

Drive Through Auto Robberies Or Carjackings

When deciding on a fast food restaurant late at night or early morning, look for establishments that are busy. If possible, purchase your food inside rather than use the drive up window. Choose one with a security agent present.

Be alert. Use your self-defense tactics to protect yourself in and around your car. Have your keys out and ready to open the door. Visually scan the area around your car before approaching it. Pay attention to road conditions and stay alert as you drive. While waiting for your food, be alert of your surroundings and use your mirrors. Don't be afraid to drive off if you feel uncomfortable of your surroundings.

Lockup. Whenever you are in your car, keep your car doors locked and windows rolled up. This will help prevent an attacker from reaching into your car, opening the door and grabbing you.

Be careful where you park. If you stop at a pay phone or gas station, park in a well-lit area where an attendant or another driver can see you. If you park on the street, look around before you pull into your spot. Check to see if anyone suspicious is hanging around or if people are sitting in parked cars nearby. You can always drive around the block or find another parking space if you sense that something is not right.

Check inside and around your car. Before you get into your car, always glance into the back seat and down at the floors to see if someone is hiding there. If you often drive at night, keep a flashlight handy — perhaps on a key chain or in a coat pocket — to shine on your car before you get in. Also, glance underneath your car; carjackers have been known to hide there. Some newer cars are equipped with a remote sensor that unlocks doors and turns on lights in the car while you are still ten feet away from it. This device will help you spot an unwanted guest in or near your car.

Don't fall for a "bump-and-run." Some carjackers use the tactic of hitting a car from behind at a relatively slow speed. When the driver of the front car gets out to check the damage, the robbers steal the car.

The best response to this situation will depend both on the circumstances and your own intuition. If you are in bumper-to-bumper traffic in broad daylight, and someone hits your car, you might decide it is safe to get out of your car because a robber wouldn't be able to go anywhere even if he tried. But if you are alone and it's late at night, you might stick your arm out the window and point to a nearby gas station, police station or some other well-lit public place and signal for the other driver to follow you there. When you get to a safer place, you can then exchange phone numbers for insurance purposes. Some drivers roll down their window an inch and wait for the driver who caused the accident to approach. By exchanging information through the crack in the window, you remain somewhat protected.

Although you're not supposed to leave the scene of an accident, if you feel you are in danger, keep driving. If circumstances or your intuition suggest that you are in danger, drive to the nearest police or highway patrol station, or to a safe public phone so you can

call police. Better to pay for repairing your back bumper than to lose your life to a carjacker. Some car robbers swoop in front of a person's moving car and force them to slam on the brakes, causing a minor accident. Again, use your common sense and judgment and the self-protective tactics mentioned for the bump-and-run tactic mentioned above. Recognizing the danger of carjackings, some states are more lenient on people who move their cars after a rear-ender. Check with your local police department or auto club for updated information on legislation in your state.