

5 Steps to Take If You Think You're Being Followed

Being followed can be a frightening experience, but knowing how to respond can help keep you safe. This guide provides practical steps to take if you suspect someone is following you.

1. Assess the Situation

Before taking action, it's important to determine if you're actually being followed:

- **Trust your instincts:** Our intuition often detects danger before we consciously recognize it. If something feels wrong, take it seriously.
- **Perform a simple test:** Change your walking pace, make several turns, or cross the street. Someone who is following you will typically mirror these movements.
- **Stay calm and observant:** Notice details about the person (height, clothing, distinctive features) without making it obvious you're looking at them.
- **Avoid jumping to conclusions:** Sometimes people may be heading in the same direction by coincidence. Look for multiple indicators before assuming you're being followed.

2. Change Your Routine

Changing your behavior can help confirm if you're being followed and potentially shake off a follower:

- **Make unexpected turns:** Take four right turns in a row, which creates a complete circle and makes it obvious if someone is following your exact path.
- **Switch transportation modes:** If possible, get into a taxi, use public transportation, or enter a ride-share vehicle.
- **Reverse direction:** Suddenly (but safely) turn around and walk in the opposite direction, forcing a potential follower to either reveal themselves or abandon their pursuit.
- **Vary your speed:** Alternate between walking quickly and slowing down to see if the person adjusts their pace to match yours.

3. Seek a Safe Location

Moving to a secure environment is crucial if you believe you're being followed:

- **Go to populated areas:** Head toward crowded places with plenty of witnesses, such as shopping malls, grocery stores, or busy restaurants.
- **Enter establishments with security:** Banks, hotels, police stations, fire stations, and government buildings typically have security staff and cameras.
- **Find authority figures:** Approach uniformed personnel like security guards, store managers, or transit employees and explain your situation.
- **Avoid secluded areas:** Stay away from parking garages, alleys, parks after dark, or any isolated location where help would be difficult to find.

4. Alert Others

Connecting with others can provide immediate assistance and create a safety network:

- **Call a trusted contact:** Phone a friend or family member and stay on the line while explaining your situation and location.
- **Use emergency features on your phone:** Many smartphones have emergency SOS features that can quickly alert authorities or emergency contacts.
- **Contact authorities if necessary:** Don't hesitate to call emergency services (911 in the US) if you feel you're in danger.
- **Be direct with bystanders:** If needed, clearly tell someone nearby, "I'm being followed, please help me" rather than hinting at the problem.

5. Document the Incident

Whether the situation resolves safely or escalates, documentation is important:

- **Record essential details:** As soon as it's safe, write down the time, location, and description of the person following you.
- **Take photos or video only if safe:** Never put yourself at risk to gather evidence, but if you can safely document the situation, it may be helpful later.
- **Report the incident:** File a police report even if emergency services weren't called during the incident.
- **Inform property management:** If the incident occurred in an apartment complex, workplace, campus, or other managed property, notify security or management.

Additional Safety Tips

- **Prepare in advance:** Have emergency contacts easily accessible in your phone.
- **Consider personal safety tools:** Carry legal personal safety items such as a whistle, flashlight, or personal alarm.
- **Be careful about sharing routines:** Limit posting your regular locations or schedules on social media.
- **Trust yourself:** If a situation feels wrong, prioritize your safety over concerns about appearing rude or paranoid.

Remember: Your safety is the priority. These steps are meant to help you exit a potentially dangerous situation, not to confront or engage with someone who may be following you.