



Real**Safe**Agent

Safe Selling

Student Guide

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Introduction

Real Estate Agents face an entirely different set of challenges than the general population when it comes to safety. The general population stays safe by not being alone with strangers in areas hidden from the eyesight and earshot of others.... however, this is how a real estate agent makes a living. The general population removes themselves from a situation where they begin to feel uncomfortable or unsafe.... but a real estate agent will keep himself/herself in a situation where he/she feels uncomfortable or unsafe because they he/she does not want to risk losing the sale. These are calculated risks that a real estate agent makes in order to make a living, and therein lies the key to staying safe as a real estate agent:

Evaluating the prospect, property, and circumstances

Assessing the collective risk

Reacting Appropriately

This course is designed to provide you with the knowledge of how to evaluate the prospect, property, and circumstances so you can assess the collective risk of all three of those and make better decisions about what actions are appropriate to minimize risk and keep yourself safe; as well as what can be done as a community do to keep each other safe.

Before jumping in, we should take a few minutes to examine some facts about the real estate industry and understand the limitations of personal safety devices, applications, and self-defense techniques.

Data regarding the safety of the real estate industry is kept by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, and even then, not all the data on crime against real estate agents even gets reported, and 2013 is the last year for which we have data. Keeping those facts in mind, in 2013:

- 23 People were murdered while selling or leasing real estate.
- Over 330 were victims of assault, rape, or murder.
- There is no accurate data available on how many were victims of robbery, attempted robbery, attempted assault, or attempted rape.
- Since 2006 violent crime against people selling and leasing real estate has risen 300%.



Understanding Crime and Criminals

Criminology is an enormous sociological discipline and the information included in this section will not make you an expert criminologist. However, the purpose of this section is to give you basic information about the criminal and crimes you are most likely to encounter as a real estate agent. Understanding crime and criminals will help you be more effective in deterring criminals from targeting you, as well as making safer decisions should you ever find yourself as the target of an attempted crime.

Types of Crimes

Crime can be broken out into different types based on the degree of intent. The types of crime you are likely to run into are:

Premeditated

- Pre-planned – The intent from the start was to commit the crime
- Planning may be rudimentary or sophisticated
- Typically, unemotional
- May be either a crime against person or a crime against property

Crimes of opportunity

- Not planned
- Most often a crime against property (theft)
 - Not typically a theft of something on your person, typically the theft of something in the house, your bag, or your car.

Almost all crime against real estate agents is premeditated in some way, simply because the perpetrator must arrange a meeting with the agent.



Criminal Motives

Motive is an essential part of any crime. Most crimes committed against real estate agents have one of two motives:

Profit

- The goal is to obtain money or valuables
- Typically associated with crimes against property unless it involves kidnapping for ransom
- Usually premeditated if it involves robbing the agent directly, may be a crime of opportunity if it involves theft of items in house or agent's bag
- It's the most common motive
- Typically, will not lead to violence unless victim is not compliant
- Not typically associated with a crime of compulsion

Power

- The goal is to feel powerful or gain control over an internal compulsion.
- Typically associated with crimes against person
- Almost always premeditated or a crime of compulsion
- Uncommon but not unlikely motive in most crimes against real estate agents
- Typically, will be violent and may involve a sexual offense



Types of Criminals

	Predators	Thieves
Crime	Assault, Rape, Murder	Burglary, Robbery
Motive	Power, Control	Profit
Emotional	Yes	No
Goal	Isolate You	Be Isolated
Decision Making	Fill an emotional need	Potential Gain vs. Potential Risk
Attractors	Weakness, Subservience	Value, Ease of Acquisition

The chart above lists the primary characteristics of predators and thieves, The two types of criminals an agent is most likely to encounter. Although this class will cover thieves, our main focus will be on predators and how they function.

Thief

- Profit motive; makes decisions based on risk vs. reward, not emotion
- Attracted to value/high ease of acquisition; the harder (riskier) it is, the less attractive
- Environment - a thief needs to be isolated where they cannot be seen or heard
- Much more common at an open house vs. showing
 - The exception is the “couple’s play”-showing to 2 or more people, one person’s job is to distract you while the other goes into another area of the house to steal

The most common type of thief an agent could run into is someone who is going to steal property from a showing or an open house or uses the showing or open house to “case” the property and come back later to burglarize.



