

# Basic Security Awareness

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What follows is simple common sense, but it gives you a system and the system works. It is based on training we used to give to service personnel and their dependants to protect them from attacks by the IRA when I was counterterrorism officer for RAF Germany. We used to ask for feedback and having given the lecture for seven years in Jo'burg, I can put my hand on my heart and tell you that no-one who had attended a lecture had ever been hijacked, and that several people gave us feedback on attempted hijackings that they had prevented/escaped. I'm not saying this to blow my own trumpet; I want to give you confidence in the system.

While the format offered refers specifically to hijacking countermeasures, it can be extended to every aspect of personal security, at home, jogging in the park, a security officer patrolling his premises.

1. First you have to **ACCEPT THAT THE THREAT EXISTS**. Human nature is a funny thing. We don't like living with threats, so, although hijacking is a subject of conversation at a thousand dinner parties every night in Jo'burg, and you read about it in the papers every day, and the TV and radio tell you about it constantly, as soon as we've finished lamenting the problem, we stick it in the recesses of memory; we forget about it. You cannot allow yourself to forget that the hijacker is out there. He hijacks cars for a living, so he simply isn't going to forget about you.
2. Next you have to consciously accept that **YOU ARE A TARGET**. Now this is quite difficult for the average person, because the average person is a nice person and it doesn't figure that someone you've never seen before in your life wants to harm you. The bottom line is simply that you have something he wants. This goes for every crook on earth, bagsnatchers, burglars, hijackers, the whole lot. You have to accept that he does not see the world the way that you do. To him you are simply an anonymous target; a bit like those legs dangling in the ocean in front of a shark. The other problem is that very strong human faith that 'it will never happen to me'. Every single hijack victim is a 'Me'.

Why am I thumping on about this? Well, tomorrow, when you are driving around, make yourself a 'hijacker', looking for a target. He pays specific attention to target indicators; not just the type of cars, but to the behaviour of its driver. I can give you a thousand examples, but the most obvious is

to look at the number of cars that are being driven around Jo'burg with their doors unlocked. Another one is people who dither at stop streets and traffic lights, looking for cigarettes, lipsticks, whatever. They give the hijacker one of his most precious commodities; time.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL: Control your environment by being aware of your immediate and proximate surroundings and being able to react to any apparent potential threat. If the bad guy wants to mug you, kidnap you, pick your pocket, sell your kids some drugs, he has to take control of the environment in which he is to operate. He might do this by stealth or by advertent force and by controlling your environment, you take the initiative away from him.
4. ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS: Think about it like this, if I am aware of my environment I will be able to react to anomalies. Think about bird-watchers. Ever wandered down a path and seen a group of people all clustered around a tree and you ask them what they are looking at and they point out some drab little grey number and give you a name you can't even pronounce. They are aware of their environment and they know what belongs, what is common, so they are alert when something unusual takes place. You should be the same. Picture your road and the passing parade on the road. The 'invisible Bantu' is still alive and well and living in Johannesburg.

Picture the road when you go out in the morning. In my old street for example, a couple of maids used to meet in the morning, shoot the breeze for half an hour or so and then go into their respective houses to work. In the evening at the other end of the street a couple of gardeners used to do the same in the summer. On Wednesdays just around the corner, about fifteen people used to congregate to wait for the 'Chinaman', a Chinese who used to come around collecting bets for 'Fah Fee'. I knew their times and knew that they belonged. Because I knew what belonged, I knew what didn't belong.

5. CONSCIOUS SELF-INTERROGATION: This is self-explanatory. As you drive your car, along the street where you live, on your route to work, wherever; ask yourself, consciously what is going on around you. After a while, your subconscious will take over. After this, once a day, make sure you do it consciously, just to make sure that you are keeping up the habit.
6. THE CLOCK FACE: This works in tandem with the self-interrogation. You might want to create a little aide memoir for yourself here. Draw yourself a clockface on a piece of paper. Make it as big as you like and then draw a birds-eye view of a car inside it. The front of the car should be pointed at twelve o'clock. Stare at the clockface for a while; I want you to imprint it on your memory. It is central to the whole system.

