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n u s  
national union of students



# STUDENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

(because it's a jungle out there)

# Safety needn't cramp your style



**C** rime levels are falling, but statistics show that one in three students will still be a victim while studying at college or university. Maybe not what you need to hear at the start of term, but the fact is criminals can see students as easy targets. That doesn't mean you can't protect yourself though – and keep you and your stuff safe. In making this survival guide, we visited campuses, spoke to club doormen and the police, investigated new scams and crimes, and asked for your views on how to stay safe...

## Survival kit

**You will need some or all of these things**

- ☞ Contents insurance (buy this before you get there).
- ☞ Good quality door and window locks (half of break ins are through unlocked doors and windows, and you'll need them for most insurance policies).
- ☞ UV pen to mark possessions with name and student ID number.
- ☞ Map of campus (to get to know your safe way around).
- ☞ Personal alarm.
- ☞ Service times for any night-time mini bus service.
- ☞ Bank or building society account (to keep your cash secure rather than lying around).
- ☞ Door chain.
- ☞ List of possessions (including make, model and serial numbers) for reference.
- ☞ List of emergency contacts.
- ☞ A separate record of numbers in case credit cards are stolen.
- ☞ Spare keys (well hidden inside the house).
- ☞ Steering wheel lock.
- ☞ A timer switch (as little as £2 from a DIY shop).

## Before going out...

- ☞ Figure out exactly where you're going and how you and your mates will get there and back. The majority of attack cases involve looking lost, taking short cuts in the early hours or walking home alone. Share a taxi or walk together.
- ☞ Consider using a personal alarm (many institutions give them away for free, or buy one from a DIY store). Carry it in your hand when walking at night so you're at the ready. Don't set them off as a joke – people may start to ignore them. And don't assume you're invincible with one. It's not OK to think: "It's a dark alleyway, but I've got an alarm". Remain cautious.
- ☞ Put a bit of extra money in a separate pocket to fall back on if it's late, you're drunk and need a cab home. £15 is a small price to pay for getting home safely.
- ☞ Half of burglaries happen because a door or window has been left open – it's that simple. So lock up (even if you're just popping to the kitchen or bathroom).
- ☞ Make sure your TV, video and other valuables can't be seen from the outside (when it's dark close curtains, and try to leave a light on).
- ☞ Tell a flatmate where you're going – and phone if you stay out for the night.

# Don't have mug-ging written all over you

Women feel most in danger walking down the street yet it's men who are the most likely victims of muggers. Protect yourself from being considered an easy target...

- ☞ Keep bags closed, zipped up and buckled. Be extra careful with rucksacks. If someone grabs it, let it go. Bags – and their contents – can be replaced.
- ☞ Carry your wallet out of sight.
- ☞ When using a cash machine, go in daylight or with a mate if you can, or choose a well-lit one (go to the back page for more on this and credit card fraud).
- ☞ Don't be flash with cash (keep in your pocket) or laptop (keep hidden in an anonymous bag like a rucksack). If you take your mobile out with you, keep it hidden and keep calls brief.
- ☞ If you suspect you're being followed, cross over the road to see if they follow. If you're still worried, don't hang about. Go into a pub or shop to call a mate to meet you, or the police.

- ☞ Have your house keys ready before you reach the door – and carry them on you, not in your bag. Rummaging around for them means you're not looking at what's around you.
- ☞ Walk confidently and be aware of what's going on at all times.
- ☞ Try to blend in and avoid wearing your "Drunk" or "Lost" student badge.
- ☞ Remember if you're chatting on the phone or listening to your personal stereo, you won't hear someone come up behind you. Your hearing is your best protection; your voice is your best defence. If you're attacked, shout and run.
- ☞ When your gut says there's trouble ahead, there probably is. Get somewhere safe.
- ☞ Steer clear of a confrontation. What's the point? Who needs the hassle?
- ☞ If something does happen to you, report it to the police and campus authorities. You could stop it happening to someone else.

## At your uni or college...

Most campuses run security/safety programmes. This includes providing late night buses for students and advice on dangerous areas. Some will even hook up with certain cab firms so, even if you don't have cash, you can take a cab and pay later if you give your student card details to the driver.



