

Other McGruff brochures available from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority:

Seniors, protect yourselves from crime!
Provides tips on how to avoid burglary, theft and fraud.

Being a kid should be fun...and safe!
Provides tips and written activities for kids (aged 5 to 9) on home and street safety.

Be street smart: Protect yourself from crime!



McGruff the Crime Dog here. Let's face it: dangerous people and situations are out there, and they're a problem for us all. But there is no need to live in fear! By being street smart, you can deter criminals and avoid bad situations. You *can* protect yourself. Learn how — take some tips from me, and let's "Take A Bite Out Of Crime!"



TAKE A BITE OUT OF
CRIME

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ILLINOIS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
INFORMATION AUTHORITY

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How do I become "street smart?"

It's easy! It's really just using common sense and thinking ahead. You should develop a positive, realistic attitude that you can and will take practical action to prevent and avoid crime. You know that crime is out there, but you also know that most criminals are lazy and tend to pick easy targets. If you take a few simple precautions, crooks will be less likely to mess with you. You won't be an easy target!

The 3 basic rules

Stay alert. Wherever you are, keep your mind on your surroundings — who's in front of you and who's behind you. Don't become distracted.

Stand tall and walk confidently. Communicate the message that you are calm, confident, and know where you're going. When someone approaches you, sweep your gaze across him and then over his head; this projects a strong, secure self image. Never look at your feet while walking.

Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, leave.

On foot

- ◆ Stick to well-lit, well-traveled streets, and walk facing traffic so you can see approaching cars. Walk close to the curb,

away from shrubbery and other dark places where a would-be attacker could be lurking. Avoid shortcuts through wooded areas, parking lots, or alleys.

- ◆ If you must carry a purse, hold it close to your body, not dangling by the straps. Put your wallet in an inside coat or front pants pocket, not a back pocket.
- ◆ Don't flash a lot of cash or other tempting targets like expensive jewelry or electronics.
- ◆ Don't let passersby distract you. Criminals sometimes work in pairs — one may ask you for directions, fake an injury, or beg for money — and the other may be out of sight, ready to attack. Watch your back.
- ◆ If you think someone is following you, switch direction or cross the street. Walk toward an open store, restaurant, or lighted house. If you're scared, yell for help.
- ◆ Try to use automated teller machines in the daytime. Have your card in hand, and don't approach the machine if you're uneasy about people nearby.
- ◆ Don't wear shoes or clothing that restrict your movements.
- ◆ Keep keys in your pocket or in your hand, separate from your purse or briefcase. Have your car or house key in hand before you reach the door.
- ◆ Always keep emergency money for cab fare, bus or train fare, or a telephone call.
- ◆ When using a public phone, stay alert. Keep the call short and simple.

- ◆ Avoid running and biking at night.
- ◆ Don't wear stereo headphones. They keep you from hearing what's around — and behind — you.
- ◆ Consider carrying a whistle or a shriek alarm.

