



Here to help

GENERAL SAFETY STRATEGIES:

- If you need help in a public place, yell **"Fire!"** People respond more quickly to someone yelling "fire" than to any other cry for help.
- Let friends and neighbors who you trust know what is going on in your home. Make a plan with them so that they know what to do if you need help (such as calling the police or banging on your door).
- Make up a signal with a trusted neighbor, like flashing the lights on and off or hanging something out the window, which will alert him/her that you need help.
- Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway (so you can quickly pull out) and having a full tank of gas. Keep your car keys in the same place so you can easily grab them. If you would be leaving by yourself (if you don't have children), you might want to even keep the driver's door unlocked (and the other car doors locked) so that you are prepared to make a quick escape if you have to.
- Sometimes stopping all communication with an abuser can be dangerous. However, if it's safe to do so, stop all contact and communication with the person stalking or harassing you but keep any evidence of the stalking (such as voicemails, texts, emails, etc.) for future court cases or criminal actions. If it's not safe to stop all communication, you may want to limit them as much as possible.
- Carry a cell phone with you. Keep handy or memorize emergency phone numbers that you can use in case of an emergency. If you ever feel you are in immediate danger, call 911. You may also be **eligible for a free phone with free minutes** from a phone company such as the [Assurance Wireless Program](http://www.assurancewireless.com), www.assurancewireless.com
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you may want to reach out for help, even if nothing immediately dangerous is happening.
- Have a safe place in mind to go to in an emergency. You might go to a police station, place of worship, public area, the home of a family member or friend (unknown to the stalker), or a domestic violence shelter. Try to go to a place with a security camera. If someone is following you, it is generally not a good idea to go home.
- Try not to travel alone. If you run or walk for exercise, you might want to get an exercise buddy to go with you. Always try to vary your routes to and from work or school, the grocery store, and any other places regularly visited. By changing your daily routes, it could make it more difficult for someone to learn your routine - however, also be aware that a stalker may put a GPS monitoring device on your car or cell phone. One hint that a GPS device may be installed is if you are varying your routes or going to unexpected places but the stalker still seems to find you.
- Be aware of how much identifying information you are posting on the Internet through social networking sites and online purchases. You may want to select the highest security settings on any social networking accounts and think carefully before giving out your personal information through online purchases. For tips go to www.rainn.org
- Alert the three credit bureaus and ask to have a fraud alert put on your credit reports: **Experian** (888) 397-3742, **Equifax** (888) 766-0008, and **TransUnion** (877) 322-8228. A stalker may try to obtain your Social Security Number and/or mother's maiden name to use this information to obtain your credit information. Putting an alert on your credit could help to prevent this and possible fraudulent activity and/or identity theft. For more information on fraud alerts, you can go to WomensLaw.org's [Financial Abuse](http://WomensLaw.org) page.

Information adapted, in part, from SafeHorizon.org and, in part, from PrivacyRights.org.



SAFETY AT HOME:

- ❖ Alert your friends, neighbors, and building personnel (if you live in an apartment or work in an office building) about your situation. Give them as much information as you can about the stalker, including a photograph of him/her, and a description of any vehicles s/he may drive. Ask them to notify you or call the police if they see the stalker at your house.
- ❖ Keep your address confidential whenever possible. If the stalker does not know your current address, you may want to register for your state's [address confidentiality program](#), which will allow you to use an alternate address for public records (such as the DMV, Board of Elections, etc.). When giving a mailing address for bills, magazines, and shipments, consider using a post office box or an address unknown to the stalker (such as a relative of yours). Not using your actual address whenever possible could make it harder for a potential stalker to find you on the Internet. You may even want to get the post office box at least two zip codes away from your home and use it on all correspondence and even your checks.
- ❖ Tell friends and neighbors not to give your address or phone number to anyone. Explain that they should not even give information to someone posing as a delivery person or mail carrier even if this person says s/he has a package for you – this could be the stalker.
- ❖ If you live in an apartment, don't put your name on the list of tenants on the front of your apartment building. Use a variation of your name that only your friends and family would recognize.
- ❖ Identify escape routes out of your house. Plan different routes in case the stalker is in front of your home, in the backyard, or if s/he enters the home.
- ❖ Pack a bag with important items you'd need if you had to leave quickly, such as a reserve set of credit cards, identification, money, medication, important papers, keys, and other valuables. Put the bag in a safe place, or give it to a friend or relative you trust. Consider, too, putting together a separate bag that includes the [stalking log](#), a camera, information about the offender, etc., that you can easily grab if you have to leave the house in a hurry.
- ❖ Install solid core doors with dead bolts at your house or apartment (solid core doors are sturdier than hollow doors). If all of your sets of keys cannot be accounted for, you may want to change the locks (and secure the spare keys) in case the stalker managed to get a set of your keys. If you are being stalked by a person who lives with you, [check with a lawyer](#) before changing your locks. Fix any broken windows or doors and consider getting an alarm system put in that will signal the police if the alarm is triggered. **Note:** If you rent your apartment/house, you may have to get the landlord's approval before changing the locks, putting in an alarm, etc.
- ❖ Get a new, unlisted phone number and/or block your phone number. If you are getting unwanted phone calls, you may want to change your phone number and keep it unlisted. For additional safety, you may also want to ask the phone company to block your number so it won't show up on calls you make. Please be aware that blocking is not 100% effective and programming glitches can sometimes mistakenly reveal blocked numbers.
- ❖ Even if there is a no contact order in place, consider getting a Personal Protection Order (PPO) from the County Clerks Office. The local shelter can assist with getting one if you need assistance.