

College is an exciting time for any young adult, but one of the most vital aspects of making the big move away from home is staying safe. Although psychology students surely have plenty of issues involving academics, safety must come first when living on or visiting a college campus.

HAVE ACCESS TO A PHONE AT ALL TIMES

Because our society is so highly based on mobile technology, emergency phones are almost obsolete due to the fact that nearly everyone over the age of twelve possesses a cell phone. You should make sure that you have a cell phone with you at all times. A cell phone should also be turned on whenever you are traveling from place to place, in case you must make a quick emergency call. However, in the event that you forget your cell phone or the phone's battery dies, you should know where the campus's emergency phones are located. Knowing the location of these phones could potentially save your life.

TAKE CAUTION WHEN TRAVELING AT NIGHT

Sometimes, a walk around campus at night will be unavoidable. When you must travel at night, safety precautions must be taken. Never walk around campus alone at night. You should always try to take at least one friend with you, but when this is not possible, many colleges offer a '[Buddy System](#)' where an escort can be called to take a student from place to place.

LOCK ALL DOORS

Dorm rooms are very public places. Practically anybody can walk into a dorm's main hall, and you need to prevent unwanted strangers from entering your room. You should lock your door at all times, both when leaving the room and when inside. If your door is equipped with a peep hole, you should use this to check the identity of all visitors before allowing anyone to enter.

KNOW WHAT IS IN YOUR DRINK

College students should know exactly what they are drinking at any type of party. Drinks and punches are sometimes spiked with dangerous drugs, leading to numerous health risks and impairment in judgment which often leads to crimes such as [date rape](#). It is far better to pass on a potentially dangerous drink than to risk your life by sipping it. Alcohol related injuries are also potentially lethal, and you should always watch your alcohol intake when at a party.

MAKE FRIENDS WHO KNOW YOU WELL

Your best friends can oftentimes be your best safety lookouts. You should make sure that roommates, close friends, and advisory figures know about your usual activities, practices, and routes that you take to get from place to place. In the event that something goes wrong, these people will notice your absence from your usual routine and can alert authorities if the absence becomes worrisome.

How to Reduce the Risk of a Sexual Assault

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, Washington, DC (2006). Retrieved December 15th, 2007 from: <http://www.rainn.org/>

1. When you go to a party, go with a group of friends.
2. Arrive together, watch out for each other and leave together.
3. Don't leave your beverage unattended or accept a drink from an open container.
4. Don't allow yourself to be isolated with someone you don't know or trust.
5. Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
6. Trust your instincts.
7. Think about the level of intimacy you want in a relationship and clearly state your limits.

Safely Traveling Back And Forth To College:

- Have an **auto safety kit** and first aid kit in your car in case of a roadside emergency.
- Keep your cell phone with you while traveling so that you could call for help in case of emergency.

After You Have Settled Into Your New Living Quarters:

- Be sure to participate in fire drills and adhere to guidelines for evacuation when a fire alarm sounds.
- Never ignore the sounding of a fire alarm. Even if there have been other false alarms, still take each and every alarm seriously.
- Have a plan ready in advance of outlining what to do in case of a fire or emergency. Don't wait until an emergency arises to make your college safety plan. It is already too late!
- Check electrical outlets for overheating.
- Do not overload outlets.
- Purchase power strips with an over current protector that will automatically shut off if too much current is being drawn.
- Purchase appliances such as irons and coffee pots with automatic shut off features.

Take Extra Precautions When You Live In Off-Campus Housing:

- 79% of fatalities from fires at colleges occur in off campus apartments compared to 12% in dormitories.
- Be extra diligent in making sure that fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and working to be safe in your college apartment.

Have Your Own College Safety Items Readily Available:

- Don't rely on others for your safety. You are ultimately responsible for your safety while away at college.
- Have your own first aid kit and college survival kit in case of emergency.
- If you are going to a college in a different part of the country, be sure to know the weather condition that you might encounter in your new environment. A hurricane, blizzard or tornado could leave you stranded in your room or apartment for a few days unexpectedly.
- Be prepared with a college survival kit that contains the necessary items that could sustain you in case of an emergency. Purchase a college survival kit with an emergency water supply. There are kits to choose from that have water contained in small pouches. These are convenient given the space constraints in most dorms and apartments. All necessary safety items are stored in one small compact case readily available for you at all times.

Be Safe When Walking Alone On Campus:

- Arm yourself with mace or pepper spray if you walk alone to class.
- Know your surroundings at all times. Be aware!
- Attach a personal alarm to your key chain that can be sounded if someone is following you.
- Try to stay in a group.
- If jogging at night, be sure to wear a reflective safety vest so that motorists can see you.

Adhere To A Buddy System While Away At College:

- Let at least one person know where you are going and who you are going with.
- It can only help if friends keep a watchful eye out for each other.
- If you are in an emergency situation and don't come home, at least someone will "miss" you and be able to alert the authorities.

One Final College Safety Tip:

Put the word ICE (In Case of Emergency) into your phone with a parent or guardian name programmed with this code. The authorities know to look for this code in case an emergency occurs and they need to get in touch with a relative.

Enjoy yourself while away at college and keep yourself safe. Be aware of all the safety precautions that you have available to you.

In the residence halls:

- Keep your dorm room door locked whenever the room is unoccupied, when you are in the room alone and when you are sleeping.
- Take care of your keys. Don't give anyone the opportunity to duplicate them and never leave a key over the door or near your room.
- Don't leave valuables, like your wallet, checkbook or jewelry, in open view.
- Keep drapes closed when changing clothes.

While walking on campus:

- Never walk or jog alone at night. Should you find yourself walking alone at night, avoid secluded or dimly lit areas. Stay away from wooded areas or locations where shrubs or buildings might provide cover for assailants.
- Never hitchhike or offer rides to strangers.
- Have your car or house key in hand and ready as you approach your vehicle or home.

Protecting you:

- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave.
- Alcohol and drugs cloud your decision making abilities. Make the right choices.
- Always be alert to your surroundings.
- Be cautious when communicating on social networking pages.
- Carry a cell phone with you.
- Don't become a victim of identity theft. Don't give out personal information about yourself.
- Learn to communicate the message that you're calm, confident and know where you are going. Stand tall, walk purposefully and make quick eye contact with people around you.