

Top Tips to Staying Safe

Simple precautions which won't cost you much in time or money. You will find that many universities and students' unions, often working closely with the local police, distribute items such as personal alarms and UV pens to new students.

- Don't act after the event, and wait until you or one of your friends has had something stolen – follow our advice now. Imagine how you would feel if weeks of work on your laptop was lost for ever – we all know of situations where that has happened.



Personal safety

A new social life and great nights out are all part of the university experience. A little forethought before going out will ensure a night to remember for the right reasons.

- Take responsibility for yourself on a night out.
- Know how you will get home – plan ahead, particularly if you're going to a part of town you don't know.
- Eat before you go out and drink plenty of water. Drinking a glass of water or a soft drink between alcoholic drinks will help you not to get drunk.
- Do carry a personal alarm with you – many men see these as female accessories and somehow not macho. But figures show that male students stand a much higher risk of been attacked in the street.
- Let someone know where you're going and what time you expect to be back.
- Ensure your mobile phone is charged and is in credit. Keep the money you need to get home separate, so that you don't spend it.
- Watch how much you drink. It is much easier to do something risky or foolish when you're drunk; and you're much more likely to lose your keys, cash or phone when you've had too much to drink.
- Keep track of what you're drinking, as well as how much. Drinks do get spiked with drugs, so do not leave your drink unattended or accept a drink from a stranger.
- Always leave a club or pub with a friend or a group of friends.
- If you use public transport to get home, sit near the driver on a bus or a tram, and in an occupied carriage on a train or the underground.
- Pre-book a licensed taxi, or know the locations of official taxi ranks. Your students' union is sure to have a list of recommended taxi companies.

- Walking may not be the best option, but if you have to, do not walk home alone in the dark. Keep to well-lit, busy streets, main roads and footpaths. Avoid badly lit areas, parks, alleyways and underpasses.
- Your university and students' union will be able to offer plenty of advice about drinking safely and staying safe, so don't ignore it. But do have fun!
- Please remember to stay safe in both the real and the virtual world – see more advice about your [personal information](#) below.

If you are affected by sexual harassment or violence, find [links for help and support](#).

Keep your belongings to yourself

Don't make it easy for a potential thief to help themselves to your possessions.

- Ensure you have adequate personal belongings insurance – over half the students who fall prey to theft and burglary are not insured.
- Mark your possessions with a UV pen – your student registration number plus the initials of your university makes a unique number.
- Do make sure outside doors are fitted with a Yale type lock and five lever mortise deadlock. Fit any vulnerable downstairs windows with key-operated locks. Students in private housing are twice as likely to be burgled than those in halls of residence, not least because their accommodation is often unoccupied for long periods of the day and night. You can give the impression of being at home by using timer switches on lights and radios.
- Do not leave cash or jewellery lying around the house and keep valuables out of sight, and where possible in a secure place.
- Consider secure storage for expensive items if you are leaving these over the vacation. International students might find this service particularly helpful.
- Dial *#06# for your unique mobile registration (IMEI) number – the first thing the police will check for when recovering stolen property.
- Register your mobile's IMEI and all the serial numbers of your electronic equipment on www.immobilise.com. Immobilise.com is a free UK-wide national property register, supported by the UK police forces and used by them, insurers and the second-hand trade. As well as electronic products, you can also register your bike and other valuable items.
- Avoid using your phone in isolated places. Remember that texting can distract you from what is happening around you. When you are out and about switch your mobile to vibrate mode rather than a ring tone
- In the unfortunate event of an item being lost or stolen you can use register the loss on the Immobilise website – always contact your network provider to block the phone's use or you may be liable for the cost of any calls, and if you know the phone has been stolen you must inform the police. Mobiles are by far and away the items most stolen from young people.
- Invest in a good quality bicycle lock and use it. Always leave your bike in a designated bike park, or a well-lit, public place and lock it to something immovable. Remember to lock your bike at home too, whether it's kept in a garage or your halls of residence. Around half the bikes stolen are taken from the owner's home – in the UK a bicycle is stolen on average every few minutes and it is often difficult for the police to identify the owner. Take a photograph of your bike and the frame number.

- Immobilise your car whenever you leave it even for a few minutes. Think about where you park. Stealing from vehicles is a major problem and you should routinely remove your CD player and sat nav and store them in a safe place.



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Keep your personal information personal

Don't leave yourself vulnerable to identity theft or be casual with your personal details.

- Be very suspicious of emails, texts or phone calls requesting personal information, passwords, PIN numbers or account details. Do not give out such information unless you are 100% sure of the validity of the request. Banks and other organisations will not ask you to confirm personal information online or via a text.
- Carefully destroy papers carrying bank or credit card details. Always keep your receipts and destroy them too.
- When you move house or flat, take the trouble to inform all the organisations you deal with of your new address and arrange for the post office to forward your mail. You don't want a bank statement, new credit card or any other personal mail to be sent to an address you no longer live at, where anyone could take and open your post.
- Keep a record somewhere safe of plastic card, driving licence and passport details. Some banks and credit card companies offer a registration service but it is often chargeable. If you lose your card or suspect it has been stolen, contact the bank or credit card company immediately. When destroying old cards, cut through the chip and magnetic strip.
- Always check a cash machine for signs of interference before you use it. Never accept a stranger's offer of help when using a cash machine. Do be aware of people crowding around you when using a cash machine and preferably draw out money during the day.
- Never let your bank or credit card out of your sight in shops and restaurants to prevent copying or cloning.
- When shopping on the internet, check that the website shows a padlock or unbroken key icon. When you check out make sure that 'https:' starts the web address; this means that a secure, encrypted connection is in place between your computer's browser and the website. If you don't see the final 's' when you come to checkout, stop the transaction immediately. The VeriSignTrust seal means that the website company's identity has been verified and that the website has passed a daily malware scan.
- Internet Shopping is Safe (ISIS) is run by the e-retail industry body Internet Media Retail Group (IMRG) and shows that the retailer has registered with the programme and has its website and service reviewed and monitored by IMRG. You can click on the ISIS logo to get verification of the retailer's accreditation.

- Install security software on your laptop (and desktop computer) and always carry it hidden inside a sports bag rather than in its own obvious case. Nowadays, university IT and learning centres are open around the clock and many students could be leaving these places in the middle of the night.

Useful links

- There are many sources of information to help you stay stay online, including:
 - [Get Safe Online](#) offers free expert advice including, for example, how to avoid rogue apps.
 - The [thinukknow](#) website is a guide to internet safety and safe surfing.
 - [CEOP](#), the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, is the national centre dedicated to eradicating sexual abuse of children and young people.