

# The Essential Guide To Self-Defense For Women

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There's no shortage of self-defense blogs and websites out there. The problem is that there's also no shortage of hype. And, that hype could get you hurt, or killed. You want to know what works and, at the same time, what will improve your life – not degrade it. This guide will walk you through simple and advanced self-defense strategies for women, and how to avoid conflict in the first place.

## Why It Matters

According to the Department of Justice, females aged 12 and older are more likely than males aged 12 and older to be victims of intimate partner violence. This type of violence is usually rape or sexual assault, but may also be assault and other violent crimes.

In 2007, the DOJ's study showed that intimate partners were responsible for 14 percent of all homicides in the U.S.

Females are also more likely than males, to be killed by people they know. In fact, in 64% of female homicide cases, the suspect was a [family member or intimate partner](#).

And, even though incidents of reported rape fell 70 percent between 1993 and 2008, one in five female rape or sexual assaults are still committed by an intimate partner.

The threat of violence is still very real.

## When To Defend Yourself

There are many situations when you might find yourself in trouble. A few include:

- Walking home at night after bar-hopping.
- A first date with a stranger.
- A first date with someone you know.
- Traveling in an unfamiliar area.
- Walking through a bad part of town.

While a lot of guys are quick to throw a punch, many women aren't as quick to get physical and defend themselves. This is actually to your benefit.

Most fights can be avoided – especially if they are between you and someone else you know. Even the risk of random acts of violence can be decreased if you take a few precautions.

According to some experts, criminals who are strangers to you only attack when you are, or appear to be, helpless. An easy victim is an easy victim. If you look like you would be difficult to overcome, it won't be worth the effort.

Most bad guys don't want to risk dying over a mugging, but they may not be above punching and kicking you to the ground if they think they can get away with it.

In sexual assault cases, you're the perfect victim if you look like you'd be easy to overpower (i.e. you look weak, you're not paying attention to your surroundings, you look like you lack confidence, etc.).

Intent is a big thing. When a person crosses the line between nonviolent and violent, there's a psychological change that happens – a change in mental state. The person decides to commit a crime.

Of course, you can't read people's minds, but you can read their body language. A change in stance or positioning, a change in tone of voice, a change in breathing patterns or normal behavior are all clues that violence is about to start.

Attackers often go through this change in order to "ready" themselves for physical violence. If you're aware of it, you can prepare (i.e. get out of the way or run).

Criminals also often subtly "interview" you to assess whether you are a bigger threat than they are. In most situations, women are not perceived as much of a threat, so they are generally easier targets than men, all other things being equal.

When a criminal looks you over, they will do one of a few things:

- They will do a "regular" interview. They may approach you to ask you innocuous questions or ask for help or directions. This is a distraction. They are looking to see if you notice them moving into position. They may even make a few feints to see if you notice what they're doing with their hands. If they confirm that you're unaware, they'll attack. Rapists do this often, because it's an easy way to gauge whether you'll fight back before they knock you down. To spot this, and foil the attack, you need to be aware of any stranger who approaches you on the street (or anywhere) to ask you "innocent" questions.
- The "hot" interview is one where you are barraged by an emotional "flurry of blows." Someone may come at you out of nowhere, cursing and screaming at you, or acting out emotionally in unexpected ways. To foil the attacker's plan, be prepared to get out of the situation as fast as possible. Ideally, you can run away to safety. But, your attacker might chase you. You need to instantly show you're ready to defend yourself. It has to happen fast – yell, scream, and get ready to defend your life. This will usually cause the would-be attacker to back down and run away.
- Another tactic used to bring down your defenses, and test you, is an "escalating" interview. This is where the attacker starts out subtle and then increases rudeness. If you don't put him down immediately, it will escalate into violence. Many sexual assaults start with an "escalating" interview. To foil the bad guy's plans, the simplest solution is to end the conversation and get out of there. Walking, or running, away gets you out of the situation. If you can't do that, you must stop the escalation with an opposing emotional "force" (talking more loudly, asserting yourself, etc.). If that doesn't work, and the other person initiates an attack, you must defend yourself. That doesn't mean you need to physically hit someone who approaches you on the street for

directions. It means that, as soon as things escalate, you increase your confidence level, project your voice, and put the person in their place with a negative message. Then, immediately get yourself out of that situation.

- A hidden or silent interview is when the attacker stays hidden or out of view until the attack. He may attack you when you show fear. It's difficult to fend this off unless you're willing to physically fight for your life. But, you can avoid situations where this becomes an opportunity.
- A prolonged interview is one that takes minutes, days, or even weeks. You may be stalked before you're scammed or assaulted. Awareness is one of your best defenses against this.

If a criminal does attack you, you need to know how to counter and defend, and then get away quickly.

## Mental Training

Long before you're attacked, you should know how to defend yourself with some basic common-sense strategies. Fortunately, these moves aren't physical. They're mental.

A few of the best websites that handle the mental preparation of self-defense include:

- [The No Nonsense Self Defense Site](#)
- [Making Sense Of Self-Defense](#)
- [Less Than Lethal Self-Defense Blog](#)

## Physical Training

Physical training will help you become stronger, which will help you look strong, which helps you avoid looking like an opportunity for an attacker. It can also prepare you to "take a punch" if you absolutely have to.

