

HOW TO GUARD AGAINST PURSE SNATCHERS

Purse snatching is a crime of opportunity. You can eliminate that opportunity. Every female carrying a purse is a potential target. Senior citizens are especially susceptible to these criminals since they may not be readily able to defend themselves and pursue their assailants.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Purse snatching is a crime that can be easily prevented when you take away the opportunity from the thief. Most purse snatchers are juveniles under the age of 18, who are waiting for the next opportunity. When you hide the "prize" you protect yourself!

Suppose you are going shopping and waiting for the bus. You are by yourself and your purse is exposed and in open view. You already made two mistakes - you're alone and your purse is vulnerable. Frankly, your personal safety might depend on NOT clinging to that purse, even though it seems a normal way to protect the contents. Grabbing and shoving that may take place can result in being injured. There are ways to protect yourself, however.

SHOP WITH A FRIEND, TRAVEL TOGETHER

The first precaution you can take is to go shopping with a friend - man or women. You're safer when in the company of someone else. If you must be out at night alone, stay in well-lighted areas. Walk close to street lights, staying well away from dark corners, alleys and building entrances.

HOW TO OUTSMART THE PURSE SNATCHER

When carrying a purse, women should have only 3 or 4 one dollar bills placed inside. Credit cards, currency, driver's license, keys and jewelry should be carried in a coat or sweater pocket, or concealed on your person to reduce the opportunity of large losses. If you carry a purse, don't wrap the strap around your shoulder, neck or wrist.

If your purse is grabbed, a strong strap will not yield easily and you may be injured. Some purse snatch victims have been thrown down and have received concussions and broken bones. Never carry anything more valuable than you can afford to lose. Always leave all unnecessary credit cards at home. When you shop and carry a purse, place it in your shopping bag. Never leave your purse on a store counter or in a grocery shopping cart - even for a moment.

DON'T CARRY WEAPONS THAT CAN BE USED AGAINST YOU

You should carry a police whistle, a flashlight, and pepper or mace spray on your key chain where they're readily available. Make a habit to carry your key chain in a pocket - NOT in your purse. And, you should never put your name and address on your house keys or car keys. This is simply a way of telling the thief who you are and where you live.

CALL THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY

Most victims are attacked from behind. They don't get a good look at the attacker. And when a juvenile gets away with it once, he'll try it again. If attacked, call the police immediately. Try to remember all details - help your police help you!

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM PICKPOCKETS

The "art" of picking pockets is among one of the world's oldest professions. Author Charles Dickens' Artful Dodger is probably among the best known pickpockets. However, all are not juveniles - and all are not males!

The skilled pickpocket is not the seedy character you'd expect to find lurking in a dark doorway. He (or she) appears about as average as you and I in appearance and manner. Because they make a study of how to "blend" into the crowd, pickpockets usually remain undetected and can practice their activities with little hindrance.

Pickpockets follow no regular schedule. they operate equally well during daylight hours as well as at night. And if you have been led to believe that picking pockets takes place only in crowds, forget it! The only known fact is that they generally focus on the public during times when they might be carrying more money than usual, such as during pre-holiday spending sprees, store sales, at fairs, carnivals, horse races, gambling casinos, near bank entrances, etc.

While many pickpockets work alone, there are also teams of two or three which sometimes involves a female accomplice. A team with nimble fingers is next to impossible to apprehend. The first team member removes the valuables from the unsuspecting victim's pockets. He then secretly passes them on to the next member who quickly disappears. When a female member is also employed, she generally engages the victim in conversation to distract or delay his attention.

Contrary to what most think, experienced pickpockets do not place their hands all the way into the victims pockets. Rather, the expert criminal reaches into the top of the pocket, takes up a pleat in the lining, then makes a dozen or so more tiny pleats, folding the lining with swift dexterity between his fingers. The shortening pocket lining moves the valuables upward so that they emerge at the mouth of the pocket. The entire act takes place in a second or two.

The best protection for foiling pickpockets is to remove the opportunity of becoming a victim. . .

FOR MEN:

1. The target areas are back trouser pockets, and suitcoat and sports jacket pockets, located inside and out. A pickpocket who values his freedom avoids front trouser pockets, and especially buttoned or zippered pockets.
2. If it is necessary to carry your wallet in an unbuttoned pants, coat or jacket pocket, be sure it contains only what you can afford to lose. Keep large sums of money, credit cards, ID's, etc. in your front pocket or any buttoned or zippered pocket; keys on a chain attached to your clothing.
3. Never "pat" your pocket to see if you wallet is still there. This notifies the criminal of the location of your valuables. 4. Larger size "pocket secretaries" are especially inviting to pickpockets - and relatively easy to steal.

FOR WOMEN

1. Do NOT carry your wallet in your purse. Conceal it in a coat or sweater pocket where it does not show a bulge.
2. Use a purse that is difficult or time consuming to open.
3. Never let your purse lie unattended on a store counter or in a grocery shopping cart.

If you have been victimized by a pickpocket, immediately notify police and give the best description you can.