

A Woman's Guide to Walking Alone at Night

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As a young girl, as soon as you are old enough to comprehend the dangers of the outside world, you were told to never walk alone at night. Some of us are fortunate enough to have people around us who are willing to walk us home or to our car, but there are bound to be instances where that is not an option. Through my experience of living alone as a woman I have compiled steps to feel safe for when you must go out on your own.

The steps:

1. Have a Plan
2. Notify Someone You Know
3. Dress Accordingly
4. Gather Supplies
5. Leave
6. Establish Your Safe Return

1. Have a Plan

-Know Your Route

This means to know where you're going, and all the routes that are available to get there. Public buildings and familiar homes should be noted if you need to stop somewhere safe.

-Light sources

Try and stay on a well-lit path at all times. If that isn't an option, a headlamp can be used to both temporarily blind an assailant, and help you see your path without having to hold your phone light.

-Safe spaces

Possible options for safe spaces would be libraries, schools, hospitals, or friends/family homes.

-Estimate travel time

Try and determine how much time it should take you to get where you need to. The shorter the distance, the better.

2. Tell Someone You Know

Before you leave, call or message someone you know telling them that you're about to step out alone. Let them know how long you should be gone for and what area you will be in. If

hours have passed and they haven't heard from you, they will know that you could be in danger.

3. Dress Accordingly

-Comfortable shoes

If you must start running, it's best that you're in shoes that will accommodate for that.

-Nonrestrictive clothing

Your clothes should not prohibit you from any swings or kicks that could help you get away from someone.

-Baggy Clothing

Sadly enough, the less recognizable I am as a girl, the less trouble I tend to get from others. Your facial structure and bodily curves can make you a target, so concealing these can lessen this chance. The main areas you would want to conceal are your hips, chest, and face. This can usually be most simply done with a pair of joggers and an oversized hoodie. The joggers should sag enough at the top to hide your hips and rear. The size of the hoodie should be large enough to wear your chest doesn't protrude from the fabric, and you are unable to see your waistline.

4. Gather Your Supplies

-Pepper spray

This is the most common self defense tool I see women with. It's easy to carry, easy to find, and it allows you to defend yourself without having to come too close to your attacker. The spray will typically be attached to a key ring, and usually hooked onto your car keys. While this is a great method for being sure you have it on your person whenever you leave the house, it isn't the best. Not only would your keys create a lot of noise, but you risk dropping it or losing it in a crucial moment. The most effective way to carry your spray is hooked to a retractable lanyard hooked to your hip. This will mean it's always within arm's reach and won't be dropped when you need it most.



-TigerLady/Claws

This is for if things begin to physically escalate. The TigerLady (that is the name of the official product but I'm sure other brands make a similar device) is a tool that fits into your palm that produces claws when you squeeze down onto it. When you swing at the attacker, not only will the claws help you defend yourself, but will also trap trace amounts of D.N.A from their skin or blood that can help the authorities track them down.



-Knife

I firmly believe that most people should carry a knife on their person the majority of the time. Not only will it have countless uses in everyday situations, but simply flashing your knife at somebody threatening you can completely turn around the situation. They are not going to want to come near you or that blade, so you hopefully won't have to use it. I would not recommend using this as your main form of protection, unless you've been properly trained in using one in self-defense.

-Phone

Having your phone with you is useful for the obvious reason: that you can call for help. Though it's likely this won't prove helpful in a real-life situation. If you are running down a dark street with someone chasing you, you are not going to be able to take out your phone and dial a number. If you did manage to do

this, it's likely that nobody will be getting to you in at least 15 minutes

5. Leave

-Stick to your route

Avoid wandering into unfamiliar areas.

-Be aware of your surroundings

Notice any dark corners, parked cars, or large objects someone may be hiding behind. If you are walking to your car be sure to check your backseat and underneath your car.

-Make a phone call

If you start to feel nervous or see someone else walking near you, start a phone call with someone. Tell them where you are, and you are doing. Continue the conversation as you are walking.

-Notice who is around you

If you happen to see another woman and somebody is following them, go up to her and act as though you know one another.

Quietly let her know that someone was following her and that you'll stay with her. It is unlikely they will continue to pursue now that their target is within a group.

6. Establish Your Safe Return

Whenever you reach your destination, be sure to let the person that you told you were leaving knows that you have made it back safely.