



As a native Philadelphian, my first memory of Philadelphia's subway system was of my father rushing me off to my first ballet recital at the Merriam Theater while people gawked at my tiny, 4-year-old frame clad in a big, white-and-pink tulle costume. Nowadays, I think that the only way an outfit like mine could attract such attention would be if it was donned by a 6-foot, 300-pound man. The subway trains contain a collection of the most eclectic sort: College students merge with the homeless, who merge with the business people, who merge with the common criminal. In my travels, I have crossed paths with all of the above—and lived to tell about it. Here are 10 tips so you can avoid danger and enjoy the ride.



If you're planning on using public transportation it's best to leave the fancy jewelry at home and ride when you're well rested.

5. Avoid carrying expensive-looking items

This may not be the best way to ensure your safety during the ride, but when a person snatches a purse or bag, there's a good chance that they don't know what's in it. If you keep those expensive items and money on your person, there's a decreased chance that you'll lose anything absolutely devastating in the unfortunate event that someone takes your bag.

6. Avoid wearing nice clothing

While this may be advisable in the case that you may find the only available seat in a crowded subway car to be littered with sunflower seed shells or even worse, an unidentifiable substance, it shouldn't warrant any uncharacteristic dressing for your travels. There is one exception to this rule: women's club wear. The subway is not the place to showcase a neckline that plunges down to your navel, or the world's shortest skirt. An oversized sweatshirt or sweater that can be easily stashed

in a bag or in a coat check can remedy this situation.

7. Always travel in groups

This may not always be possible in the hectic life of a college student. Try asking your best friend to wake up at 7 in the morning to accompany you to your internship in Center City—then

who's going to be with her on the ride back?

Also, riding with some of your more naïve or insane friends could result in a less enjoyable commute. Their reactions to surroundings could affect you just because you are with them. On SEPTA, you are most definitely the company you keep. Try to adhere to this rule while traveling during the evening hours.

8. Travel as early as possible
This can be applied for commutes at all hours of the day. Trains can always be delayed for countless reasons.

Traveling during off-peak hours, when service is mind-numbingly slower, can leave you open to the most rowdy crowd or at least a harrowing, almost-empty train. If you can help it, try to get on a train before 10 p.m. Riding the Night Owl, which can take the form of either train or bus, is a personal choice which takes longer than the normal commute up the Broad Street line. If you're uncomfortable with after-hours public transportation, splurge on a cab.

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9. Always trust your instincts
While the subway and its platforms are a confined space, there is usually a little room to move, as well as seating or standing options. If there's a rider in one car that you find irksome or dangerous, wait for the train to stop at its next location and walk quickly to the next car. Never

use the doors to cross between cars when the train is moving—you or your items could fall onto the tracks and get crushed by the train.

10. Don't travel while under the influence of any mind-altering substances

If a cab or designated driver is not an option, be sure to sober up as much as possible before taking the subway. A person who appears to be intoxicated is a very easy target for unwanted advances and other crimes. Not only does it impair your ability to defend yourself, but it can also leave you unable to identify the criminal and make you appear unreliable as a witness to an illegal activity.

“Don't be afraid to ask a friendly face for directions, but be sure to check with another person—not everyone knows where they're going.”

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Staying safe in your travels isn't difficult. If you keep your mind sharp and clear and aren't distracted or intimidated by fellow commuters, getting from point A to point B should be as easy as stepping through the train's sliding doors.