Notes

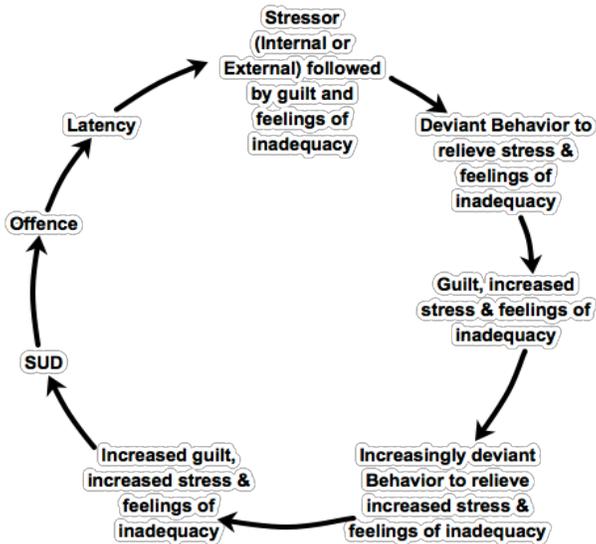
Predator

- Completely different type of criminal
- Power motive-power and control over another person or feelings
- Decision making is emotionally driven/feeds an emotional need
- Follows an obsessive-compulsive cycle known as the **Offender Cycle**
- Attracted to signs of weakness, vulnerability, subservience
- Environment required - need to get **you** isolated where you can't be seen or heard to commit their crime

Because of the fact that they need to get you isolated, predators are much more common at a showing than an open home. This is why showings are so much more dangerous than open homes, despite the common misperception that the opposite is true.

Notes

The Offender Cycle



The Offender Cycle

A predator's crime and all the activities that lead up to it are part of an obsessive-compulsive cycle known as the Offender Cycle. The cycle starts with a trigger-this could be external or internal. While we can't know specifically what the trigger is; we do know that is almost always associated with feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy. To relieve these feelings they will start the initiating behaviors (looking at pictures, for example). While the behavior eases their stress, the guilt they feel afterward increases the feelings of worthlessness/inadequacy and they have to engage in even more deviant behavior to relieve the stress from the feelings and the obsession, until they reach the SUD-the seemingly unimportant decision-that is the tipping point. What we must understand is that the predator may not attack, the first, second or even 20th agent they meet, but the attack will occur.



The Anatomy of a Crime

Having an understanding of the processes that are common to many crimes is essential to being able to take the guidelines and suggestions in the course and apply them to your own particular needs and each unique situation in which you may find yourself.

All crimes have a beginning and in the case of premeditated crimes, a that beginning is long before you are contacted.

Power Motive Timeline

1. **Initial focus** - The crime begins when the predator first notices you.
2. **Focusing behavior** - Predator is seeking you out, typically online.
3. **Fantasy** - Predator begins to fantasize about you, fantasies may be something as innocent and simple as a chance meeting or take on more complex and possibly even darker forms. Predator will possibly engage in stalking behaviors, likely online, possibly in public. These stalking behaviors will often feel intoxicating to the predator and provide a “high”.
4. **Plan the meeting** - At some point the Fantasy and stalking no longer provide the “high”, and the predator will plan a meeting. It is at this point that they will decide on a location.
5. **Execute the plan** - The first step in executing the plan will be to arrange the meeting by calling and asking you to show him/her a home. This will likely be your first opportunity to assess the risk of the prospect.
6. **Meeting** - The predator will meet you at the prescribed location, it is possible that he/she will “no show” depending upon their state of mind and/or comfort level with their urges.
7. **Stage setting** - During the showing the Predator will seek to isolate you where you cannot be seen or heard by others. He/She may ask you to look at something in the closet or bathroom, show them the basement, the garage if the door is closed, or to close the blinds because they want to see how much light the fixture throws off, etc...
8. **Offend** - When the stage is set the way he/she wants it and you are isolated, the attack will come.



Profit Motive Timeline

Although less complicated and most certainly less emotional, crimes with a profit motive still involve a specific process.