Now picture yourself driving along a road with which you are very familiar, and in your mind, superimpose the clockface around your car. Make your imaginary clockface as large as the area you can consciously interrogate, maybe a radius of fifty metres, but you will get to know your own attention capability.

Now, interrogate yourself about what is going on around you. Do a running commentary. 'I'm driving along Main Street, it is a clear day and there is traffic travelling in both directions. On my right hand side (**THREE O'CLOCK**) there is a narrow verge, with garden walls coming within five metres of the road. On the Left hand (**NINE O'CLOCK**) side the verge is perhaps thirty metres wide, again with garden walls at the edge. In front of me (**TWELVE O'CLOCK**) I see that there is a traffic light which is now green, but it might turn red when I'm in close proximity, so I'm going to slow down, so that if it does go red, I won't be too close. (For the record, if you ever saw a little blue Opel or a white Merc behaving strangely at traffic lights, reversing up, rolling backward downhill, whatever, that was probably me, because unless I had to, I never pulled up next to a red light - That's Horatio Hijacker's 'Killing Ground' and I didn't want to be in it.

I look behind me (**SIX O'CLOCK**) and what do I see? I see (say) a white car, a blue car and a green car. I make a note of these cars and who is in them, because I want to see if anyone is following me. (We'll talk a little more about followers later.) Make sure that your rear view mirrors are properly adjusted. You should be able to see just a sliver of the body of your car, to give you a point of reference. I can't overstress this seemingly minor point.

You should scan through your clockface roughly every three seconds, which is the frequency with which a good driver checks his rear view mirror. No, I promise you, it's perfectly possible.

7. **CORRIDORS AND PATTERNS:** Ever heard the saying that 'we're slaves to habit'? It's absolutely true. We oscillate between known points; home, work, the bank, schools and we go to them at given times and along favourite routes. This plays into the hands of a type of hijacker I used to call a 'loiterer'. He's been tasked to go and find a blue Mercedes E Class, for example. So he's going to go to a part of town where he knows he'll find one; an affluent neighbourhood, one where there are foreign businessmen, the Diplomatic Quarter. He'll go and hang around on a reasonably busy street corner and wait until he sees his target car. If he sees it two days in a row, he'll follow off in its direction of travel (remember he's got a lot riding on a good outcome, so he'll invest a couple of days if he thinks it's worth his while.) Your chances of seeing this guy, however

alert you are, are minimal. So your protection is to identify your corridors and patterns and as far as possible, break them. When you drive home tomorrow, think about alternative routes; I had five different ways of approaching and leaving my home in Jo'burg. What time do you HAVE to be at work; can you allow yourself a twenty minute variable? Do you really HAVE to do your banking at ten o'clock every Saturday? Get the picture?

One last point here. The next time you get into your car, ask yourself what you did as soon as you got in. Eight out of ten people have some small habit, adjusting the rear-view mirror, plugging in the cel phone, whatever. I used to work with a guy who used to light a cigarette as soon as he got into the driving seat, until he got tired of me hitting him! If you are one of those eight, identify that little habit and break it. You are both surrendering environmental control and giving the hijacker the gift of time.

8. Leaving and returning to **KNOWN POINTS** (again, home, work, the bank etc. You know your life better than anybody else - identify those known points and work around them). OK, lets start with leaving home first thing in the morning. It's worth mentioning at this point that you don't have to be in a car to use the clockface. You can use it while out walking, jogging and even at home. It's yours, take it with you everywhere. Right; I'm thinking about the first place outside my home where I could face trouble. Right outside my front door. So before I go out, I take a peek outside to see who's in the neighbourhood. Is it the normal people; those two maids, for example. Or is there some guy skulking near the bushes on the opposite side of the road? He's allowed to be there. After all it's a free country. So I'm just going to keep an eye on him and as I move around I'm going to be aware of his position in my clockface. What am I doing? I'm controlling my environment. He's in my area of control, so if he does anything interesting, I can react.

What's that? You can't see into the street because you've got a two-metre wall around your property? If it were me, I'd take it down and replace it with balustrade fencing with spiky bits on top and designed so that the horizontal bars don't provide footholds. If you don't want to take the fence down (I can relate to privacy), then devise a means so that you can, very discreetly, take a peek over the top before you drive out. I advised one client of mine to put a couple of boxes up against the inside of his wall so that he could jump up and have a look over. Another client had plenty of money, so I told him to rig up cameras, which he did. Neither had been hijacked by the time I left SA.

