

Personal safety is built on awareness, preparation, and practiced response — things you do consistently, not just in moments of perceived threat.

This guide covers the core domains: situational awareness, body and behavior, verbal tools, physical response, home security, digital safety, travel, and emergency preparedness. Each section draws on research and field-tested practices.

## Situational Awareness

The single most protective skill you can develop. Research consistently shows that being alert and aware of surroundings is the most commonly reported and effective protective strategy.

### Awareness operates on three levels

**Perception** — actively scanning your environment using all senses, not just sight

**Comprehension** — recognizing what's normal vs. abnormal for the context

**Projection** — anticipating what a situation might become based on what you're observing

- **Phone away, headphones out** when walking in public, especially in isolated or unfamiliar areas
- **Three-level environmental scan** when entering any new space: above eye level, eye level, and ground level
- **Identify exits** whenever you enter a building, vehicle, or crowded space — takes seconds, costs nothing
- **Vary your routines** when commuting or exercising outdoors; predictable patterns make you easier to target
- **Trust discomfort signals.** Your threat detection system processes information before your conscious mind does — that "off" feeling is data, not paranoia

## Body Language and Behavioral Signals

How you carry yourself communicates a great deal to opportunistic actors. Most predatory offenders select targets based on perceived vulnerability and ease, not random chance.

- **Walk with purpose and directional confidence** even when unsure of your exact route
- **Keep your hands free and visible**, not buried in pockets or bags
- **Stand tall with relaxed shoulders** — collapsed or protective posture signals anxiety
- **Make brief, calm eye contact** with people around you; this communicates awareness, not invitation
- **A firm, clear "No" or "Stop" is a complete statement** — you don't need to justify or soften it

## Verbal De-escalation and Boundary Setting

Before any physical response is needed, verbal tools are your most accessible resource.

- **Use loud, direct commands** if someone invades your space: "Stop," "Back up," or "Leave me alone" — firmly and without apology
- **Don't feel obligated to explain yourself** or soften your boundary to make someone else comfortable
- **If something escalates in public, make noise.** Yell, draw attention, use your voice as a tool
- **Remove yourself early**, before situations escalate — you don't need a "good enough reason"

## Physical Self-Defense

Physical response is a last resort. The goal is always to create enough disruption to escape — not to win a fight.

Primary vulnerable targets regardless of size difference

**Eyes • Throat • Nose • Groin • Knees**

- **Palm strike** — base of the palm driven upward toward the nose or chin
- **Knee strike** — close-range impact to the groin or midsection
- **Elbow strike** — highly effective at close range; elbows are hard and fast
- **Wrist grab escape** — rotate toward the attacker's thumb (weakest grip point) using body movement, not arm strength
- **Personal alarm** — loud, legal everywhere; attach to a keychain for immediate access
- **Pepper spray (where legal)** — practice accessing it quickly before you need it

Strongest recommendation: Take a women-focused self-defense class covering escape techniques, ground defense, and real-world scenarios. Muscle memory from training functions under stress — knowledge alone does not.

## Home Security

- **Change locks** when you move into any new residence — you don't know who has copies of previous keys
- **Install a video doorbell or peephole** so you can identify visitors without opening the door
- **Keep doors and windows locked consistently**, including when you're home
- **Reinforce sliding doors and ground-floor windows** with security bars or wedge locks
- **Use timers or smart plugs** to keep lights on when you're away — an occupied-looking home is a less attractive target
- **Don't keep your name or address on your keyring**; if lost, it's a map to your door
- **Verify identity first** before opening the door to unexpected visitors, maintenance workers, or delivery personnel

## Digital Safety

Women are more than twice as likely as men to experience cyberstalking. Digital threats often precede or accompany physical ones.

- **Set profiles to private** and audit your settings regularly
- **Avoid sharing real-time location, daily routines**, or photos that reveal your home, workplace, or neighborhood
- **Don't post vacation plans publicly** while you're away — it broadcasts both your absence and your location
- **Enable two-factor authentication** on all key accounts; use strong, unique passwords and a password manager
- **Regularly check installed apps** for anything unfamiliar (potential spyware); disable location for apps that don't need it
- **Be cautious about shared accounts or devices** that someone else may have had access to
- **If you suspect digital stalking**: document everything with timestamped screenshots before reporting

## Travel Safety

- **Research the specific area** — crime patterns, cultural norms, areas to avoid, and current conditions
- **Share your itinerary and a check-in schedule** with someone you trust; download offline maps
- **Never confirm you're traveling alone** to strangers, drivers, or accommodation check-in staff
- **Keep your bag in front of you in crowds**; keep valuables on your body, not in outer pockets
- **Verify car and driver details** before getting into any rideshare or taxi
- **Night travel on foot in unfamiliar areas** carries significantly higher risk — use transportation instead
- **In shared accommodation, use a door wedge at night** for an additional physical barrier
- **Ask for directions from other women or businesses**, not from strangers who approach you first

## Emergency Preparedness

- **Save emergency contacts** with short labels at the top of your contact list (ICE: In Case of Emergency)
- **Know the local emergency number** for wherever you are
- **Pre-arrange a safe word** with a trusted person that signals "I need help" without alerting whoever is nearby
- **Safety apps (bSafe, Noonlight, Life360)** allow real-time location sharing and SOS signaling with one tap
- **If you're in immediate danger:** make noise, get to a public area, and call 911 — a fire station, hospital, or open business is a valid safe haven

## Core Habits at a Glance

Domain	Highest-Impact Action
<b>Awareness</b>	Phone away, headphones out in public
<b>Body Language</b>	Walk with purpose; keep hands free
<b>Verbal</b>	Use your voice loudly and without apology
<b>Physical</b>	Learn at least one escape technique; carry an alarm
<b>Home</b>	Change locks on move-in; lock doors while home
<b>Digital</b>	Private profiles; no real-time location sharing
<b>Travel</b>	Never confirm solo status; share your itinerary
<b>Emergency</b>	Pre-load contacts; know your nearest safe haven

Sources: A+R Tactics | Second Sight Training Systems | Injury Prevention (PMC) | Warrior's Cove | Fittsafe | Divas for Defense | Reolink | Domestic Violence and Abuse Protection Inc. | Women CyberSecurity Society | Sunsets Abroad | Hey Ciara