed. Criminals go through garbage cans looking for these types of documents.

It is a good idea to shred your unwanted mail, particularly anything that lists any of your information. There are shredding services available to do this. You may also decide to purchase a shredder for yourself. Either way, you want to make sure that criminals are not able to get their hands on your personal information.

- 🔒 **Online Safety:** Another way criminals find access to personal information is through the internet. There are steps you can take to prevent your information from falling into the wrong hands.

Use a good firewall to prevent unauthorized access to your computer through the internet. If you are not familiar with a firewall, it is software that you install on your computer. It is to the computer what your front

door is to your home. It is an electronically monitored point of entry. It prevents unwanted entry, much like a deadbolt does on a door.

You should also install anti-virus software. This searches for programs that seek to invade and infect your computer system. Many times these programs disguise themselves as harmless programs to get past the firewall. A good anti-virus program removes unwanted programs and prevents them from collecting your information. It is crucial that you keep your anti-virus software up to date since new viruses are emerging daily.



When opening email, only open emails from people or businesses you trust. NEVER open an attachment from an unknown email address. These often contain viruses, or other harmful content.

If you receive an email from a bank, or other institution, asking for you to confirm your personal information, **DO NOT RESPOND.**



This is a very common scam used by websites that try to mimic trustworthy businesses.

One site even scammed

many victims by claiming to be the IRS.

Be aware that most businesses understand this and make it a practice to never solicit personal information unless the customer has initiated the contact.

When shopping online, make sure that you are on a secure website. You can do this by looking at the web address bar. A typical site will say something like, “<http://www.sitename.com>”. A secure site will begin with “<https://>”, the “s” at the end signifies that it is a secure website.

Use a credit card to make purchases whenever possible. These offer protections to consumers which helps to combat ID Theft. Using a debit card does not offer the same protection. If your debit card number gets compromised online, it can be very difficult to straighten out since it is directly attached to your bank account. If a credit card number is compromised, the bank can simply cancel the account number and issue a new one.

🔒 Monitor Your Credit: Review monthly statements to ensure there are no unauthorized

charges on any of your accounts. A good way to ensure that your ID has not been compromised is to check your credit report annually. You are entitled to one free credit report a year from each of the three credit bureaus. Carefully note any discrepancies on your credit report that do not match up to accounts you are aware of.

Equifax: <http://www.equifax.com>

1 (866) 640-2273

Experian: <http://www.experian.com>

1 (888) 397-3742

TransUnion: <https://www.transunion.com>

1 (855) 681-3196

Another way to protect your personal information is to initiate a “credit freeze” with all three credit bureaus. By doing this, it prevents new lines of credit from being opened under your name and social security number.

CAUTION: This tool is so effective that even if you decide to open a credit card, get a new phone line, or purchase a vehicle, you will need to “thaw” your credit. This process can take up to a week or more. Be sure to keep your unique codes for “thawing” your credit in a safe place, as these will be required as part of the process.

Recovering Property



In the event your property is stolen, how can you recover it? The truth is, property is generally very difficult to recover, but you can make the process easier. Successful property recovery requires diligent effort up front.

What is the serial number on your TV? Can you give a vivid description of your diamond ring? What uniquely identifies your golf clubs?

These questions are posed to help you think about ways you can make recovering your property easier.

Photograph your belongings. You should record the serial number of every item you own that has one. For items such as jewelry, that do not have serial numbers, you should make sure to photograph it from multiple angles. Consider etching small, but distinct markings into items such as golf clubs.

Protecting Yourself



When they hear the term “self-defense” many people immediately think of a physical fight. But protecting yourself is much more than physical fighting. It involves mental alertness and preparation.

Mental Preparation: To prepare yourself mentally, you need to learn to be alert to criminal indicators. You also need a plan to prevent becoming a victim. One of the best ways to do this is to prepare and rehearse potential scenarios.

Example – If you use a parking garage at work, you can mentally rehearse walking to your vehicle. Imagine a masked man with a knife suddenly appearing from behind another vehicle. What would you do? Rehearse a few different options in your mind.

Good mental preparation also requires being aware of criminal indicators. This includes knowing what level of awareness to be at in different situations. There are three general levels of mental awareness:

LOW – Virtually no awareness of threats as you are in a comfortable environment with only those you trust

Typical Setting: Home

MEDIUM – A good general awareness of your surroundings and who is near you or approaching you

Typical Setting: Public

HIGH – Extreme vigilance in noting what is going on around you where something could easily go wrong

Typical Setting: Large Crowds / Events

Always listen to your instincts, even if you cannot articulate why you feel like something is not right.

Typically, our senses pick up on things before we are even able to explain them. So if the “hair on the back of your neck” starts to stand up, do what you can to remove yourself from the situation.

Physical Preparation: Preventing yourself from becoming a victim is less about fighting out of a situation, and more about taking actions *before* there is a problem. You do not want to look like an easy target to a criminal. How can you show that you are strong?

- ✓ Display good posture
- ✓ Maintain eye contact with others
- ✓ Have a plan
- ✓ Maintain your personal space

Defense Tools

If all else fails and you absolutely need to defend yourself, there are a wide variety of options to choose from. Each has its own pros and cons.

Personal Alarm: You can carry a device that will sound an excruciatingly loud alarm if you activate it. This will sometimes scare away a would be attacker, while alerting others that you are in danger.

Martial Arts: Good self-defense techniques are typically taught, along with methods of escape.

Pepper Spray: This tool is designed to be sprayed in the eyes of an attacker, causing temporary blindness and pain.

Stun Gun: This comes in two different forms, a contact application, and one that shoots out electrical darts.

Knife: This is a great method of self-defense, but only works well in close quarters situations.

Firearms: Designed to have maximum threat deterrence.

While any of these can be effective tools, they all have one thing in common: they require training and practice. So whichever tool you choose, make sure that you get proper training on how to handle it.

Getting Help



Before the age of cell phones, the emergency 911 system was designed to be able to locate callers that were unable to provide their address. Most people do not realize that even though cell phone calls can be triangulated, this takes valuable extra time in an emergency.

Smart 911 was developed to help eliminate this issue. By using this free service, you are able to log in to your secure account online. From here, you can provide numerous details about yourself and family, including; address, household members, medical conditions, medications, floor plans, and utility shut off locations.

This information is stored securely online and cannot be accessed by 911 dispatchers unless you initiate a 911 call. The information remains open for just a couple of hours after your emergency call is resolved, and then it returns to secure storage that cannot be accessed.

www.smart911.com

Additional Resources

RECORD YOUR PROPERTY

Easily create a record of your valuable property that can be generated into a PDF and sent directly to your email.

PERSONAL PROPERTY LOG

FIREARMS LOG

WHAT IS YOUR RISK SCORE?

PERSONAL SAFETY QUIZ

UPDATE YOUR CHILD'S INFO

CHILD ID KIT



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