OK, lets assume you've checked out your surroundings, including your garden. Now lets get out to the car as quickly as possible and get it started. I start the car and I lock myself in before I open the automatic

gate, so that I can skedaddle if I need to. You'll have to assess the traffic pattern where you live, in order to work out the quickest way to get into the flow of traffic and moving. Remember, the hijacker wants you sitting in a stationary vehicle, preferably with the engine running, so get onto that road and moving pronto. In order to make this system work, observe the speed limit, or even go a little slower. That way, you can interrogate your environment effectively. If you are speeding, you will never be able to assimilate all of the information around you. In short, you'll miss things.

Also make sure that you are observing a sensible following distance. Mostly this is to give you time to react, but also, if you are following the vehicle in front too closely, you are devoting valuable concentration to that vehicle and prejudicing your environmental control. In a lot of cities that means that some genius is going to sneak into the space between you and the car in front. It isn't always easy, but you need to keep cool so just count to ten, and drop back.

When you have to stop, at traffic lights or a stop street, leave a half a car length between you and the vehicle in front. You should be able to see the bottom of his back wheels and about a half metre of road. This means that no one will be able to sneak in front of you and it gives you room to manoeuvre if you need to get out of there in a hurry. Position yourself directly behind him, so that you can escape either right or left. You're STOPPED now, SO WATCH YOUR SIX O'CLOCK, but keep your eyes ticking around that clockface.

And as soon as the light goes green, GET GOING. Remember, cars are made to go. They put in brakes as an afterthought.

Another thing about human nature is that we're inclined to relax when we get close to home or anywhere else we associate with comfort. Probably the majority of hijackings take place outside front gates. We need to be very aware of this. When you are approaching home, get that clockface working fulltime. Remember what we said about loiterers.

If you have automatic gates, don't draw up facing them. Find out what the full range of your remote control is, and open the gate from as far away as possible, staying on the road, maintaining your direction of travel and keeping your car in gear to get away quickly if you have to. I like to pull all sorts of tricks, including driving past to see who responded to my gate opening.

Now I'm going to ask you to go and have a look at your garden, driveway and street. I had my gate specifically designed so that if we had to, my wife or I could drive straight through it if we got followed into the drive. We also had a second gate, permanently closed, which we could drive

through if a second car blocked us in our driveway before the primary gate closed. If you have used your clockface properly, you should be able to judge whether or not it is safe once you have driven in.

Train your dogs to come to the car to greet you. Their behaviour will indicate whether everything is OK in the property. Dogs have body language, just like humans, in fact even more perceptible, so invest a bit of time in getting to know just how your dog reacts to, for example, a stranger on the property.

8. **RECOGNISE POTENTIAL HIJACK SITUATIONS:** Really anywhere you are obliged to stop; again, red lights, stop streets etc. But also be wary of deviations, especially in the peri-urban areas, where there is some population, buildings etc. but it's sufficiently dispersed for the bad guys to be able to isolate you - to take control of the environment. Consider alternative routes, rather than follow a dubious deviation. Consider this little scenario. You are driving down a country road and you come across a deviation sign, sending you down a farm road; you drive 100 metres down the road and you find it's blocked with a log. You try to back up and find yourself confronted by a couple of guys with AKs. Fanciful? It actually happened.

So when you plan a trip, always have an alternative route planned. If you come across a deviation in an out of the way place, consciously interrogate yourself about the circumstances. Is the deviation set up properly? Look down the road. Is there any sign of the reason for the deviation? If there is no readily apparent reason to go down that little track, don't go there.

Can you take up your artist's materials once more, and picture a controlled intersection you frequently pass through? Draw it, marking down every physical peculiarity of the place; trees, bushes, culverts, electrical switching station, whatever. Now take your clockface with your car in the centre and superimpose it over the sketch. You might want to use overhead transparencies to do this.