1. **The Need Decision** - The predator arrives at the decision that he or she has financial need.
2. **Target Selection** - The target may be you or the property, depending on the predator's preference as to primary target. If you are the primary target it is possible that you were chosen at random, however it is more likely that the predator has chosen you specifically because he/she feels you will be carrying cash and/or expensive jewelry. If the property is the primary target more than likely you are merely a catalyst chosen at random.
3. **Planning** - Depending on the severity of the crime there may be very little planning such as in a simple robbery of items on your person or easily hidden items from the home; or complex planning in the event of a more severe crime such as kidnapping for ransom, a whole house burglary, or a theft involving an immovable locked safe.
4. **Execution** - Just as with planning, the execution may be simple and take relatively little time and resources or it may be complicated and require substantial time and resources. It's at this stage when the initial call will occur, and you will have your first opportunity to assess the prospect. If the predator is there to steal easily concealable items from the home, he/she will attempt to separate from you. A common ploy would be to pose as a husband and wife, one keeps you busy while the other goes through the house.



Reducing the risk of being targeted

The first step in preventing being a victim of a crime is eliminating as many “attractors” as possible. That being said, a big part of marketing yourself as a real estate agent is making yourself and your picture as prominent as possible. This section is about how to still market yourself but make minor changes that remove as many “attractors” as possible.

Images

Images are an important part of marketing yourself and your listings, however they are also often the item that starts the targeting process. Your professional photos can act as an attractor for both the power motive and the profit motive.

To reduce the risk of being targeted by those with a power motive:

- Avoid full body pictures
- Wherever possible use photos that are above or right at the shoulders
- When using pictures that include the upper body:
 - Be professional
 - Wear a shirt that goes no lower than the top of the breast bone
 - Don’t wear anything form fitting
 - Wear professional colors
 - Wear a jacket where possible
- Be aware of facial expressions
- Professional, authoritative smile and expression – We smile differently towards a client than we do towards a loved one. A professional smile is a facial expression that establishes a “boundary”, whereas a personal smile is a facial expression that is softer, warmer, and conveys vulnerability.
 - Look straight into the camera
 - Keep your head vertical, no tilt to one side or another
 - Professional Eyes-relaxed and fully open
 - For women, your make-up should be natural and understated

To reduce the risk of being targeted by those with a profit motive:

- Avoid pictures that depict you within an expensive vehicle.
- Avoid jewelry if possible, otherwise:
 - Jewelry should be minimal and understated
 - Wedding rings visible in photos should be a simple band



Setting Expectations in your marketing

The words you use in your marketing messages have connotations, which is to say that they have emotional value over and above the literal meaning. Those who commit crimes with a power motive are attracted to subservience and weakness because the “power high” is what they seek. Those who commit crimes with a profit motive are also attracted to subservience and weakness because it represents lower risk.

In your marketing, choose words that convey power, control, knowledge, authority, etc.... For example:

“Here to serve all your real estate needs”

Vs.

“Experience to handle the entire real estate process”

Notice that the first statement implies servitude, whereas the second statement implies confidence and power.

Information to avoid in marketing

Earlier we mentioned that stalking behaviors give a predator a “high” in addition to potentially planning an attack. Consequently, you’ll want to ensure that information you include in your marketing does not “feed the stalking high” or help a predator plan an attack in the event that someone does fixate and target you. By limiting the “high” a predator can achieve through online stalking, you will increase the likelihood that he or she will lose interest.

Avoid including the following information:

- Whether or not you have children
- The neighborhood you live in - For Example: Avoid “I’m the expert in the Hills Subdivision, I’ve lived here for years”; Instead use “I’m the expert in the Hills Subdivision, I’ve lived in the area for years”
- Pictures of your family
- Your favorite places-restaurant, club, exercise, store, etc....
- Specific PUBLIC networking groups to which you belong
- Specific neighborhood or school groups to which you belong



Social Media

In today's day and age social media is an important marketing tool for the real estate agent. Unfortunately, it is also an important tool for predators and those who stalk. Remember, if you catch the attention of a predatory or obsessive individual, your best chance of having them lose their interest is to give them little or no material of interest to them.