There are two aspects of physical training:

- Strength training and;
- Endurance training

If you've never lifted weights before, one of the best resources on the web for safe and effective strength training is:

[Starting Strength](#)

The program focuses on building strength, balance, and power, not bulkiness. This strength can then be used in any self-defense training you choose to take.

Endurance should also be high on your list of preparatory training because the best way to survive violence is to avoid it. For that, you will want to learn how to run. Running is one of the most important defenses you have against an attacker. If you can outrun the bad guy, no harm will come to you.

One of the best guides on how to run, and train for running, is Dr. Kelly Starrett's book and course material:

### [Ready To Run](#)

Once you've physically and mentally prepared yourself, it's time to train.

## Types of Self-Defense Training

Many women benefit from self-defense systems and martial arts that focus on leverage over brute strength. This is because, all other things being equal, women have weaker upper bodies than men.

Effective martial arts tend to employ high leverage, or use hard parts of the body for striking, like:

- Jiu Jitsu
- Aikijujutsu
- Brazilian Jiu Jitsu
- Wing Chun
- Muay Thai and Muay Boran
- Boxing

[Jiu Jitsu](#) is the original Japanese martial art, used by samurais. It favors joint locking and throwing, with the goal of immobilizing the attacker.

[Aikijujutsu](#) is an ancient Japanese martial art that combines striking, joint locks, joint lock throwing, throwing, and grappling into one martial art. It's goal is early neutralization of an attack and is based on basic principle of Jiu Jitsu.

[Brazilian Jiu Jitsu](#) was made famous by Carlos and Hélio Gracie, and focuses on ground fighting and grappling.

[Wing Chun](#) was allegedly developed by a nun named Ng Mui, and is the most direct Chinese fighting system, focusing on fast strikes and "chain punching."

[Muay Thai](#) and Muay Boran are forms of Thai boxing, which utilize hard points of the body to strike and do damage, including knees, elbows, and shins.

[Western Boxing](#) is most useful for its quick footwork, and can be a valuable addition to any martial art or self-defense system.

# Weapons That Work (and are legal)

Almost anything can be used as a weapon, including:

- Keys
- Sticks
- Dirt or sand
- Rocks

Most of these weapons also have the benefit of ubiquity – they are found nearly everywhere.

Legal (formal) weapons are typically restricted to knives and firearms, depending on the state you happen to live in.

A small concealed knife can give you an edge in a self-defense situation, allowing you to stab your attacker so you can run. Remember, running (and getting away from the situation) is ultimately your best chance at survival and should be attempted first.

Firearms are also effective for putting down an attacker if your life is in imminent danger. Glocks are common firearms that women carry. Specific models and types include:

- The [Glock 43 Tiffany Blue](#)
- Various Beretta Models
- Sig Sauer Models
- Springfield XDM Models (compact and subcompact)

[Tiffany Blue Glocks](#) are especially popular.

A firearm, and specifically a pistol, is often the most effective self-defense weapon when you have advanced warning of an attacker because it's capable of deadly force and it requires little strength to use.

It does require high technical skill to operate, however, and you must spend hours and years training with targets, both stationary and moving to become proficient.

**A few videos that teach you basic handgun etiquette:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COvFyw-6Fqs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bLUB2MMMeI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvEJ4kTwe-0>

**A few videos that teach you how to shoot:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPo\\_6O4eUAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPo_6O4eUAo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZlfNt8ee7Y>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bLUB2MMMeI>

# How To Avoid Conflict In The First Place

Avoiding conflict is preferable to engaging an attacker. Even with proper training in a martial art, or with weapon in hand, when you engage with a potential attacker your risk of injury increases.

Don't develop a pattern in your daily activities. We're creatures of habit, but those habits can make us targets. If you suspect that you might be a victim of stalking, start changing your routine. Take different routes to work or home. Do not go to the same restaurants. Change the order of your weekend chores. Don't become predictable.

- Know your surroundings. This is especially necessary if you're in an unfamiliar area. Don't keep your nose buried in your cell phone. Keep your eyes up, and know what's going on around you. Most of the time, you can avoid trouble by noticing things that others don't. Stalkers, for example, may monitor you from a distance. If you spot them as they are watching you, you will be better prepared to react.
- Always carry your keys in your hands when approaching your car. Don't fumble with your purse at the door. This makes you an easy target because you're not paying attention to what (or who) is around you. Have your keys out and ready to go. As soon as you're safely in your vehicle, lock the doors.
- Always carry a powerful flashlight. A small, powerful, flashlight can save you a lot of trouble by giving you light down a dark street or through a dark neighborhood. It can light a dimly-lit parking lot or garage. It gives you advance warning of danger and can be used to blind an attacker so that you can escape.

## Using A "Buddy System"

You may not be able to go with someone everywhere you go, but you can make your presence known to family and friends. Modern GPS allows you to take advantage of "anti-rape" apps which can track your whereabouts and notify others if something happens to you.

- OnWatch (Android, iOS)
- YWCA Safety Alert (Android, iOS)
- bSafe (Android, iOS)
- Guardly (Android, iOS)

These apps are probably the best way to alert your friends and family that something has happened to you. If you're expected to be at a certain place by a certain time, you won't be able to hide with these installed.

Most of these types of applications are free, which means they should be on every mobile device you use and carry with you.

## Additional Ref:

<http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=4594>

<http://www.justice.gov/opa/blog/10-facts-female-victims-violence>