



Stay Safe This Christmas and New Year

The festive period brings joy to millions and is one of the busiest times of our social calendars. It is a time to enjoy office parties and get-togethers with friends and family.

While we are currently deep into the office and works party season, most of us still have nights out ahead of us while we celebrate the festive season from now through to Christmas and New Years day and into 2015.

Despite the fact that for most of us this time of year is about enjoying ourselves, nights out at this time of year can end badly for many.

In the spirit of the season we bring you this guide to staying safe by being aware of the most common risks.

1. Belongings

Keep your bags and belongings close to you. Use cloakroom facilities, if available.

Thefts of bags and coats generally rise over the festive period, so stay safe.

Most bags and purses contain clues to a person's address, as well as their keys.

Try to avoid taking bags of Christmas presents out with you, as these are easily misplaced or stolen.

Office gifts can stay at the office until they can be taken home. Taking your bags of Christmas shopping out to busy bars and pubs is also a best avoided.

2. Drinks

Don't leave your drinks unattended at any time.

Avoid overdoing your intake of alcohol. Drinking too much leads to accidents, injuries and embarrassment... or worse.

Don't mix your drinks. Stick to one type or you could easily end up drinking far more alcohol than you intended. Resist the pressure to have another drink or to drink anything that you are not comfortable with.

Pace yourself when drinking. It is not a competition or a race! Try to treat your nights out as a social occasion that includes an alcoholic drink rather than a drinking session that has a social aspect.

Don't be afraid to alternate between soft drinks or water in between alcoholic drinks in order to stay hydrated. Bars and clubs are obliged to offer free tap water.

The potential for drinks to be interfered with or **spiked** rise over the holidays as we let our guard down.

Invest in a stopper if you drink from bottles to make it more difficult for your drink to be spiked. <http://www.spikey.co.uk/>. There is a growing list of ways to detect if a drink has been interfered with in order to avoid drinking a drugged beverage. A few of these are listed in this article <http://modamadison.com/2014/04/06/polished-protection/>.

If you suspect that a drink has been spiked, then alert venue security straight away. (They should be fully trained for these situations.) A trip to A&E is also advised if a spiked drink has been ingested.

Injuries from binge-drinking or simply over-indulging rise steeply during the Christmas and New Year period. This can mean a trip (literally) to A&E and a ruined night.



3. Money

Beware of pick-pockets and handbag 'dippers', especially in crowded places. This can leave you without access to money for the rest of the night.

PIN theft at cash machines or payment terminals is still a big issue in the UK, so shield your PIN by covering the keypad as you draw money or make a payment.

Look out for people standing too close to you or potentially 'shoulder-surfing' as you enter your PIN.

Never reveal your PIN to anyone or allow anyone to draw out money on your behalf.

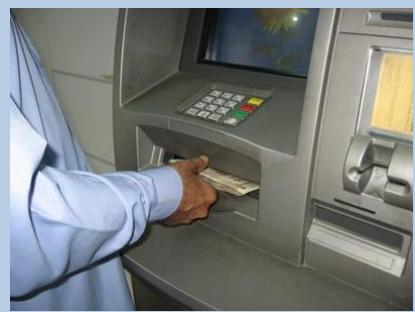
When paying with your card, ensure that it never leaves your sight. This will cut the risk of card-cloning.



Contactless cards are also open to fraud. Protect them by keeping them in a shielded wallet to avoid them being scanned by fraudsters.

Try not to carry large sums of money on a night out and avoid drawing large sums from cash machines.

It is sensible to hide some cash or a bank card in another pocket for emergencies and for travel fares.



4. Stay Together

There is safety in numbers and people who travel together in pairs or groups are less likely to fall victim to street crime or assault.

It is easy to become separated at crowded events, so stay close.

Arrange a place to meet in advance should anyone stray from the group.

Make sure that you can contact each other by ensuring that you have each other's mobile telephone numbers and that they can be heard in even the noisiest of venues.

Avoid walking home alone and look after friends and make sure that they get home safely.

5. Transport

The logistics of a night out can be tricky at the best of times. The more people there are, the more complicated it can get to keep everyone safe.

Travel together to and from office parties and ensure that everyone gets home safely.