Social Media Do's

- Have separate personal and professional pages
- Eliminate or abbreviate your last name on your personal page
- Use different images on your personal and professional pages
- Periodically, use Google© to search for yourself to see how difficult it is to find your personal pages
- Use the social media site's security to help ensure your personal site information is hidden to all who are not your direct friend or contact

Social Media Don'ts

- Don't use location tracking
- Don't post your habits (i.e. "I love this coffee shop, I come here every day")
- Don't post information that could be used to identify your children's school, spouse's workplace, etc.....



Pre-Showing

Evaluations

“Always bring someone on an appointment” – It’s a nice idea, but unrealistic. When something is ALWAYS important, then it becomes NEVER important. However, understanding how to evaluate the prospect, property, and circumstances is the first step in assessing the overall risk of an appointment so you can make better decisions about your safety and the safety of your colleagues on an appointment by appointment basis.

Evaluating a Prospect

Evaluating a prospect in your initial conversation is easily done with a sales technique you are probably already using – Active Listening. Simply put, Active Listening is a conversational style that allows you to gain the trust of the prospect and gets them to provide additional information. In addition to allowing you to gain a deeper understanding of a legitimate prospect’s needs and wants, it also allows you to uncover inconsistencies and red flags if a prospect is not legitimate.

Let’s take a look at an excerpt from an initial phone conversation:

Prospect: “I saw this house online and I’d like to see it.”

Agent: “OK, what about the house appealed to you?”

Prospect: “I just liked it.”

The prospect’s answer should serve as a red flag. If someone liked a house enough to take the time to see it; there should be at least one specific thing that was attractive to him/her.

Agent: “OK, I like to make sure I can answer any questions you may have during the showing, is there anything about the house or neighborhood that’s important for you to know?”

Prospect: “Not really.”

Once again, the prospect’s inability to specifically answer reasonable questions should act as a red flag.

Agent: “That’s easy then, I know you found the house online; how did you locate me?”

Prospect: “Online, the same site as the house.”

Agent: “Great, it’s nice to know that I’m getting some attention; sometimes it’s difficult to evaluate what sites are getting my name out there. What site did you find me on?”



Notes

Prospect: “BigDataRealEstate.com”

In this part of the conversation there are no red flags until the agent compares it with information only, she would know; for instance, whether or not she pays BigDataRealEstate.com to promote her alongside properties in that zip code. If she doesn't, then that's an obvious red flag.

Agent: “I understand that BigDataRealEstate.com also recommends mortgage providers, have you already been pre-qualified?”

Prospect: “Yes.”

Agent: “Great, who have you been working with?” (You may even tell them it's because as a matter of policy you need to have the pre-approval paperwork)

Prospect: “I can't remember.”

Obviously, not being able to remember the name of the company or individual that pre-qualified him/her would be a red flag

Notice that each question built on some aspect of the prospect's answer to the previous question, sending the clear signal that you are listening to what the prospect has been saying, which the first step in building trust is.

Remember to be fluid in your conversation, not mechanical; don't turn it into an interrogation. The primary reason for this is that the vast majority of prospects are legitimate, and you don't want to scare those off. This fluidity can be seen in the following:

Prospect: “I found this house online and I'd like to see it.”

Agent: “OK, what about the house appealed to you?”

Prospect: “I've seen other houses in the neighborhood but wasn't thrilled, but I liked the looks of this house.”

Agent: “Sounds like you've been putting some time into this. Have you seen those houses with other agents?”

As you can see, the agent adjusted her line of questioning based on the prospect's response and followed up with a question that was relevant but would still obtain important information for a legitimate sale as well as possibly uncovering red flags.

The above conversation was kept short for class time consideration. However, in a real situation, if the prospect was a threat, he could often be more talkative and inquisitive because he would be trying to increase your comfort level and obtain information he could use in order to make you an easier target.



Evaluating a Property and Neighborhood

Learning as much as possible about a property and neighborhood is an important part of the sales process; however, it is also an important step in assessing the risk of an appointment as well as deterring a possible predator.

Your listing

The Neighborhood

If the property you are showing is your listing spending a little time introducing yourself to the neighbors and checking out the neighborhood is an excellent strategy for getting additional business. However, it is also an extremely valuable safety strategy. While introducing yourself to neighbors, take the time to find out the following information:

- Is there a neighborhood watch? How active is it?
- Are there any law enforcement officers living on the block?
- Is it an active neighborhood? Do the neighbors know and socialize with one another?