# Going out

## Who's eyeing up your drink?

### What you need to know about spiking

- Spiking drinks with alcohol or drugs is on the increase.
- People do it 'to be funny', out of spite or anger, to rob you or to leave you open to sexual assault.
- Don't just think spiking is with drugs - it's more likely that someone has vodka added to a pint, or you're bought doubles instead of singles.
- It only takes 15 minutes for the effects of "rape drugs" to kick in - they can wipe out eight hours of memory.
- Almost 70% of victims know their spiker/rapist.
- Men's drinks get spiked too!
- If someone spikes your drink with the intention of raping you, they could face up to 10 years in prison (even if a sexual assault doesn't take place).



### Case Study

"It was my first week of term. We had a few drinks then went on to a club to celebrate. Some lads invited us to a drinking competition at the bar - it was a laugh. Our drinks were only out of sight for seconds. I headed for the dance floor then I don't remember anything else - until I had a shower the next morning and found bruises on my inner thighs. I'd been raped."

Nicola, 1st year student

## How to protect yourself

- Don't accept a drink from a stranger.
- Don't take drinks from large open containers like punch bowls.
- Don't share or swap drinks.
- Leave your drink with someone you know you can trust when you nip to the toilet or go for a dance.
- If you suddenly feel odd or unusually drunk, ask a friend to get you home - but make sure it's someone you really trust.
- If a mate starts acting in a 'They wouldn't normally do/say that' way, she/he might have been drugged - ask for help and get them home safely.
- Always look out for each other. If there's a group of you and one's driving, get them to be a designated drinks watcher.

## The Bouncer

We met Edinburgh University student and doorman Dave Crosswell, 21, and asked him a few questions about keeping safe in clubs and bars...



### Q. Of all the places you've been doorman, where is your favourite?

A. "I've liked them all! I've bounced the door at old man's pubs, drum and bass nights through to the gay scene but now I'm at a cheesy nightclub."

### Q. What are the worst scenarios you've had to deal with?

A. "The most difficult times are when people are tanked up - they tend to think they're invincible and superior, when really they're more vulnerable than ever, and make really bad decisions. I had a lad the other night who wandered off boozed up - despite us trying to stop him - and he was beaten up and mugged by a group of locals. The thing is, some locals regard students as 'soft' and 'rich' so have a go. He was so drunk he couldn't defend himself."

### Q. What are the usual trouble times to avoid?

A. "Chucking out time. That's when fighting usually happens, so always be aware of what's happening around you and stay clear."

### Q. Would you encourage girls to ask doormen to call cabs for them?

A. "Yes - or ask the bar staff if we're busy. We'll only use a licensed cab firm, and I'd say never let on you're on your own when booking. Girls wait with me all the time and, if they ask, I'll check the driver's details before they get in."

### Q. Have you ever been a victim of crime?

A. "Yes. I've had my drink spiked by idiots who thought it'd be funny (I left it for two minutes) and my wallet nicked (I'd left it on the table). The silly thing is, like most of these things, they were preventable."

### Q. What else have you learned about staying safe when you're out drinking?

A. "Don't take out too many valuables, and if you see something dodgy tell the door staff. Most clubs have an emergency room for people who need help, or have taken too many drugs. Most of all, relax!"



# THE TROUBLE WITH WEED

## Q. What is the law on cannabis?

**A.** Despite being downgraded from a Class B to a Class C drug in 2004, it's still illegal. Possession of a small "personal quantity" may lead to a warning or caution on a first occasion, rather than arrest, but the drug will be confiscated.

## Q. Can I smoke cannabis in the street or in a pub?

**A.** No. Those who smoke the drug in "public view" or in front of children are likely to be arrested.

## Q. Can cannabis now be legally sold like in Amsterdam-style coffee shops?

**A.** No. Dealing in cannabis is still a serious offence. The punishment for supplying - which includes everything from giving a joint to a mate (even without being paid for it) to selling bags - is a maximum sentence of up to 14 years in prison.

