

A Teenager's Guide to Protecting Portable Property



Crime Prevention Tips From

National Crime Prevention Council

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and

Immediately Report a Theft to Authorities

Remember, being robbed or having your property stolen is not your fault. Even if you left your valuables unattended, no one has the right to take your things. If something that belongs to you is stolen, report the theft immediately to school authorities, your parents, and the police. Be sure to note the date, time, and location of the incident. If someone else witnessed the theft, ask for the person's full name and contact information for the report. Prompt reporting is an important factor in recovering stolen items and in catching the thief so he or she does not commit more crimes.

Start a School Watch Program

You may have heard of Neighborhood Watch, where neighbors watch out for each other and report crime in their neighborhoods. A school crime watch works the same way. Students watch out for each other to make the entire school safer and more enjoyable. They learn how to keep from becoming victims. They also learn the best ways to report theft and suspicious activities.

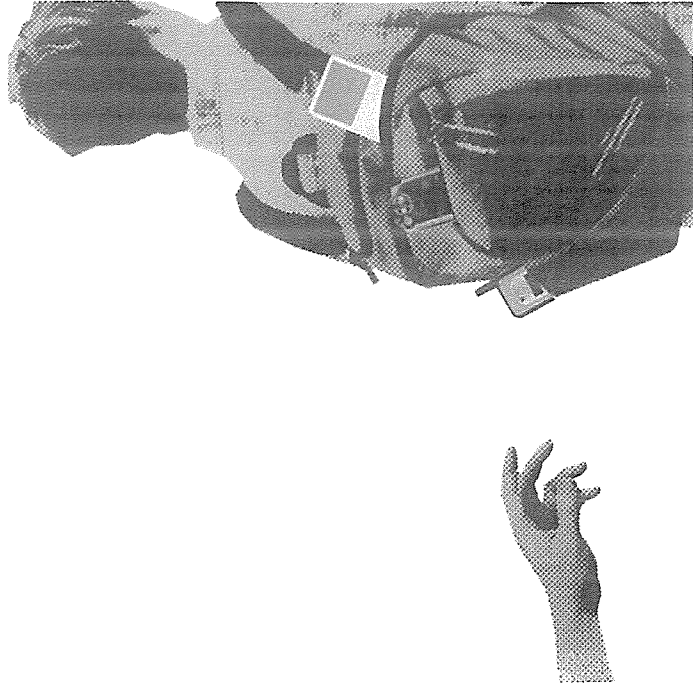
When students in a school start and run a crime watch program, they are saying, "Crime is not tolerated here." Talk to your school principal about starting a program at your school. A national organization called Youth Crime Watch of America can also provide you with information on starting a school crime watch. Visit their website, www.ycwa.org, or call them at 305-670-2409 for more information.

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**NATIONAL CRIME
PREVENTION COUNCIL**

Are you a teen who owns a cell phone, a portable music player, or the latest CDs? How about a calculator, a digital camera, or a popular brand of athletic gear? Do you bring these items with you to school and leave them in your backpack or store them in your locker while you are in class, at lunch, or in the gym?

If your answer to these questions is yes, then answer one more: Do you know how to protect your personal property so that it goes home in your backpack at the end of the day and not in someone else's?

Odds are that you or someone you know has had personal property stolen while at school or a school event. Statistics show that young people ages 12 to 17 are far more likely to be victims of property crimes than adults, and most of the crimes occur on school grounds. The majority of these thefts are never reported to police or school officials.

How To Prevent Theft

It's unfortunate, but some people steal. Yet protecting your portable property doesn't mean you can't have it with you or enjoy it. It does mean taking steps to ensure that this property is carefully watched or secured at all times. Here are some approaches that will help keep you from being a victim of property crime.

Don't Bring Valuables to School

If you don't absolutely need something during the school day, leave it at home. Keep only as much cash in your wallet or purse as you need in one day. Remember, most schools have an "at your own risk" policy when it comes to bringing money and expensive items to school and will take no responsibility for your losses.

Avoid Calling Attention to Your Valuables

Playing cool ring tones on your cell phone might amuse your lunch buddies, but it can also mean unwanted attention from people around you who you don't know. If you listen to your portable music player on your way to and from school, tuck it in a pocket or keep it out of sight. And don't brag about how much your new basketball sneakers cost at the mall.

Never Leave Your Valuables Unattended

Most items are stolen because they are left unattended. If you toss your backpack on a table while you get in the lunch line or leave it on the bench next to your gym locker, either your backpack or an item inside it may be missing when you return. If you must leave your belongings for a few minutes, ask a friend to watch them until you return.

Secure Your Locker at all Times

Many students report that their belongings are stolen from lockers. Lockers can be broken into easily, especially if they are not properly closed. Make sure your locker is shut tightly at the top, in the middle, and at the bottom. Request a different one if it is not working properly. Always keep it locked and do not share your combination with anyone. Gym lockers are the most vulnerable to theft because they are often left unlocked, and changing rooms are usually not monitored by security cameras or guards.

Protect Valuables That You Leave in Your Car

If you drive to school, never leave valuables in plain view inside your car, even if you keep it locked. Put them in the trunk or at least out of sight. Buy radios and CD players that can be removed and locked in the trunk. Remember, school parking lots are often deserted during the school day and car thieves know this.

How To Recover Stolen Items

Although many stolen items are never recovered, there is always a chance that a thief will be apprehended and his or her stash of stolen items will fall into the authorities' hands. If you take certain steps before and after a theft, you just might get a prized item returned to you.

Keep a List of All Your Valuables

One of the best ways you can assist the police in recovering your stolen property is by keeping records. Make a list of all of your valuables. Write down a full description of each item including color, make, model, serial numbers, and any other identifiers. You might want to take a picture of each item to keep with the list. Make several copies of the list and give one to your parents.

Take Part in Operation ID

Operation ID is a nationwide theft prevention program that involves marking property with an identifying number to make it less desirable to thieves, who will have trouble selling it, and to help police locate the owner if the stolen property is recovered. You will need an engraver to mark your personal property. These are often available free of charge from Neighborhood Watch programs and other groups.

Some items can be ordered from the manufacturer already engraved with personal identifying information such as your initials. If allowed by your school, write your name in the front cover of your textbooks. Use indelible ink to write your name on the inside labels of your gym clothing, jackets, and accessories such as hats and gloves. Many items are lost rather than stolen, and having your name on them will bring them safely back to you.