

## Defending Yourself Against Carjacking

**A** sad fact of modern life is that carjackings are becoming increasingly common in both large and small cities. While some people think that only expensive cars are carjacked, the facts show that carjackers are also interested in other cars for their parts, and some carjackers simply want any available car. Carjacking is not limited to "certain neighborhoods." It can happen anywhere, at any time.

### How They Operate

Carjackers may approach with a weapon while you are stopped at an intersection and take the car by force. Or they may stage a "bump and run," a minor rear-end accident. When you get out to inspect the damage, you are robbed by one accomplice while the other drives off in your car.

### Stay Alert

The key to avoiding crime is to be aware of your surroundings. Know the route you must travel and areas where you must stop. You don't want to get lost in an unfamiliar neighborhood. Be on the lookout for suspicious people near intersections and be prepared to change your route to avoid them if you can do so without getting lost.

To protect yourself:

- Keep your car well maintained and your gas tank full.
- Drive with your windows rolled up and your doors locked.

- Position yourself in traffic so you are not pinned in.
- Try to stay in the middle lane in areas where you don't feel safe.
- If you're approached while at an intersection, sound your horn.
- Whenever possible, park in well-lighted, highly visible areas. Park with the front end pointed out so you can drive away easily.
- Keep your valuables out of sight.
- Stop only in places that are well lit and well traveled.



- In case of danger, stay in your car with the doors locked.
- Don't drive late at night or other times when the streets are deserted. If you must drive at these times, try to avoid routes that include stoplights. Carry a cell phone with a charged battery.
- If you are involved in a minor accident and don't feel safe leaving your car, drive to the nearest safe place, such as a police station or hospital. The same goes for a flat tire. A damaged rim is less costly than being carjacked.

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### Don't Risk Your Life

All these tips are to help you avoid meeting up with a carjacker. But if an armed person approaches you and demands your car, purse, wallet or other valuables, don't resist. Better to lose your property than your life. Notice as much as you can about the thief and report the incident to the police immediately.

There is no way to guarantee you won't be a victim of a crime. But being aware and knowing how to respond in a dangerous situation will give you the greatest possible control over your own safety.