## Q. And other consequences?

**A.** A conviction for any kind of drugs can mean suspension or expulsion from your studies and/or halls of residence, the charge passed to a potential employer or exclusion from certain jobs. In some countries, such as the USA, a conviction for drugs may mean you're not allowed into the country. So bang go holidays there too.

## Case Study

"I saw two guys doing coke in a club toilet. The nasty thing about mixing coke with drink is you feel indestructible. These two couldn't actually feel pain so it took two bouncers to get them out. One had his arm broken in the process but didn't bat an eyelid - he just picked up a CO<sub>2</sub> gas canister with his bad arm and threw it at the bouncers, then drove off. We're talking a driving ban, a trip to the hospital and getting kicked off his course - and he won't remember any of it in the morning."

**Steve, 2nd year student**



Illegal drugs are just that - illegal. But if you're going to use them, at least know what you're getting into. Use the following statements to see how much you know. They're either true, false or in between...



**Magic mushrooms aren't illegal drugs**

It isn't illegal to possess raw magic mushrooms but the moment they're prepared (eg dried or stewed) they become a Class A drug.

**You can't get hooked on a few joints or lines on a Saturday night**

You might think "recreational" drug-taking won't hurt - but you can become dependent on any drug. Heavy cannabis smokers often think they have to get stoned to cope. Take stimulants like cocaine and crack, and the mind gets hooked because the hit is intense. Physically addictive drugs like heroin change body chemistry - the more you take, the more you need.

**Ecstasy makes you thirsty**

It's not the ecstasy, more the loss of water caused by sweating, often brought on by dancing. It's important to keep sipping fluids (water or an isotonic sport drink) - about a pint an hour, no more.

**Like alcohol, drugs can make you do things you'll regret**

Thinking you're OK to drive. Thinking you want to go home with that person. Thinking that a fight, smashing up a car or getting into one with someone who is clearly wasted is a good idea. Drugs do not generally bring on your best decisions. They can cloud your judgement, make you paranoid, violent and behave in a "look at me!" way potential attackers can spot a mile off. Bottom line - you're more susceptible to danger and being dangerous. If you do take drugs, make sure you're with a mate you trust in surroundings you're comfortable with, and tell them what you've taken.

**You'll get away with taking drugs and driving**

Experts believe that at least 4,500 deaths and 135,000 serious injuries are caused in Europe through drug driving. It is also illegal - visit [www.drugdrive.com](http://www.drugdrive.com) for more information.



# Don't leave home without... contents insurance!

It costs £900 to replace all the stuff stolen after an average burglary. Starting from around £18 per year, insurance is cheaper

**S**tudents often own plenty of items attractive to thieves – take a look around you. A selection of just 20 CDs adds up to £300.

Contents insurance policies provide the cover you need, taking into account your lifestyle and the fact your house is empty in the holidays, and will allow you to quickly replace what's stolen.

Many institutions provide free contents insurance as part of their service – just make sure that you get top-up cover for especially valuable items such as laptops.

Ask your parents if their contents insurance covers your property – sometimes it's cheaper to add it on to their policy.

Get it sorted before you arrive at uni or college – many thefts take place within a few weeks of a new term and in the run up to Christmas as burglars start their Christmas shopping.

Shop around for the best price. If your bank balance can't take it, think about insuring your most expensive or irreplaceable items like your lap top or bike individually.

Try to take most of your good stuff home during the breaks.

If you can't, find out whether your institution provides a secure storage room where you can leave your stuff in the holidays.



## Property marking

Don't just think about doing it. Use a UV pen (your Union might give them away for free) and write your university name and student ID number on valuables. You won't be able to see it under normal light, and it won't damage your property. Record the make, model and serial numbers of electrical equipment too.

### Case Study

"One minute I was having a great time with my new flatmates, the next someone broke in and took everything. I lost my decks and my flatmate had left his car keys lying about, and they nicked his car. It turns out we hadn't double locked the door".

**Susie, 2nd year student**

### Case Study

"I went in to the library to send an email, and hung my rucksack on the back of my chair. When I turned round, it was gone – along with my phone, diary, books, keys. I had to change the locks on my front door."

