

## **Advice from the Police on How to Have a Crime-Free Christmas.**

The police are working hard over Christmas to keep you and your family safe, but there are steps you can take to help them.

### **When you're out shopping**

- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you, especially in busy shops and crowded streets where thieves and pickpockets may well be operating.
- Keep valuables in inside pockets of clothing or bags. Keep a close watch on them, and try not to keep them all in one place.
- Only carry the cash and cards that you need. Always shield the PIN pad when entering your PIN.
- Be careful where you park your car, especially if you will be returning to it after dark. If parking in a multi-storey car park, choose a well-lit space as close to the exit as possible and away from pillars. Reverse into position. Visit [www.parkmark.co.uk](http://www.parkmark.co.uk) for details of approved car parks.
- Avoid going back to your car to leave your shopping part-way through your trip. If you have to keep presents in the car, make sure they are out of view in the boot, the car is locked, and keep the receipts with you.
- Deter pickpockets and muggers. Don't overburden yourself with bags/packages. Be extra careful with purses and wallets. Always carry a purse close to your body and not dangling by the straps. Put a wallet in an inside coat or front trouser pocket, likewise with your phone and keys.
- Try and avoid taking young children into busy shopping areas. If it is unavoidable make sure they know what to do if they lose you e.g. tell the nearest counter assistant that they are lost and never leave a shop without you. Agree a meeting point with older children, in case you get separated.
- Never leave your bag unattended on your trolley whilst shopping and don't leave it in your vehicle when returning your trolley.
- Don't get loaded down with too many bags. Try to keep one hand free.
- Keep car doors locked whilst driving in built-up areas, especially if you've got bags or presents in the car.

### **At cash machines**

- If you see anything suspicious alert the bank or call the police on **101**.
- Shield the keypad when typing in your PIN at a cash machine or in a shop.
- Only withdraw as much as you need and avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Put your money and cards away (not in your back pocket) safely before leaving the machine. Ideally pay with a debit/credit card wherever possible.

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### **When you're out for the evening**

- Watch your drinks and food to ensure that nothing is added to them. Never leave your drink unattended, even if you are going to dance or to the toilet. If your drink has been left unattended, don't drink any more of it. If something tastes or looks odd, don't eat/drink any more of it. Be aware, though, that some drugs are colourless and tasteless.
- If someone you don't know or trust offers to buy you a drink, either decline or accompany them to the bar and watch that nothing is added.

- Know your own limit.
- If you meet someone new at a party, avoid going home with them or inviting them back to your home/accepting a lift from them. It's safer to arrange a second date in a public place to get to know the person better. If you do find yourself alone with someone you don't know well, make sure that someone knows where you are and who you're with.
- Pay attention to your instincts. If you feel uneasy about someone, there may be a reason.
- Make sure someone knows where you are going and when you'll be home.
- Avoid walking home alone and never with someone you don't know well.
- Drink responsibly, arrange for a member of your group to be a designated driver.
- Check your taxi driver's ID and never get into an unlicensed taxi.
- The ideal plan is to book your cab or taxi in advance or call a licensed cab company from the party and arrange for them to pick you up right outside the venue.
- Never accept a lift from a minicab touting for trade on the street. They are illegal and can be very dangerous.
- Always sit in the back of a cab/taxi and if you get chatting to the driver, do not give away personal details. If you feel uneasy with the driver, ask him to stop at a busy familiar place and get out.
- If using public transport, have your ticket, pass or change ready in your hand so that your wallet or purse is out of sight.
- Always wait for the bus or train in a well-lit place near other people if possible and try and arrange for someone to meet you at the bus stop or station. If a bus is empty, or it is after dark, you may feel safer on the lower deck as near as possible to the driver. On trains, avoid empty compartments. If you feel threatened on any public transport press the alarm or attract the attention of your fellow passengers or the driver or guard.
- Take note of where the emergency alarms are and try to sit near them.

### **At home**

- Don't leave presents under your Christmas tree if they are visible from windows or doors.
- Never keep large amounts of cash at home.
- Make sure you keep your doors and windows locked at all times.
- Keys should always be kept out of sight and not left in doors or in view of windows.
- Make your house look occupied, use a timer switch to operate lamps as it starts to get dark, leave a radio on.
- Don't open the door to anybody you don't recognise. Not sure? Don't open the door!

### **After you have opened your Christmas gifts**

Burglars and robbers know that many households have new and often expensive, items in their homes following the December holidays especially items such as new tech such as tablets or laptops, phones, music systems, televisions, cameras and other electronic equipment. In many cases, residents make it easy for burglars to figure out which homes to target by putting boxes that identify their new gifts in plain view with their other rubbish.

Avoid becoming an easy target for post-holiday burglars/robbers by not leaving boxes for new electronics and other items outside your wheelie bin.

- Break down any boxes you are throwing out and put them in rubbish bags and place them inside the wheelie bin.
- With computer equipment, you might consider keeping the boxes for safe storage, shipping or moving in the future. Would they be useful as storage boxes?
- Think about keeping broken-down boxes inside in a garage or loft.