Plan Your Travel

Ensure in advance that you know where you are going, where you'll meet your friends and how you'll get home. Make sure that you know when the last train or bus departs and what time services stop. Don't leave yourself stranded.

If you intend to get home using taxi cabs, then book your return journey early, as they are in short supply at the busiest time of the year.

Keep the telephone numbers of trusted taxi firms stored in your phone.

For extra safety, share your travel plans with your friends and family and travel with other people.

Always avoid using unlicensed mini cabs. [They are potentially very dangerous.](#)

If you are lucky enough to have the use of a designated driver for the evening, ensure that your designated driver remains sober! Most venues operate schemes to look after designated drivers. Ask at the bar.

Avoid unlit areas when walking home or waiting for buses and cabs.

Invest in a personal attack alarm. They can be very effective at discouraging potential trouble.

6. Watch Your Step

Snow and ice make getting around difficult in the winter. The potential to slip on frosty or frozen pavements is very high and makes it very tricky to rush around at our normal pace.

If you find yourself rushing around to reach your destination on time, then take note of our following tips.

Wear shoes with a good grip and deep tread. If you do not want to carry a spare pair of shoes or wear "sensible" shoes, you may want to invest in a pair of [pavement crampons](#) like this pair to attach to your shoes for extra stability and grip on snow and ice.

Excess alcohol can make stairs, kerbs, inclines and ordinary obstacles [especially challenging](#). Use banisters and handrails where available.

7. Strangers

Look after your friends on nights out. If you see them leaving with strangers, make sure that they are capable of making sensible decisions. Be prepared to lead your friend away or to alert venue security.

Alcohol can make normally-sensible people vulnerable to suggestion or coercion. When you add excessive consumption and a spiked drink, normal awareness and judgement can completely disappear.

Never accept drinks from strangers. You can never be sure what is in it or what their intentions are. Ensure that all of your drinks are poured by the bar staff and have not been interfered with.

If you believe that your friend may be in a vulnerable state, then make sure that nothing happens that they may regret.



If you suspect that your own drink may have been spiked, then seek out your friends and security staff as soon as possible.

Look after each other and stay safe.

8. Keep Your Phone Charged

There are few things worse than needing your phone in an emergency only to find that the battery is flat. *Charge your phone before you leave home and even invest in a spare battery that you keep fully charged.*

Most smart phones use power faster than older phones due to their large screens and constant connection to the internet and other services.

Adjust your settings and shut down non-essential programmes to get the longest battery life possible from your phone.

9. Line Your Stomach

Drinking on an empty stomach is never a good idea. You'll get drunk faster, increasing the chances of embarrassing yourself on a night out. Don't be the party-goer throwing up or passed out in a corner before the night is over.

Eat a meal as part of the night out or before you leave home in order to avoid being the party light-weight.

Eating first will slow the absorption of alcohol and will help you to last till the end of the night.

(Eating after you have consumed a large amount of alcohol will have little benefit.)

Drink plenty of water before starting to drink alcohol, in order to remain hydrated.



10. Wrap Up Warm

We all like to look our best when attending parties, this can lead some of us to be reluctant to cover our best party clothes with a heavy coat. Not only will coats, woolly hats, scarves and gloves keep you warm, they'll also cover up any jewellery and valuables that you may have on show.

The extra pockets are useful for keeping phones and other valuables out of sight.

**If you enjoyed this article, then please share it with friends and family.
Help as many people as possible to stay safe over the festive period.**

From all of us here at SALT Business Growth, we wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

2015 will see us continuing our mission to improve the fortunes of our clients.

Every business needs training in issues relating to safety and security, especially when they are responsible for the welfare of staff, customers, visitors as well as other people.

Our courses include first aid at work, emergency first Aid, paediatric first aid, fire safety, security awareness, conflict management and more.

If you are responsible for the welfare of people that are in your care, then get in contact for more information on our courses.

While we are well-known for helping our customers to make more money, it is our focus on protecting the businesses that we help to grow that marks us as true experts in the area of sustainable business growth.

This is all part of our mission at SALT to cut the high rates of business failure in small and medium sized enterprises through directly increasing the ability for companies to become more successful.