**Matt, 3rd year student**

### Case Study

"My mate had his stuff nicked when he went home for the holidays. It happened in the afternoon. I'd only gone to the canteen for 30 minutes, and someone stole my laptop. It was new and, stupidly, I hadn't insured it. Word got around my halls and we're all more careful now."

**Joe, 1st year student**

### Case Study

"I parked my car outside my boyfriend's house while we went out for the evening and it got broken into. I'd been home for the weekend and had my clothes in the boot, and they pinched a camera out of one of the bags. It cost me a fortune to replace. I don't leave anything in there now."

**Claudia, 3rd year student**

# Don't let them steal your degree...

If your laptop's nicked, that's how many weeks of hard work gone?  
Save yourself the grief (and cost) by doing what you can to protect what's yours...



## Laptops

OK, so they're mobile, but don't carry it around if you can help it.

If you do, disguise it by putting it in a rucksack so people won't know you have one.

Don't leave it on show in a car – even if you are in it.

Back up all your work regularly and keep disks separate from the laptop.



## Motor bikes & scooters

Always lock it to something immovable (some insurance companies won't pay out unless you've done this).

Put a steering lock on and use a strong steel cable or D-lock.

Get a combined alarm/immobiliser fitted by a pro.

Take the same precautions about where you park as you would with a car.

Get the bike, engine and windscreen etched with the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) or your postcode or university name and student ID number.



## Bicycles

Use a sturdy lock. Chains are OK, but can be cut. Talk to your local bike dealer about the best for sale. Lock both tyres, and remove any extras (like lights). With over 100,000 bikes stolen every year, you can't be too protective.

Mark your bike frame with your postcode or university name and student ID number.



## Mobile phones

If you make a call in public, keep an eye on who's around you.

Register your phone with your network operator. This makes barring easier.

Record your IMEI number (a unique ID code located on a strip normally found behind the battery of the handset).

These days it's as easy to cancel a mobile as it is to cancel a credit card. The moment your phone is stolen, call your network on **08701 123 123**.

Once cancelled, it cannot be used again on any network, even with a new SIM card – meaning no big bill run up in your name, and stealing it is pointless.

Contact the Mobile Industry Crime Action Forum on **020 78778 9864** for more advice on handset security.



## Cars

Believe it or not, most cars are stolen because they're unlocked. Say no more.

Never leave the keys in the ignition: prime example, when paying for petrol.

Don't make it easy for the thieves. Hide car documents and keys at home. Get a car alarm, steering lock or immobiliser fitted.

Think about where you're parking. For instance, well lit secure car park v dark alley?

Don't leave anything – CDs, chequebooks, even an old coat – on show inside.

Secure your stereo.

Have your car reg number or the last 7 digits of your Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) etched onto all windows, the windscreens and headlamps.



## Are your digs asking for it?

Test out your student accommodation and ask, if you were a burglar, how easy would it be to break in?

### The burglary test

For most of you, living on your own for the first time or moving into rented digs means your own 'house' rules. But just how safe are you in your room? Take the test...

Do you have outside lighting?  
 Yes  No

Do you have a burglar alarm and use it (despite the hassle)?  
 Yes  No

Does your door fit properly, is the lock properly attached and does it keep the door firmly shut?  
 Yes  No

Do you always lock your door (even when you nip down the corridor to see a mate for a minute)?  
 Yes  No

If you live in halls, do you make sure no one follows you in through the main entrance?  
 Yes  No

And do you avoid leaving notes on your door announcing, "I'm out!" or giving out access codes to take-away companies?  
 Yes  No

Do you shut and lock windows when you're going out (even if you live on the second floor)?  
 Yes  No

If you have deadlocks do you use them (burglars hate them because you need a key to open them)?  
 Yes  No

Do you use a timer switch for lights and radios when you're out (to give the impression you're in)?  
 Yes  No

Do you have a smoke alarm?  
 Yes  No

Do you make sure any valuable items – TVs, CDs or cash – are hidden away from outside view (no need to advertise the fact)?  
 Yes  No

**Loads of Yes's: You're looking after yourself.**  
**More No's: C'mon. Take more care.**

## Before you rent

Check to see that external doors have five-lever mortise locks, and internal doors and ground floor windows have locks. Your landlord should provide adequate locks and keys/smoke detectors. Ask your Student Union Welfare Service, Accommodation Office or local Citizens Advice Bureau for tips on how to keep property safe, and tenant rights.

