



## **Self-Defense Weapons for Women (Part One)**

**Anything 'On' or 'Near' You  
Is a Potential Weapon for Self Defense**

**By**

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I was teaching a self-defense clinic to a large group of women many years ago and thought they might be interested in seeing how many self-defense ‘weapons’ each of them had available in their purse. I asked one of the women before the class if she would mind helping me with the demonstration. She agreed.

When the time came for the demo I asked her to pour the contents of her purse onto a table in the room where we were training. She had 47 items in her purse — everything from lipstick to hairspray to a hair brush to a wallet to sun glasses to a pen to a cell phone to a compact mirror to an address book — (etc).

I then told the ladies that they could use everything in their purse as a defensive weapon. I remember the look on their faces. Some were surprised. Others gave me the look that said, ‘No way.’ My answer? **Way**. And I began to show them how.

## First, The Purse Itself



Photo by [Artem Maltsev](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The first and most obvious self-defense weapon is the purse or bag itself. If a woman is attacked suddenly, without warning, she may not have time to open her purse or bag and grab an item inside that she could use to

defend herself. That's why it's good to learn how to use the purse itself as a weapon of self defense.

In the photo above — if the woman was approached by an attacker from the front, she could take one step back and swing the purse/bag straight toward his groin. After hitting his groin, she could kick him in a shin (or knee him in the face if he's bent over), and stomp on the top of his foot before turning to escape to safety. That combination will usually stop a man from chasing a woman. If he does chase you, scream and go into a store or other safe place (if you able). Screaming gets people's attention, which is what an attacker doesn't want.

The target of their attack is usually your purse or you. If your attempt to defend yourself doesn't work for some reason, it's better to let the attacker (robber) take your purse than take or hurt you. I've seen pictures of women who tried to hold on to their purse during a robbery and they usually were beaten or dragged before finally letting

go of their purse. It's your choice how to respond, but your health and safety are more important than 'things.'

If a robber does take your purse, call your bank and credit card providers right away to put a stop on your cards. Robbers usually try to use bank and credit cards within the first 30 minutes after an attack. Credit cards come with some protection from the card company, but debit cards allow a robber direct access to your checking account.

Identity theft experts suggest that women minimize the number of cards they carry with them. Some of the cards they recommend you DON'T carry in your purse or wallet on a regular basis are —

- Debit cards
- Gift or prepaid debit cards
- ATM receipts (because of the account information printed on the receipt)

- Bank checks
- Account passwords' list
- Large amount of cash
- Social Security card
- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Spare keys to house or car
- Health insurance card

I think this is a pretty good list, though I question not carrying your health insurance card. If you become ill or are in an accident, having your insurance card with you could facilitate a faster medical response. Some experts recommend a compromise of taking your health insurance card with you 'only' when you are headed to a doctor's visit where showing the card will be required. Fortunately, many doctors require showing the card only during your initial visit.

Some experts also recommend women carry their cell phone in the pocket of a jacket or pants since so much private access information is now available on smart phones. Having your phone in another location will also give you the option of calling police and family members immediately following an attack. If your phone is in your purse or wallet and it's stolen, you won't have access to using it but the robber will. One cardinal rule for safety when out in public is DON'T be on your cell phone while you're outside of your car or a safe building (e.g. store, home, friend's house). If you're paying attention to the phone (calling or texting), you won't see an attacker approaching you until it's too late to respond.



Before you leave your house each day consider what you really need to have with you and be prepared to lose all of it if attacked. My hope is that you will never be attacked or that if you are the self-defense recommendations I share with you in these newsletters will help keep you safe. However, consider the worst-case scenario and be prepared for it.

One other note about your driver's license. You have to carry that if you drive, so that's not something you can take out of your purse or wallet. Just remember that if a robber gets your driver's license they know where you live. Report the robbery to the police immediately and ask them for guidance about how to protect your home from burglary. If your car keys and house keys are also in your purse, a robber can get into your house and also steal your car. Police may recommend you change locks on the outside doors of your house. You can also check with your car dealer about getting a new set of keys made for your vehicle (depending on make/model/age). Dealerships

can often make a new set of keys with new chips that they ‘re-sequence’ to your car’s computer. Also contact your auto insurance company to let them know about the theft. They will probably have some good advice for you as well.

One other note — make copies of the front and back of all of the cards and other materials you carry in your wallet. Keep the ‘wallet copies’ at home. That will help you contact various companies to cancel cards because the information will be readily available for you give them.

Keep your wallet ‘thin’ — meaning take as few items with you as possible. The fewer items you have in your purse and/or wallet, the less you’ll have to deal with if a robber steals them.



Photo by [Zeny Rosalina](#) on [Unsplash](#)

If a woman is holding a smaller purse when an attacker approaches her, she can take one step back, grab the sides of her purse in both hands and use the edge of the purse to strike the attacker in his throat, nose, or an eye. She can follow that up with a knee to his groin, an elbow to his face, stomping the top of his foot, and escaping to safety. There's truth to the old martial arts saying — 'if someone can't breathe and can't see, they can't fight.'



The size or shape of a woman's purse doesn't matter. There's a way to use any purse or handbag for women's self defense. Once a woman learns how to use their purse (or bag), then it's just a matter of practicing the defensive techniques until it's a natural response to attack. We call that 'muscle memory' in training. Your mind and body respond naturally to an attack based on your training.

One key to using a purse for self defense is to ‘swing’ or ‘strike’ with the purse from the same position you hold it. If you move the purse from one position to another position before using it to defend yourself, the attacker has time to see your intent and move his body in a way to avoid the strike.

One negative example is holding a purse by the handle by your side (as in the first photo above), then moving the purse away from your body for the purpose of swinging it into the attacker. Moving the purse from position A to position B to strike position C gives the attacker too much time to react and avoid the strike.

The positive example is to move the purse from position A (holding purse at side) to position B (striking his groin), the attacker doesn’t have time to avoid the strike. The bad guy doesn’t see it coming because all you’ve done is taken one step back, which is a natural response to an attack, followed by a strong swing of the purse into his

groin. Follow that with kicks and stomps to shins and top of feet and you're good to go (escape).

And, of course, remember to scream! If the attacker pulls you close to him, scream directly into one of his ears. That will usually confuse and distract them for a couple of seconds. Two seconds is enough time to kick, stomp, and elbow your way out of his hold. You may have to forget about his taking your purse, but don't let him get you. And, by all means, don't allow him to get you into his car or van. That usually does not end well for women (or children).

## **Pepper Spray**

If you carry pepper spray in one hand and your purse in the other hand, you have doubled your self-defensive position. [You can read about using pepper spray in this previous newsletter.](#)

In the next part of this series, I'll share about some of the items found inside a purse that can be used for self defense.

## **Women's Self Defense Resources**

[Self Defense 90-10](#)

[Young Women and Sexual Assault](#)

[Safe Jogging](#)

[Stop and Drop](#)

[Evade to Enter](#)

[Evade to Escape](#)

*You can be attacked anywhere, at anytime, by anyone. Be ready.*



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