



Safe Steps to College Success: 10 Must-Know Tips for Students and Parents

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College is a thrilling chapter for both students and parents that can be filled with both anticipation and anxiety. Amidst the excitement of new beginnings or returning to campus for another year, personal safety should be a constant companion. This guide outlines 10 practical security tips crafted for college-bound individuals. Whether it's maintaining awareness in unfamiliar settings or practicing digital discretion, these insights provide a roadmap to empower you to create a safe and thriving college experience.

1. Embrace Awareness in New Surroundings:

Stay mindful of your surroundings whether on campus or in new locations. Trust your instincts and stay vigilant. You don't have to be anxious but keep your "head on a swivel" and understand what's happening around you. Be mindful of not isolating your senses by fixating on your phone while walking or drowning out all sounds by listening to your headphones. Familiarize yourselves with emergency exits and safe areas to navigate any environment with confidence.

2. Lock Up and Secure Valuables:

Ensure your dorm room or living location is locked when you're away and secure key valuables to protect against unauthorized access and theft. Keep valuable items out of 'plain view' whether they are in a vehicle or at your living location. Consider using a small personal safe or lockbox to secure highly confidential items (e.g., credit cards, extra cash, passport, etc.). When mobile, keep your backpack or bag zipped up and secure.

3. Master Digital Security:

Create unique and robust passwords for your online accounts, laptops, and mobile devices. Practice caution while sharing personal information online. Maintaining strong online security safeguards your digital identity. Do not share passwords or PIN numbers and do not use the same passwords/PINS for all online accounts.

4. Navigate Social Media Wisely:

Be mindful of what you share on social media platforms. Adjust privacy settings to control who can view your posts. Engage in open conversations about the implications of oversharing and digital footprints. Be mindful of sharing your routines or frequented locations.

5. Create a Network of Emergency Contacts:

Ensure you have a list of trusted emergency contacts including campus security and your parents. Share your contact information and communicate your plans with friends or family for added safety. Set ***In Case of Emergency*** contacts on your mobile device.

6. Trust Your Intuition and Set Boundaries:

Listen to your gut feelings and remove yourself from any situation that feels unsafe. Get away from dangerous situations immediately. Don't look around to "see what's going on" or pull your phone out to video. Prioritize your well-being by setting boundaries and recognizing your personal limits.

7. Embrace Security Workshops and Seminars:

Actively participate in personal security workshops offered by your college. Taking advantage of these resources to learn practical skills will empower you to handle various situations confidently. Learn and identify the security and safety features of the campus and understand the general risks of the area (e.g., tornado risk area, high crime in this area, etc.). Sign up for the campus emergency alerting platform to receive emergency texts and voice calls.

8. Go with others:

Whether walking to class, to work, or going for an evening run, go with others. Find a classmate to walk with or a running or biking partner. Avoid unlit areas or non-trafficked areas, especially at night. There is truth to the old adage, "there is safety in numbers". If you must walk alone, call a friend, and talk with them while you walk to your destination.

9. Take Precautions When Traveling:

Share your travel itineraries and plans with someone you trust. Reinforce the importance of safe travel practices, whether it's heading home for a break or exploring new places. Turn on Location Services on your mobile phone – share with trusted people. Stay in communication.

10. Secure Personal Documents and IDs:

Keep important documents like IDs and passports in a secure location. Safeguard these documents to prevent identity theft and fraud. Select one credit/debit card and only necessary ID cards required for daily use. Leave the rest secured back at the dorm or living location. Do not hang college ID cards, work IDs, or other IDs from your rear-view mirror in your vehicle.

Remember, as you embark on this exciting journey, prioritizing your safety is a key ingredient for a successful college experience. While not all inclusive, by embracing these 10 essential security tips, you're arming yourself with tools to navigate challenges with confidence. Your college adventure is about growth, learning, and creating unforgettable memories, and these safety measures ensure that every step you take is grounded in personal security and your own empowerment.