



Crime Prevention for University Life



For many students this will be your first time away from home and you will now have to face not only with getting to grips with lectures and making new friends, but also the added responsibility of looking after yourself and your property without the help of your parents or guardians.

The following advice will hopefully help you to avoid becoming a victim of crime so that you can fully enjoy your university experience.

Insurance

Research has shown that 34% of students have been the victim of burglary or theft in a shared house or university halls, and a similar 36% don't have contents insurance, with many assuming it's too expensive or that they won't need it.

As with all insurance policies, ensure you know what you need to cover and how it will be covered; some specific items may need to be covered separately. Check policy excesses and of course shop around for the best deal for you. Further advice for students is available online. Check out: <https://www.savethestudent.org/accommodation/student-contents-insurance.html>

Student Halls

Halls are communal buildings, so there are a lot of people coming in and going out at all different times of day. This can create opportunities for passing thieves. Following a few simple steps can help prevent crime.

- Always lock your room's doors and close windows, especially if on the ground floor.
- Be aware of who lives around you – challenge people you don't know trying to enter your corridor or contact security if you have any concerns.
- Don't leave flat doors open so that friends can come in – thieves can then come in too.

Living off campus

Once you move out of halls, you leave a monitored environment, and the onus is now well and truly on you to make sure your belongings are secure.

- Make sure doors and windows are locked when you go out.
- Keep valuables away from windows.
- Use a light timer switch to give the impression that someone is in the property, even when you are out.

- Ask your landlord to fit a door chain and use it every time someone knocks at the address.
- Don't let anyone into your digs unless you know who they are, even if they are claiming to be from an official organisation. Ask to see identification and check it out – if in doubt, call the police.
- Be extra careful if you have friends and their “friends” back to your digs. Where possible keep valuables out of view even in your own room, and if you can, try to think of unusual places in which to hide them. Drawers, and the bottoms of wardrobes are usually quickly searched by thieves.
- Do not “borrow” your flatmates items especially things like food and drink without asking. This always causes problems...

Personal property

Laptops, i-pads, mobile phones, jewellery – these days students can have a lot of valuable equipment and property. This can make you a tempting target for thieves.

- Always back up your computer frequently to a safe location. Imagine how you would feel if your computer was stolen, and all your hard work was lost with it.
- Lock property in your room when you are not using it. Do not leave it out on display near windows.
- Mark your home postcode and house number on to your property. This will make it easier to prove that the item has been stolen and easier to return it to you.
- Mobile phones are regularly reported stolen every week – most frequently from pubs and clubs. Keep them in a safe place – preferably zipped up –while you are out and about. Don't leave them on tables even if you are with them.
- Property also goes from cafes and other public places such as the library –don't leave items unattended, even for a short time and beware of distraction thieves who may cover the item whilst talking to you then walk away with it.
- Make a note of your phone's unique IMEI number - you can get this by tapping in *#06#. Write it down, keep it safe (but not on your phone!) and give it to the police and your network supplier if your phone happens to be stolen.

Bicycles

Bikes are a cheap method of transport for students – and thieves like them just as much.

- If you use a bike – lock and secure it each time you leave it, even if it is just to nip into a shop for a few minutes.
- Use an approved Silver or Gold standard “Sold Secure” bike lock: even better – use two locks.
- Secure your bike to something substantial and put your chain through the frame, not just the wheel as this can be removed.
- If you can easily remove your bike seat and take it with you then do so.
- Register your bike for free at <https://www.bikeregister.com>

Cars

If you are lucky enough to own a car and take it with you, make sure it is always locked when not in use, and the keys are never left in the ignition.

- Fit a “[Sold Secure](#)” or “[Secured by Design](#)” approved steering wheel lock or immobiliser to act as an

extra theft deterrent.

- Don't leave anything on show inside. Some thieves will cause damage breaking in just to steal a few coins collected for car park money!

Keep personal details safe

Identity theft is possibly the fastest growing crime in the country and messy student accommodation can be the perfect place for criminals to find bills and other personal items left lying around.

- Keep a safe record of info e.g. driving licence, passport details etc. should you need to report them stolen.
- Be suspicious of calls or messages that ask for any personal information, passwords, PIN numbers or account details. Don't give out such information unless you are 100% sure of the validity of the request.
- If property such as credit cards, passports and personal address details are stolen, you can find yourself the victim of identity theft. Report them as missing to the relevant authority as soon as possible.
- Shred or destroy any item that has your name and address details on it, particularly bank statements or credit card bills, before disposing of them in the bin, and destroy old cards by cutting through the chip and magnetic strip
- When you move house or flat, let relevant organisations know and consider arranging for Royal Mail to forward on your mail. This avoids strangers receiving your personal information.
- Don't assume you'll never get hacked. Install security software on your computer and always carry it hidden inside a sports bag rather than in its own obvious case—Don't forget to postcode it!
- When shopping online, check the website for a padlock or unbroken key icon. Websites with 'https:' in the URL are secure, but 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. For more information about safety online visit: <https://www.getsafeonline.org>