The property must be in the same (or better) state when you move in as it was when you viewed it.

When dealing with your landlord, do it in writing and keep a copy, in case you need proof.

Your contract is not legally binding until you sign it. Read the small print carefully.

Go to [www.studentuk.com](http://www.studentuk.com) for more information.

### Case Study

"I'd left my bedroom window open when I went to a lecture – I thought it'd be safe because there's so many people around (it's a nine-bedroom house). But when I got back, my room had been ransacked and my stereo was gone. My flatmates were furious because my room's on the ground floor. I couldn't have made it easier – anybody could have climbed in and helped themselves."

**Ted, 3rd year student**



If you see signs of a break in, like a smashed window or open door, don't go in or touch anything. Call 999 for help.

# International Students

Until now, you've been judged as high risk because you're new to the culture and so won't be aware of how crime works in the UK. **NOT ANY MORE.** All the information in this guide applies to you, but follow these extra safety tips and you should be safer

## When packing

- ☞ Before you get there, learn as much as you can about your uni or college and the local area via the Internet – and familiarise yourself with UK's customs/manners/laws (eg you can drink from 18 years of age).
- ☞ Make sure you have travel and property insurance that covers you abroad. Check to see if you need medical insurance too.
- ☞ Always take (and bring with you) photocopies of your travel documents and passport's data page.
- ☞ Keep the telephone number of your college or uni handy, in case you need to call for help.
- ☞ Don't bring valuables. If you'd be upset about losing it, leave it.

## When travelling

- ☞ Do not carry huge amounts of cash with you; bring just enough to cover your journey needs (about £200). Use a credit card to pay for things like hotels and train tickets.
- ☞ Carry a "dummy" wallet with a small amount of local currency. If you get into a situation where you have to hand it over, give that to them instead of your real wallet/purse (hidden).
- ☞ Never leave your luggage unattended – and label it with a forwarding address.

### Think about...

Buying a small personal safe or lockable footlocker to keep passport, travellers cheques, wallet you could do without losing. It's not easy knowing who to trust.

## When you get there

- ☞ After dark, try not to travel alone, and keep to well-lit, busy streets. Look confident, not nervous.
- ☞ Study a map before you leave the house so you know where you're going.
- ☞ When using a public telephone, stand facing out so you can see what's going on around you.
- ☞ Avoid taking strangers back to where you live.
- ☞ Drunken people do NOT listen to reason. Walk away from them.
- ☞ If you are attacked, shout and scream, and run away if you can. Never take matters into your own hands.

## Who's who of people to trust

Should you need the Police, Fire or Ambulance Service in an emergency, the telephone number to call is **999**. This is a free number from any phone including public telephone boxes. If you're unfortunate enough to experience crime, have been involved in an attack or threatened, you should report it to the police and campus authorities.

Coming to a new country can be daunting. But your uni or college is there to help you. Most unis provide safety talks and services for foreign students. They may also be able to give you a student safety map to help you get around.

Limit the amount of cash you carry on you or stash at home/in your lodgings. Open a bank account immediately – it's the only safe option. You will then be able to withdraw money using a cash card. Most banks in the UK are open from 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday (some open on Saturday). Get advice from your welfare officer on services offered by local banks.

**ALWAYS** report a "hate crime" – when a student is targeted because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or other minority group status. Do not feel intimidated to speak out. On anything from name calling to being threatened. It's one way to stop it.

## HI-TECH CRIME

**Stealing your PIN and squandering £££ on your credit card – the likelihood is low, but reduce the odds by keeping your details and cash safe**

### Credit card fraud: Ways to protect yourself

Treat your cards like cash – never let them out your sight (one in five stolen credit cards are taken from cars) and never pass on PINs or passwords, ever.