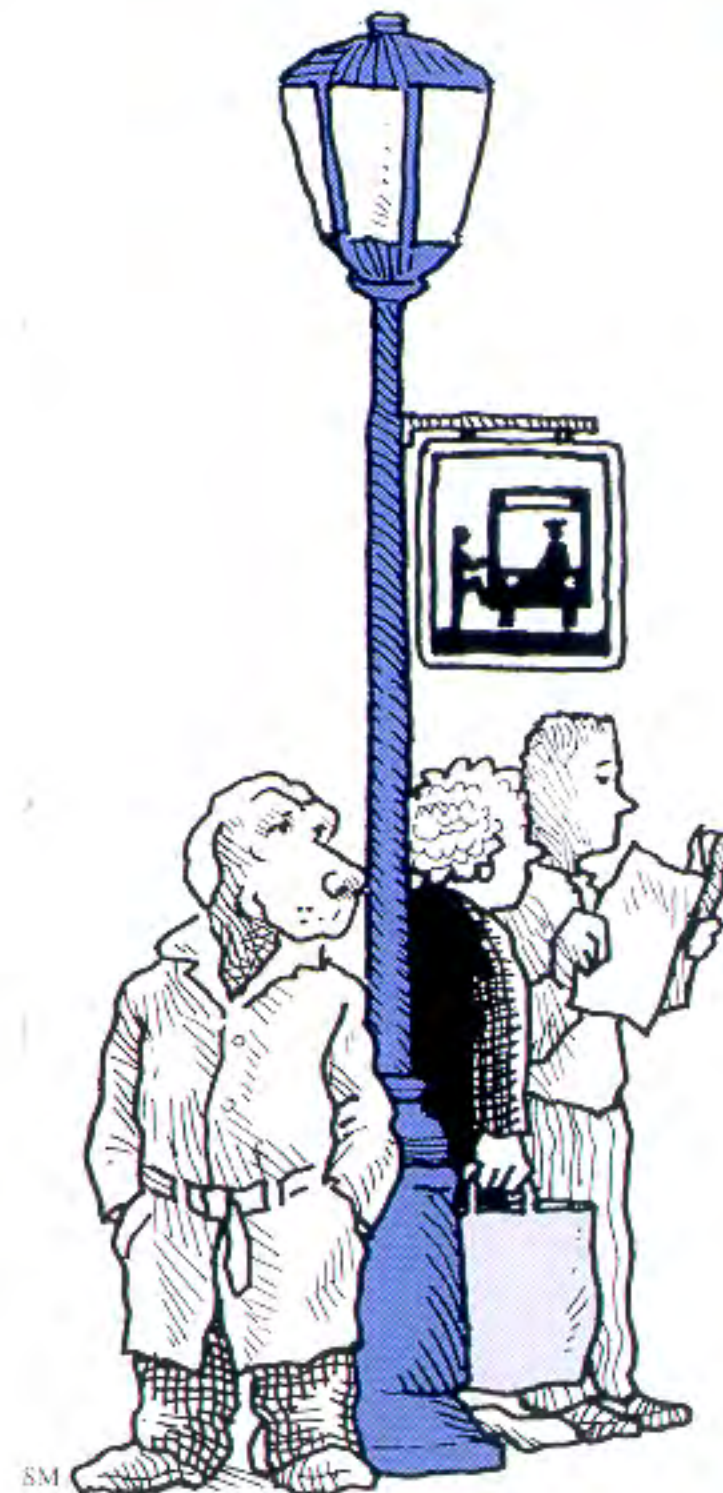
On your wheels



- ◆ Always roll up the windows and lock car doors, even if you're coming right back. Check inside and out before getting in.
- ◆ Don't leave any valuables visible in the car, even when you're in it. When in the car, if you have a purse, secure it under the seat so it's out of view.
- ◆ Avoid parking in isolated areas. In parking garages, try to park in the well-lit, more traveled areas of the garage, or near the entrances or exits.
- ◆ If you think someone is following you, don't head home. Go to the nearest police or fire station, gas station, or other open business to get help.
- ◆ Don't pick up hitchhikers. Don't hitchhike.
- ◆ If your car breaks down, raise the hood, use flares, and tie a white cloth to the door handle or antenna. Stay in your car. When someone stops, ask them to call the police.
- ◆ If you see another motorist in trouble, signal that you'll get help and then call police.

On public transportation

- ◆ Use well-lit, busy stops.
- ◆ Have exact fare ready when boarding. Don't advertise that you are carrying money, even if it is a small amount.
- ◆ Stay alert. Don't doze or daydream.
- ◆ Try to sit near the driver or conductor.
- ◆ If someone harasses you, don't be embarrassed. Loudly say, "Leave me alone!" If that doesn't work, hit the emergency device.
- ◆ Watch who gets off with you. If you feel uneasy, walk directly to a place where there are other people.



If you need to look at a transit map, do it before you get on the bus or train, preferably inside a building. Act like you know where you are even if you are lost. If you need help, quietly ask the driver or conductor.

On elevators

- ◆ Always look in the elevator before getting on. Look down both sides of the hall before you get off.
- ◆ Stand near the controls. If you feel threatened or are attacked in the elevator, hit the alarm and as many floor buttons as possible.
- ◆ Get off if someone suspicious enters. If you're worried about someone who is waiting for the elevator with you, pretend you forgot something and don't get on.

What if I am attacked?

- ◆ If the attacker is only after your purse or wallet, don't resist. Your life and safety are worth more than your possessions.
- ◆ Never let an attacker force you into a car, even if he or she has a weapon. Whatever they are going to do, they can do more harm somewhere else. Be prepared to react early.
- ◆ Activate a shriek alarm or blow a whistle, if you have one. Scream "fire;" this will get more attention than yelling "help."
- ◆ Hit the attacker in vulnerable areas: scratch the eyes with your fingernails or house keys; jab your elbow into the ribs or neck; knee the groin area; twist the lips or ears; strike under the chin with the heel of your hand. The purpose is not to permanently injure, but to briefly incapacitate the attacker and get away.

- ◆ Get a description of the attacker, paying close attention to things that cannot be easily altered, such as age, height, weight, birth marks, tattoos, facial features and unusual characteristics.
- ◆ Report the crime to the police. Your actions can help prevent others from being victims.
- ◆ Contact your local victim assistance agency to help deal with the trauma that all crime victims experience. The staff can also help you learn more about counseling, victim compensation laws, and how to follow your case's progress.



Take a stand

- ◆ Join a Neighborhood, Apartment, or Office Watch to look out for each other and help the police.
- ◆ Help out a friend or co-worker who's been a victim of crime. Cook a meal or babysit. Listen, sympathize, and don't blame.
- ◆ Look at the root causes. Work for better drug treatment services, crime and drug abuse prevention education, and job and recreational opportunities for young people in your community.