Now, hopefully, we can picture ourselves, sitting in a potential hijack situation and we're going to use a system devised by the Institute for Advanced Motoring called IPDE (Pronounced IP-DEE)

**IDENTIFY** - yes, this is an area where I have to stop, ergo, I identify it as a potential hijack point.

**PREDICT** - Okay, let's see, there's a high wall at my nine o'clock, my twelve o'clock is clear, at three o'clock, there's a culvert where a man could hide and at my six o'clock there's a nineteen seventy Toyota being

driven by an old lady with a blue rinse. The attack will potentially come from three o'clock. (Actually, mostly it comes from about four thirty - behind you and on your right, found it? If you are driving a left-hand drive vehicle, it will be at about seven-thirty.)

**DECIDE** - Right, I'm not going to fixate on three o'clock, I'm just going to make special note of it, I'm still tracking through the clockface; what if he comes from there. Can I get my car up over the pavement and take off front and left? Can I get into reverse, go back fifty metres and do a three point turn? Can I ...? Can I...? See what I mean? In order to do this, you will have to get to know your car well. Remember that as a last resort, your car is a formidable weapon. Not every car will do this, but if you are under threat you can turn left or right and push a person away, provided you know how to do it. Have your handbrake off and your car in gear and running at about fifteen hundred revs and be ready to pop your clutch if you have to. You can do it with some automatics; keep the car in drive with your revs up and your foot on the brake. Its not good for your gearbox but what's more important? To see if your car will do this, take two cardboard apple boxes and place them about forty-five centimetres from your central door column. If you hit the boxes, you'll hit the hijacker.

**EXECUTE** - You must be absolutely determined to execute whatever you have decided to do. If you devote enough mental preparation, if you go through the processes you can do it. When I used to give self-defence classes, I used to get my students to shout in their respective languages, DO IT. Again, I can't overstress this, because all of the preparation in the world will do you no good if you hesitate. Remember, your wellbeing is no concern of the hijacker; so why should you be concerned about him? There is another reason behind determination to execute - that is overcoming the instant of "fight or flight". You've already decided what you are going to do, so you cut the instant in half before you nail him or make your escape. You have cut the instant in half because you have pre-planned your actions.

Now there's an interesting phenomenon at work here. It's called the three-second rule. We found that in the average road in developed countries, (and this would include large cities in the developing world - watch CNN footage from Karachi or Manila for example - perhaps not Mogadishu) from the time of breaking cover to the time of placing a target under immediate threat, the hijacker, terrorist, kidnapper almost always took three seconds.

Going on from this, suppose as I'm driving along, I notice that that green car behind me has been there a little too long for my liking, through a couple of changes of direction. If you are in an area you know, take a turn and see if the vehicle follows. If it does, don't mess about, head

straight for a safe haven. This is not your home or a service station, it is a police station, the tree where your local armed response officers like to hang out, fire station, that traffic cop you just saw putting up a speed trap; somewhere there are men in uniform with guns. If you are in an unfamiliar area, go as fast as you can to familiar turf, obviously looking for help along the way. A little old lady (in every sense of the term, hit trouble in a shopping complex in the next town, the only area where she knew a safe haven was her local police station, so she drove there as fast as she could. The pursuing car only broke off after she turned into the station yard after a drive of some fifteen kilometres – harrowing, but because she kept her head, she got out of the situation intact.

9. LEAVING AND APPROACHING YOUR CAR: This is particularly important in parking lots. Imagine you are at a shopping centre and you are driving into the parking area. As you drive in you employ TWO CLOCKFACES. First, the clockface you use to control your immediate environment. Now throw out a second clock face as you identify the place where you are going to park. Your parking place is right in the middle of this second clock face and you CONSCIOUSLY INTERROGATE the area around it. As you drive into your parking place, the two clockfaces merge and you are working precisely as if you were on the open road.

Get into your parking place as quickly as possible and then get out of your car and STAND UP as quickly as possible, using the clockface to control your environment once more. Remember that if you are bending down peering at the lock you are surrendering environmental control. Now walk briskly away from your car, using the clockface to observe who is watching you. You don't have rear view mirrors, so consciously turn around and look at your sides and behind you. An observer with ill intent will note that you are alert and in most cases will look for an easier target, but don't let this make you 'cocky' he will still have a go if he doesn't find easier pickings.