Don't leave cards behind the bar. Someone could copy the details.

Go through your bank statements carefully – if you spot a withdrawal or purchase that isn't yours report it to your bank.

Rip up or shred receipts, mini statements, loan forms and cash point balances so card details can't be stolen.

When you go off abroad, only take the cards you'll need.

Have emergency contact numbers to hand to cancel lost or stolen cards.

Never keep your PIN number with your cash card.

If any of your cards are stolen, don't mess around. Call to cancel them – don't even wait until you get home.

Be aware of **CYBER PRANKSTERS** – they steal credit card details and data either from you or over the net, and use online.

### Four steps to cyber safety

#### 1. Use a secure computer

It needs to have virus protection and a firewall software package installed. Avoid shopping from Internet cafes or public computers. Don't open emails or attachments if you don't know where they came from – they could contain a virus. The same goes for programmes. Log in and out of secure sessions correctly.

#### 2. Only shop at secure web sites

Always use a single credit card. Check that you are shopping with a reputable online store. If it's a secure connection, the beginning of the website address should change from http to https. Also, a small padlock symbol should appear on the bottom of your browser.

#### 3. Keep your ID YOUR identity

Keep PINs, passwords and personal information safe – always be wary of unsolicited emails that claim to come from banks asking you to click on a link and disclose information. Your bank would never ask you to disclose your password in full or PIN.

#### 4. Be up to date

Keep a record of any transactions you make online – preferably print out so you have proof of purchase.

### ATM security

Be aware of **SHOULDER SURFERS** – they steal PIN numbers over your shoulder at cash machines for use later with copied cards

#### So, when taking money out of cash machines, the rules are these

- ☞ Go in daylight and use machines inside banks if you can.
- ☞ Shield the keyboard.
- ☞ Never be distracted.
- ☞ If someone crowds or watches you, cancel the transaction and move on.
- ☞ Put money and card away before leaving.

## Helplines

**Need more advice?  
These will help...**

### General

[www.good2bsecure.gov.uk](http://www.good2bsecure.gov.uk)  
[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)  
[www.nusonline.co.uk](http://www.nusonline.co.uk)  
[www.studentuk.com](http://www.studentuk.com)  
[www.need2know.co.uk](http://www.need2know.co.uk)

### www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Feel safe phoning the police with information on a crime on freephone. line: **0800 555111**. You will remain anonymous.

### Personal

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)  
Log on or call the Victim Support Line: **0845 3030900**.

### www.met.police.uk/sapphire

Provides a one-stop shop for all victims of sexual assault and sexual assault.

### www.roofie.com

A charity working in the field of drug related assault and sexual assault in the UK. 24-hour helpline: **0800 783 2980**.

### www.suzylamplugh.org

A national charity on how to be safe at home, work, uni and out and about. Call: **020 8392 1839**.

### Vehicle

#### www.secureyourmotor.gov.uk

#### www.soldsecure.com

A non-profit company that produces car security equipment, backed by police and the Home Office. Call: **01327 264687**.

### Drugs

#### www.talktofrank.com

You've seen the ads. Provides all you need to know on drugs, alongside stories from recovering users. Helpline: **0800 776600**.

### Housing

[www.studentaccommodation.org](http://www.studentaccommodation.org)  
[www.upmystreet.com](http://www.upmystreet.com)  
[www.unipolnetletleeds.co.uk](http://www.unipolnetletleeds.co.uk)

### Mobile phones

#### www.immobilise.com

How it works and what you should do to block a stolen phone.

### Hi-Tech Crime

#### www.crimereduction.gov.uk/ etailing

Guide to safer online shopping and credit card fraud protection.

#### www.cardwatch.org.uk

The UK bank industry, police and retailers working together to fight card fraud.

Write in  
your relevant  
numbers and  
keep in case  
of emergency

#### Local taxi rank:

#### Campus security:

Mobile network operator  
(or call **08701 123123**):

24-hour emergency  
bank number:

Insurance claim  
emergency number: