



Assault is probably the greatest crime-related concern we deal with on a college campus. This article will explore various **preventative** measures a person can take to reduce the odds of being assaulted, and will also describe the options a person has to choose from if confronted by an attacker.

There are numerous crime prevention measures a person can take to reduce the odds of being assaulted, but perhaps nothing is more effective than walking with a companion. Studies show that the odds of two people being attacked when walking together is 80% less than if the same two people were walking alone.

If you do find yourself walking alone, keep a few common sense tips in mind. Try to look confident and make eye contact with the people you pass. Make sure you know where you're going before you leave, and follow the most direct - and best lit - path to your destination. To keep your hands free, and appear less vulnerable, avoid fumbling with cumbersome items like maps or books, instead carrying them in a more easily managed package such as a "fanny pack" or back pack. Be alert to your surroundings and avoid letting people take you by surprise. If you think you observe someone following you, proceed to the nearest populated area or pay phone and call the police immediately.

If you are confronted, or worse attacked, try to remain calm, evaluate the situation, and plan a strategy for *survival*. This may mean complying with an assailant, especially if a weapon is involved, but remember it's better to be a rape survivor than a homicide victim. Other options you might consider include talking with the assailant, running away, or fighting back. It is impossible to say which of these will work best in every situation because each assailant is different. Fighting back, for example, might deter one type of assailant while aggravating another to a higher level of violence. Try the strategy you think is most likely to work, but remain ready to change gears quickly if it becomes obvious things are deteriorating. If you choose to fight back, be loud, aggressive, and strike vulnerable areas like the windpipe, groin, and eyes. If you manage to escape, be sure to run **toward** safety and not just away from danger.

Personal weapons are a big business, and we are frequently asked for recommendations; however, we do not suggest carrying any weapon that can be used against an attacker, because it can also be used against **you** if the assailant gains control of it. There are other issues to consider with weapons, too. Mace, for example, expires (something few people check), and not everyone is affected by it anyway. In addition, it can blow back in a victim's face, giving the assailant an added advantage. In general, weapons tend to breed a false sense of security, sometimes leading people to do things that may not be prudent. It is better to avoid a potentially dangerous situation than rely on a weapon to escape from it.

Students on campus can obtain an escort during the hours of darkness by calling the Nighttime Door to Door service (NDD) at 529-2277. In addition, the University Police offers seminars on crime prevention and personal safety, as well as Rape Aggression Defense (RAD) training for women. Anyone interested in obtaining further information about either of these programs should e-mail us using the button at the left.