

Safeguarding your handbag

Out and about

Walk with confidence, displaying positive body language.

Secure your handbag close to your body, carrying it so that it faces away from passing traffic. This will prevent any cyclist or occupants of any vehicle from being able to snatch your handbag.

If you wrap a handbag strap around your arm or over your shoulder, you could be injured if the handbag is forcibly snatched.

Avoid walking in isolated or unlit areas. Thieves favour locations where they can hide and are unlikely to be seen by others.

Be observant and aware of people who may appear suspicious. Change your route or call for assistance if necessary.

Always keep your bag close. Be wary of any person who may try to distract you. Do not leave your bag unattended in a trolley.

If a handbag is stolen, a thief could obtain an address and keys to your home. Any personal information in the handbag could be used for identity theft. If you can, keep your ATM cards, credit cards and keys separate from your handbag.

Using a vehicle

Always keep your doors locked when travelling.

Avoid leaving items of value inside your vehicle.

If possible, secure property in the boot before arriving at your destination

When driving into a car park avoid parking in isolated or unlit positions. Parking in areas with good visibility and an open plan reduces the opportunity for theft.

Before leaving your vehicle, look around for any person who may be loitering nearby. If you see anyone who looks suspicious, drive away and park in a different location. Report suspicious activity to police.

When walking to and from your vehicle be observant and aware of people who may appear suspicious. Change your route or call for assistance.

If you feel uncomfortable, acknowledge your feelings and act accordingly.

On returning to your vehicle, have your keys in your hand so you are not distracted looking for them once you reach your vehicle.

Holding onto your handbag and not putting it down until you are fully inside and have locked all the doors will reduce the risk of it being stolen.

Your attention could be diverted from your handbag when placing shopping bags in the boot. Secure your handbag safely first before attending to your shopping.

Bars, restaurants, clubs, concerts, sports events, cinemas

Do not leave a handbag unattended, particularly at a crowded venue. If you are going out onto a dance floor or leaving your handbag for any reason, have someone you trust look after it.

If using a public toilet, be careful where you place your handbag. Do not place it down close to the door if there is a gap between the bottom of the door and the ground. It could be snatched away from the outside.

Do not place a handbag under a seat or anywhere out of sight. The bag or its contents could be stolen.

Be cautious of someone you may have just met. Someone could slip drugs into your bag. If you are stopped by police you would be placed in a difficult position.

Bus terminals, railway stations and airports

It pays to be alert in places of public transit. Inattention when you put a handbag down and dealing with tickets or other matters could result in the handbag being stolen, especially in crowded areas.

Hold your handbag or put it directly in front of you if dealing with tickets at a counter.

Hold a handbag in a way that would prevent a pick-pocket from opening a zip or clasp and removing a purse.

Shopping trolleys

The best place for your handbag is on you.

Do not leave your trolley unattended or out of sight when your handbag or purse is in it.

Be mindful of distractions, thieves (working in pairs) may attempt to divert your attention and attempt to steal your handbag or contents.

The workplace

A person may gain unauthorised access to internal areas through insecure rear doors and steal handbags and/or purses from unattended offices or meal rooms.

At work, handbags should be under observation, locked in a safe place, or held in a secure location where unauthorised persons cannot gain access.

In shops or offices, one thief may distract a person whilst an accomplice commits the theft.

Businesses may require regular banking, and guidelines have been produced on safe practices for cash conveyance. Do not use your handbag and consult your local Police for advice if you are asked to do the banking.

At home

Some people leave their homes insecure (doors/windows) when gardening or doing other activities out the back, and thieves can easily walk in and steal handbags and/or contents.

Thieves can get into an insecure bedroom when householders are having a meal or watching television in another part of the house. Thieves target bedrooms for handbags and jewellery.

One or two persons may knock on the front door and make an excuse to gain entry, such as asking to use the telephone. Whilst the householder is distracted, the accomplice will look for a handbag and quickly steal the contents.

Hotel and motel rooms

Leaving a handbag in a locked hotel or motel room does not guarantee property security. Burglars may get in through the windows and there can be a risk of theft by staff in some establishments.

If available, an in-room safe should be used or your valuables should be kept in a safe at reception. Otherwise, carry your valuables with you.

Insecure ground floor windows can pose a security risk. When sleeping at night, keep handbags away from windows and out of reach/sight. At higher levels, access could be gained across balconies. Keep windows secured.

Responding to theft

If you think someone is about to snatch your handbag talk loudly and assertively, using words like "go away", "I'll call the police". Displaying a firm and confident manner in confronting a potential thief may prevent an offence from being committed.

It is a natural reaction to try and protect property, but consider that if your handbag is seized and you put up resistance, you could be assaulted or seriously injured during the struggle.

If your handbag is stolen, yell out loudly, "stop thief" or similar, to attract attention. Activate a personal alarm if you have one.

It is a good idea to carry a mobile phone separate from your handbag. If your handbag is stolen, immediately telephone the Police providing a description of the thief, direction of travel and details of any vehicle used, including the registration number.

If you have ATM or credit cards stolen, notify the bank or credit card provider as soon as possible. Never keep a written record of your PIN numbers with your cards or in your handbag.

If you have left your ATM or credit cards in your handbag, you could receive a telephone call from a person claiming to be from the bank, credit card provider or Police, requesting your PIN number for cancellation or other action to be taken. Under no circumstances will you receive a call from any of these agencies requesting a PIN number. Do not divulge it.

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