

Queen's Park Trust

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Keeping your phone safe

We use our mobile phone for lots of things nowadays, including banking and diary management. If your phone isn't protected by security, losing your phone could mean thieves get access to your personal information.

Follow these simple steps to protect your mobile phone.

1. Use the security features provided

Most mobile phones have security features that are designed to stop people accessing a phone and using it, should it be stolen. In order for these security features to work you need to switch them on/put them in place:

The security features include:

- creating a PIN code that locks your handset
- tracing the location of, wiping data from, or locking your handset
- remotely using another internet enabled device.

Most major mobile phone manufacturers, such as Apple, Samsung and Sony, offer security features such as:

- a unique PIN
- password-protected, fingerprint or facial recognition access
- the ability to locate a lost or stolen phone
- the facility to remotely wipe your phone's data and/or block the handset's functionality
- a way to prevent any unauthorised reset of security features.

2. Know how to identify your mobile phone if it is stolen

Each handset manufactured for use in the UK has a unique International Mobile Equipment Identity number (IMEI) hardwired into it during the manufacturing process. Knowing the IMEI will help the police identify your handset should it be stolen.

UK network operators will also prevent a stolen handset from working across their respective networks if you can tell them the IMEI.

You can find your handset's IMEI by:

- Typing *#06# into the keypad of your handset
- OR looking inside the battery or SIM card compartment of your handset
- OR looking on the side of the box, or on the associated paperwork, that you received when purchasing the handset

3. Be aware of your surroundings

Consider the following when protecting your handset from opportunist thieves:

- Ensure you know where your phone is when you are in a busy location. Train stations, shopping centres - these places are popular with pickpockets especially if your handset is visible in an open bag or hanging out of your back pocket.
- Think about when you use your phone – outside train and underground stations are popular places for snatch theft
- Never leave your mobile unattended in a public place

To protect your mobile phone from snatch-and-grab thieves and pickpockets while walking down the street, keep it out of sight, remain highly alert, and secure your digital data. Thieves often operate on bikes or mopeds, targeting distracted pedestrians.

Physical Security & Awareness

- **Put it away:** Keep your phone concealed in a front trouser pocket or a zipped, cross-body bag. Avoid back pockets or open tote bags.
- **Use a tether:** Attach a to your wrist or case so it cannot be easily ripped from your hand.
- **Stop and step aside:** Do not text, scroll, or map-read while walking. If you must use your phone, step away from the kerb, stand with your back flat against a wall or shop front, and check your surroundings first.
- **Use headphones for navigation:** Listen to spoken map instructions rather than holding your phone out in the open.

Digital Protection

- **Harden your lock screen:** Turn off message previews so thieves cannot see verification codes or reset messages while your phone is locked.
- **Use biometrics and strong PINs:** Protect sensitive apps (banking, digital wallets) with Face ID, fingerprint, or a unique password rather than a short, easily observable PIN.
- **Enable tracking apps:** Ensure **Find My** (Apple) or **Find My Device** (Android) is switched on so you can locate or remotely wipe the phone if it is stolen. iPhone users should also turn on **Stolen Device Protection** in the settings.

The "paper technique" is a common form of **distraction theft** (often called "table surfing") where a thief uses a piece of paper—like a map, menu, petition, or flyer—to hide a mobile phone and steal it in plain sight.

Thieves usually target busy public places like cafes, bars, and restaurants where people naturally leave their phones on tables.

How the Technique Works

1. **The Approach:** A stranger approaches your table holding a large piece of paper (a map, a newspaper, or a petition they want you to sign).
2. **The Cover:** They place the paper directly over your phone, which is sitting on the table.
3. **The Distraction:** While the paper is covering your phone, they engage you in a confusing or high-pressure conversation—asking for directions, begging for money, or insisting you sign a document.
4. **The Lift:** While you are looking at them or the top of the paper, they slide their hand underneath to grab the phone.
5. **The Exit:** They pick up the paper, concealing the phone beneath it or having already slipped it into their pocket, and walk away quickly. These thefts can take as little as 10 seconds.

How to Protect Yourself

- **Keep Valuables Out of Sight:** The most effective defence is to never leave your phone on the table. Keep it in a pocket or a zipped bag.
- **Pick Up Your Phone Immediately:** If someone approaches you and places anything on your table, pick up your phone or wallet before they even start talking.
- **Be Skeptical of Strangers:** Be wary of anyone who gets too close or uses large objects (like a map or a scarf) to crowd your personal space.
- **Situational Awareness:** Choose tables with your back to a wall so you can see people approaching

If Your Phone is Stolen

- **Lock It Remotely:** Immediately use services like Find My iPhone or Google's Find My Device to lock the phone and protect your data.
- **Report to Carrier:** Contact your mobile provider to block your [IMEI number](#), which makes the device useless on their network even if the SIM card is changed.
- **File a Report:** Report the theft to local police and your insurance provider. Authorities often use [CCTV footage](#) from cafes to track these "table surfers."