

GOOD HABITS KEY TO CAMPUS SAFETY

For many of you entering college this fall, this also marks your first time living away from home. In the interest of your personal safety—and your parents' sanity—here's a few things you need to do to make your time at college harm free:

* When moving into campus housing or your own apartment, have the locks changed even if the previous tenants have allegedly returned all the keys—even keys stamped “do not copy” can be copied if the right palm is greased. Install a deadbolt with a minimum 1” throw and 3” screws in the strike plate. We recommend any by Weiser Lock: unlike many cheaper deadbolts, all Weiser products meet the safety standards set by police and security experts.

* If you have roommates, agree that your door must remain locked at all times, even if you're just running to the laundry room or visiting a friend a few doors away. Same goes for your bedroom door if you live in a dorm.

* Never let anyone unknown into your building; intruders will often claim to be “looking for a friend.” If your dorm has a Front Desk officer, inform him/her of any suspicious persons.

* Avoid travelling alone in low-traffic or poorly lit areas. Whenever possible, tell someone where you are going and when you will return. If going on a date, give the full name and number of your escort to a friend or roommate. If going by car, memorise the licence number.

* Many campuses have “panic” phones, security buses that stop at key points, and security escort services. Don't be shy about using them.

* When socialising, keep an eye on your drink and never leave it unattended, even if you believe yourself to be among “friends.” The use of “date-rape” drugs is on the rise.

* If you are approached by someone who makes you feel uncomfortable, know that it is okay to ignore them, say no, or walk away.

* Never provide personal information such as email, full name, address or phone number to anyone you do not know well.

* Signals and messages may be culturally or socially specific. Communicate your limits as clearly as possible and, if someone is pressuring you into an unsafe situation, say no. Be direct and assertive.

* All campuses have programs and personnel there to prevent injury to you and assistance if you've been harmed. Remember an assault is NEVER the victim's fault, no matter the circumstances. This applies equally to theft, robbery, physical or sexual assault. If you've been hurt you have a right to compassionate, considerate aftercare.

* These are only some of the security habits you need to learn. All campuses produce safety pamphlets with further information both general and specific to your campus. Read them. It may mean the difference between the best days of your life—or the worst.