



<https://rainn.org/>

➡ Avoiding Dangerous Situations

While you can never completely protect yourself from sexual assault, there are some things you can do to help reduce your risk of being assaulted.

- **Be aware** of your surroundings. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.
- Try to **avoid isolated areas**. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around.
- **Walk with purpose**. Even if you don't know where you are going, act like you do.
- **Trust your instincts**. If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be.
- **Try not to load yourself down** with packages or bags as this can make you appear more vulnerable.
- **Make sure your cell phone is with you** and charged and that you have cash money.
- **Don't allow yourself to be isolated** with someone you don't trust or someone you don't know.
- **Avoid putting music headphones in both ears** so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.

➡ Safety Planning

- If you or someone you know has been sexually assaulted or is in an abusive relationship, there are things to consider when thinking about safety. It may be helpful to create a safety plan or to think about some ways to stay and feel safer. Depending on where you live, there may be unique circumstances to think about. The following information is divided up into rural, suburban and urban, and college campus safety tips. There is a lot of overlap but there are also things that are unique to each location. Please review the one that is closest to your situation.

Things to think about:

How to get away if there is an emergency

- Be conscious of exits or other escape routes
- Think about options for transportation (car, bus, train, etc.)

Who can help

- Friends, family
- Support centers, if there are any in your area
- National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE(4673), the [National Sexual Assault Online Hotline](#) or, if you are in a dating or domestic violence situation, the National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.800.799.SAFE(7233)

Where to go

- Friend's house
- Relative's house
- A domestic violence or homeless shelter (if there are not any domestic violence shelters in your area, and you are contemplating leaving the town, you may want to consider going to a homeless shelter)
- The police (even if the police know both you and the perpetrator—they are still responsible for doing their job).
- **Important:** If the dangerous situation involves a partner, go to the police or a shelter first.

Traveling Safety:

If you need to get away and there is no public transportation in your area, try to find someone who will allow you to use his or her car if you do not have one at your disposal.

Driving

- Keep your doors locked
- Have extra car necessities (oil, jumper cables, etc.)
- Try not to wait until the last minute to fill your gas tank; always keep it half-way full if you can
- Have your keys ready when you go to unlock your car
- Plan your route and know what “safe” places are on it (police stations, hospitals, etc.)

In a Social Situation

While you can never completely protect yourself from sexual assault, there are some things you can do to help reduce your risk of being assaulted in social situations.

1. **When you go to a social gathering, go with a group of friends.** Arrive together, check in with each other throughout the evening, and leave together. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way out of a bad situation.
2. **Trust your instincts.** If you feel unsafe in any situation, go with your gut. If you see something suspicious, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.).
3. **Don't leave your drink unattended** while talking, dancing, using the restroom, or making a phone call. If you've left your drink alone, just get a new one.
4. **Don't accept drinks from people you don't know or trust.** If you choose to accept a drink, go with the person to the bar to order it, watch it being poured, and carry it yourself. At parties, don't drink from the punch bowls or other large, common open containers.
5. **Watch out for your friends, and vice versa.** If a friend seems out of it, is way too intoxicated for the amount of alcohol they've had, or is acting out of character, get him or her to a safe place immediately.
6. **If you suspect you or a friend has been drugged, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.).** Be explicit with doctors so they can give you the correct tests (you will need a urine test and possibly others).

What Can Bystanders Do?

There are many things men and women can do to help prevent sexual violence.

If you see someone in danger of being assaulted:

- Step in and offer assistance. Ask if the person needs help. NOTE: Before stepping in, make sure to evaluate the risk. If it means putting yourself in danger, call 911 instead.
- Don't leave. If you remain at the scene and are a witness, the perpetrator is less likely to do anything.
- If you know the perpetrator, tell the person you do not approve of their actions. Ask the person to leave the potential victim alone.

Be an ally:

- When you go to a party, go with a group of friends. Arrive together, check in with each other frequently and leave together.
- Have a buddy system. Don't be afraid to let a friend know if you are worried about her/his safety.
- If you see someone who is intoxicated, offer to call a cab.

➡ If Someone is Pressuring You

If you need to get out of an uncomfortable or scary situation here are some things that you can try:

1. **Remember that being in this situation is not your fault.** You did not do anything wrong, it is the person who is making you uncomfortable that is to blame.
2. **Be true to yourself.** Don't feel obligated to do anything you don't want to do. "I don't want to" is always a good enough reason. Do what feels right to you and what you are comfortable with.
3. **Have a code word with your friends or family** so that if you don't feel comfortable you can call them and communicate your discomfort without the person you are with knowing. Your friends or family can then come to get you or make up an excuse for you to leave.
4. **Lie.** If you don't want to hurt the person's feelings it is better to lie and make up a reason to leave than to stay and be uncomfortable, scared, or worse. Some excuses you could use are: needing to take care of a friend or family member, not feeling well, having somewhere else that you need to be, etc.
5. **Try to think of an escape route.** How would you try to get out of the room? Where are the doors? Windows? Are there people around who might be able to help you? Is there an emergency phone nearby?
6. **If you and/or the other person have been drinking,** you can say that you would rather wait until you both have your full judgment before doing anything you may regret later.

Works Cited

Scott Berkowitz. (2009). Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN). Washington, District of Columbia. Retrieved August 12, 2014