Inevitably I'm going to come back to my car, so as I walk out of the supermarket, the hairdresser, restaurant, I once more use my second clockface to interrogate the area around my car. I do not walk directly to my car, I go away from it, at an angle so that I can keep it visual and watch for any reactions in the people around. Once I am happy that the area is clear, I walk back to my car FROM A DIFFERENT DIRECTION. Remember that I am always using my personal clockface. If possible, I have exited the building I was in through a different doorway.

I walk to my car as quickly as possible, unlock it while standing upright, if possible start it while standing upright (quite easy, especially for short people) and get in and get out of there. If I am carrying goods, I stay



upright as much as possible and I put things in the car from a standing position. I do not lean into the car and thus make myself vulnerable.

If I have a remote electronic locking system, I make sure that locking and unlocking is accompanied by a minimum of flashing lights and I certainly make sure that my car does not make any bleeping sounds. That will alert anyone in the parking lot that someone with the means to open the car and drive it away is approaching a specific vehicle and that makes me vulnerable to the opportunist.

What we've touched on here is that you can and should use the clockface when on foot, when jogging or simply walking down the street. It's also a very good system for patrolling guards.

The real beauty of the clockface when on foot is that you can move it so as to avoid danger. If I am jogging and I see a bush, a utility building, anything that interferes with my visual control of the clockface, I simply manoeuvre away so that I keep my five, ten, fifteen metre circumference clear, buying me those precious seconds that will allow me to identify a potential or actual threat.

10. **KNOW WHEN AND HOW TO GIVE UP YOUR CAR:** Supposing, just supposing, it has all gone wrong, you've been tuning your radio at the traffic light and you look up and there is a guy with an AK pointed straight at you from two metres away. I'd be inclined to give up the car.

The first thing I do is acknowledge that I'm going to do what he wants, so I point to the lock to indicate to him that I'm going to unlock the car. Then, keeping as much of my arm clearly visible as possible, I open the door. Keeping both my hands visible, I push the door open with my foot. He'll be talking to me now, so I can hear what he wants me to do and if necessary, I can comply. Then, very slowly, I unfasten my seat belt with my right hand, keeping my left hand visible, and I bring the belt back into its storage position. I don't want any sudden movement to alarm the hijacker. I then turn my body fully towards the hijacker, to show him that I'm not carrying a weapon, I stand up, keeping myself open to him, and I begin to walk away, walking backwards.

If I have left anything in the car, that's tough. I can always replace it, just as I can replace the car. Hijackers are afraid that you might have a gun and if he sees you turning around, he's going to think 'gun' and shoot you before you can shoot him. I need to stress that you must take the initiative in placing distance between you and the hijacker, particularly if you are a woman. Make it look as if you are walking from the car automatically, play act that you believe that is what he wants you to do.

Once you have a few metres between you and him, you can turn and run. Remember what he really wants is your car.

10. ON FOOT: We looked at the fact that you can use the clockface when out of your car. Using this principle should also enable you to identify areas you should stay out of; alleys, bushy areas, shanty settlements where environmental clutter makes it hard to control the environment. You just don't go there without adequate protection. One of South Africa's top Karate exponents, Malcolm Dorffman was asked what he would do if four men attacked him while alone in a dark alley. His response was that he wouldn't be alone in a dark alley. That's the best possible rule of thumb; if you can't control it, don't go there.

When crossing the street in a built up part of town in a reasonably developed part of the world, South Africa or Brazil say, you can use shop windows as mirrors if the lighting is right, but it still pays to have the odd look behind you, just so he knows you are alert.

The first clock face/second clock face system is particularly important at ATMs, which are constantly observed by opportunist thieves in even the most developed countries. Don't fixate on the screen, examine the screen before you start work, but at all times, look around you every couple of seconds. In this instance, as in all others, you must have your escape route planned along the lines we looked at under IPDE.

When using cellular 'phones, it's best to stand with your back to a flat high wall. A shop window is good. Now you only have to sweep through 180 degrees. But remember when you walk off, your clockface is 360 degrees again, because some interested party has just seen you use that 'phone...

If anyone would like more information or is interested in contracting the author for security training:

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