

Don't be a Victim!

Purse snatchers choose their targets carefully. They avoid people who **look confident and aware of their surroundings**, and hone in on those who seem busier, lost or distracted in some way.

To reduce the odds that a purse snatcher will target you, the first and most important rule is to **be aware of your surroundings**. Then:

- **Watch out for potential "set-ups,"** such as someone bumping into you or asking a question as a distraction while someone else steals your purse.
- **Appear confident** and look like you know where you're going.
- Dress down. Don't flaunt jewelry or designer labels that let a purse snatcher know you're likely to have money or valuables close at hand.
- **Listen to your instincts.** If something feels strange, go inside a store, cross the street or seek help.

Carrying Your Valuables Safely

Aside from how you look and act, the way you hold your purse can also be a deciding factor on whether or not you're preyed upon. Most thieves will go for the **easiest target**, which means that **if your purse is left unattended in a shopping cart you're more at risk**.

Bad guys are looking for easy options. The idea is to make it difficult for them. To make your purse less tempting (and more difficult to snatch):

- **Keep your purse in sight at all times.** Do not hang it on the back of a chair, the hook on a public washroom door, or leave it unattended while shopping.
- Always keep purses closed and carry them close to the **front of your body, or held tightly under your arm**.
- If your purse is slung over your head, **consider wearing it under your coat** (this makes it harder for a thief to yank on the strap).

You can also protect yourself in advance. In the event your purse or wallet is stolen, the impact will be less severe if you:

- Don't carry all your cash in one place.
- Carry only a small amount of cash.
- Don't keep your social security number in your wallet--it puts you at risk of identity theft.
- Carry only what's necessary, and nothing more.
- **Keep house keys in your pocket**, rather than your purse. If a thief steals your purse and house keys, they have your address and access to your home.
- Leave irreplaceable items (photos, important papers, sentimental trinkets) at home.

What to do if Your Purse is Stolen

Sometimes, no matter how careful you are, you can't stop a purse snatcher. The first thing to remember is that **your purse is not worth getting hurt over**. If someone tries to take your belongings, resist the urge to fight back. While some thieves will back down at the sign of confrontation, others are willing to fight and may be carrying a weapon.

Your safety is what's most important, and while your purse can be replaced, your life cannot. Here's what to do immediately after your purse is stolen:

- Don't panic--try to think clearly.
- Call 911 right away.
- Make a list of everything in your purse or wallet, including credit cards, checks, ID cards, cash and other items.
- Call your credit card companies and report your cards as stolen.
- Call your bank and tell them your bank cards/checks have been stolen.
- If your driver's license was stolen, contact your local Driver's License Bureau to get a new one.
- If your social security card was stolen, contact your local Social Security office to get a new one (the number won't be changed unless fraudulent activity is found).
- Monitor your bills for unusual activity, and report anything strange to the police.

You don't need to walk around in fear, though. Just pay attention to what's going on around you and use common sense about displaying valuable items and purse snatchers are likely to stay away.

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!