Staying safe while out and about

- Make sure your phone is fully charged before you go out so you can call for help if necessary.
- Always stick to well-lit main routes through the city.
- If you go out as a group of friends – stay as a group.
- If one person wants to go home early make sure they are going to get there in one piece, or if you are disappearing (for whatever reason) – tell someone where you are going. Check in with friends when you each arrive home safely.
- Remember – safety in numbers – so stick together and never walk home alone. Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Take care of your cash and bank cards only taking out what you will realistically need for an evening and avoid using cash machines at night –it is not worth the risk.
- It's a good idea to keep valuables such as wallets in an inside pocket and to separate a small amount of cash or a bankcard from your main purse/wallet. Keep your car or house keys separate too.
- Don't keep bank or credit cards in your phone case. If you lose it or have your phone stolen, you lose your ability to pay for things as well, including getting home.
- Keep enough money for a taxi. Don't spend your last fiver on a burger – get home safe instead.

- Always call or book a cab or use a cab premises and never accept a lift from drivers on the street. Only black cabs can be hailed on the street so don't ever hail a minicab without booking it in advance.
- When a minicab arrives, always ask who they are waiting for before telling them your name. Never tell them your name first. A lot of cab firms will provide a female driver if you ask for one, or will give you a password so that you know it is the correct cab. Check you have all your belongings as you get out.
- Always be assertive and remain vigilant. Look purposeful - it will reduce any perceived vulnerability. Be confident with any unwanted approaches by saying 'Don't touch me', 'No', 'Go away'. If they persist make sure you raise your voice and command them to 'back away' or shout 'I said NO'.
- Consider an app-based personal safety platform, lone worker device or personal alarm tested and certified by Secured by Design member companies.
- For more information on staying safe and secure visit the Suzy Lamplugh website: <https://www.suzylamplugh.org>

Alcohol

Alcohol is sometimes seen as a traditional part of student life - but remember, it isn't compulsory! Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can affect your judgement, cause a health risk and leave you vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime. Decide before you go out, to only have a certain number of drinks and stick to it, tell your friends your decision. Health guidelines can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/health>.

- Pace your drinks and consider alternating alcoholic drinks with a soft drink or water - you will last the night out and you'll save a bit of cash too.
- Drink spiking is rare (the amount of alcohol consumed is more often the problem.) Do not leave your drink unattended or become distracted at the bar. Always watch your drink being poured – if someone offers to buy you a drink, go to the bar with them. If you start to feel unwell, seek assistance from venue staff. The safety initiative 'Ask for Angela' is being rolled out to bars, clubs and other licensed businesses across the country. People who feel unsafe, vulnerable or threatened can discreetly seek help by approaching venue staff and asking them for 'Angela'. This code-phrase will indicate to staff that they require help with their situation and a trained member of staff will then look to support and assist them. This might be through reuniting them with a friend, seeing them into a taxi, or by calling venue security and/or the police.
- Remember that drink lowers inhibitions and makes you more vulnerable to theft or assault. If something happens to you, report it to the police.
- Your behaviour may come at a cost – police officers take a zero-tolerance attitude to drunken criminal behaviour. Penalty notices for disorder cost £80 - a fairly hefty fine for a student pocket – and a criminal record is not the kind of result you want to leave university with.

“Recreational” Drugs

You might think “recreational” drug taking won't hurt – but you can become dependent on any drug. Heavy cannabis smokers often think they have to get stoned to cope. Take stimulants like cocaine and crack, and the mind gets hooked because the hit is intense. Physically addictive drugs like heroin change body chemistry – the more you take, the more you need.

Illegal drugs are just that—illegal and using them, even a Class C drug like cannabis, can get you expelled from university, and give you a criminal record, leading to difficulties travelling abroad and/or

getting a job. Supplying cannabis (even passing someone a joint) is an offence with a maximum of 14 years in prison!

- Drug users may also attract the attention of other drug users which can lead to violent thefts, burglaries and serious assaults.

Consideration for the community

- We all want to get along with our neighbours, so it's really important that you keep in mind that there are people living around you that might not be students (and that their partying days might be behind them!).
- The police work in partnership with the universities and there can be exchanges of information, which on occasions can relate to misconduct of students. The vast majority of students don't get in trouble with us but please be aware that students will be treated exactly the same as any other member of the public if they commit a criminal offence.
- Finally, removal of road signs is a criminal offence under the road traffic act – you might think it is funny, but it can also be considered as theft.

Contacting the Police

Always call 999 if a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed, someone is in immediate danger or harm, property is in danger or being damaged.

For other non-urgent crimes or information you wish to provide to the Police go online to the Police website for your university area **or call 101**. Information can also be passed anonymously via the **CrimeStoppers** website or by calling 0800 555 111.

For more crime prevention advice, details of accredited products and companies, visit:
<https://www.securedbydesign.com>.

Compiled by 42077939 Essex Police 01/25. Sources: Lancashire Constabulary, The Home Office, Secured By Design, and The Complete University Guide Ltd.