



HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY

The holiday season is always a special time of year. Unfortunately, thieves often use the holiday season to find easy targets. As you shop, please be mindful of the following safety tips to help keep your holiday shopping safe and joyous!

Did you know?

- In 2019 Black Friday saw 93.2 million buyers shopping online.
- Millennials were the biggest spenders on Black Friday 2019.
- Black Friday online shopping sales hit \$7.4 billion in 2019 which is an all-time high.
- In person shopper visits on Black Friday 2019 fell down by 6.2% from 2018.
- 56% of online shoppers use their mobile device for holiday shopping.
- Identity theft and robberies are two of the most common crimes during the holiday season.
- Identity theft accounted for 20.33% of cases and was the most-common type of fraud in 2019.
- 51% of online retailers do not attempt to lock a consumer out after 10 incorrect login attempts; therefore, fraudsters have an unlimited number of attempts into your online profile/account.

WHILE SHOPPING

Be aware of your surroundings. Look for suspicious persons, etc. when you are in any area.

- Shop during the day when possible, avoid shopping alone after dark.
- Keep your purse and bags closed at all times.
- Credit cards are the safest form of payment.
- Do not buy more than you can comfortably carry or ask a store employee to assist you to your vehicle.
- Consolidate your purchase into larger bags.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry or handbags.
- Jugging, or stalking of potential victims as a prelude to robbery is on the rise:
 - If you must use an ATM, choose one located inside a bank or mall rather than a stand-alone machine, and make sure it is in a well-lit area.
 - Pay attention to who and what is around you when leaving an ATM or bank.
 - Only withdraw the amount of cash needed and never leave cash in your car.
 - If you feel like someone is following you, contact security or law enforcement right away. If you are driving, do not go straight home.

IN THE PARKING LOT

Remember where you parked your car. While this may sound elementary, many shopping centers are spread out over large areas. Being unable to locate a car can cause you undue confusion and stress that may make you an easy target to a criminal.

- Always park in an open and well-lit area.
- Lock your doors and don't leave valuables in your vehicle—including purchases!
- Be alert and off of your cell phone when in a parking lot.
- Be ready to unlock your car before leaving a store.
- Do not resist if someone tries to take any of your belongings – nothing is worth your life.

SHOPPING WITH KIDS

Make a rule that you must always be able to see them and they must always be able to see you. It may sound simple, but keep reminding them periodically, especially if you think they are getting restless.

- Teach children to ask store personal or security for help if you become separated.
- Children should not be allowed to go to the car or restroom alone.
- Do not leave children unattended in play areas or arcades.
- Ensure that children know their full name and your cell phone number.
- Never leave children alone in the car!

ONLINE SHOPPING

Undoubtably COVID-19 will further influence people to shop online. In an effort to minimize larger crowds typically found on Black Friday many retailers have already begun Black Friday deals online and in stores. No matter how you choose to do your shopping, remaining vigilant and implementing a few simple safety precautions while shopping can mitigate crimes of opportunity.

Before you start your online shopping, remember to STOP. THINK. CONNECT. Make sure security measures are in place, and enjoy the benefits of the internet.

- Shop from a secure network connection such as your home, avoid using public Wi-Fi.
- Ensure your anti-virus software is updated on your home computer and mobile devices.
- Use strong passwords even if online retailers are accepting “weak” ones allowing your information to become susceptible to fraudulent activity.
- Use familiar and safe websites (indicated by a lock symbol or https://).
- Save receipts and review your statements regularly for discrepancies.
- Consider having packages sent to a work address if you will not be home during delivery and utilize online in-store pick up or ship-to-store options.

How to Report a Tip

 Call 713.222.TIPS (8477)

 Use our **Mobile App**
Download app name: Crime Stoppers Houston

 Go to [crime-stoppers.org](https://www.crime-stoppers.org)

Tipsters will remain anonymous and could be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$5,000.