This is all important information that you can use in an initial conversation with a prospect to not only impress a legitimate prospect, but also deter a possible predator or opportunistic thief.

Additionally, look for any abandoned houses in the immediate area. Even if the house you are showing is not abandoned, neighborhoods with abandoned houses may be more attractive to someone intending to commit a crime.

The Property

Just as you take the time to learn about the property and evaluate it so you can market and price it correctly, you can do the same to determine the risk level of the property.

The following are important factors in determining the risk level of the property:

- **Vacancy** – Is the property vacant? A vacant property will increase risk.
- **Cell Signal** – Do you have a strong cell signal? If the signal is weak or non-existent ALWAYS BRING SOMEONE WITH YOU ON AN APPOINTMENT!



Notes

- **Exterior Lighting** – Is the exterior of the house well lit?
- **Interior Lighting** – Is the interior of the house well lit?
- **Windows** – Are there plenty of windows? Do they provide an unobstructed view from the outside of the house to the inside and vice versa? Ideally, you'll want to make sure that you and the prospect are always in view of the outside.
- **Stories** – How many stories does the house have? One story houses are the safest because they generally have the best escape paths.
- **Garage** – Does the house have a garage? Is it attached? Can you open the door easily? The existence of a garage can increase risk if it's attached and the garage door is closed.
- **Basement** – Does the house have a basement? Basements are a huge risk, and if a predator has targeted you there is a good chance that a basement will be a factor in choosing the house in which to commit the crime.
- **Escape Paths** – Do you have at least 2 escape paths from any point in the house? Multiple escape paths reduce the risk because a predator can't block your escape path if it's needed.
- **Exterior Doors** – Does the entrance have a storm door in addition to main door? How many exterior doors? Storm doors can slow down an escape if needed. The more exterior doors the house has means more escape paths.
- **Yard** – Does the yard obstruct the view into the house from any houses around the property? Does it provide an escape route to another house or the street?
- **Fence** – Is the front and/or back yard fenced? Does it obstruct views?

No class or guide can anticipate every layout of every house, so be sure to you use common sense and think critically. The more visible you are, the safer you are and the more escape paths, the safer.

Not Your listing

If the property is not your listing, you'll need to rely on the listing agent for information about the neighborhood and possibly information about the house as well.

If possible, you should take the time to preview the property so you can analyze the items listed in the previous section for yourself. If previewing the property is not an option, be sure to contact the listing agent to learn as much as possible about the property.



Notes

Assessing the Overall Risk

Now that you have evaluated the prospect and the property you can come up with an overall risk assessment using an EAR worksheet.

The process is simple. The worksheet contains a list of criteria that corresponds to the evaluation you've already done. Each of the criteria has a corresponding negative or positive value depending on whether it increases the risk or decreases the risk.

Simply add the numbers together to arrive at an overall risk assessment. The lower the score the higher the risk.... simple.

The following two pages contain a sample EAR Worksheet.



Evaluate the prospect, property, and circumstances

Assess the overall risk

React appropriately

EAR Worksheet

Prospect

The prospect is a stranger	-1
They found me on the Internet	-1
Cash buyer	-2
Looking for a Foreclosure	-1
From out of town	-1
Referral from a previous client	+1
Close friend or relative of the person that referred you	+2
You confirmed prospect with the referrer	+3
Prospect can't articulate what they are looking for in a home	-2
Prospect can only meet at a specific time that is after dark	-2
Prospect say they are an investor looking for empty homes	-1
Prospect says you can't call them back	-3
Prospect stumbles over lifestyle questions	-2
Prospect is specific about what they are looking for in a home	+1
Prospect is flexible with meeting time/date	+1
Prospect is open to seeing other homes	+1
Prospect freely gives phone number	+1
Prospect says they will be bringing kids	+1

Property

The property is off the beaten path	-2
The property is poorly lit	-1
The property has a basement	-1
The property only has one exterior door	-1
The property is in a typical suburban neighborhood	+1
Good cell phone reception	+1
The property is well lit	+1
There are multiple exit doors	+1
One story home	+1
Limited windows and poor visibility	-2
Abundant windows and good visibility	+1

Circumstances

You have an uncomfortable feeling	-10
You need to close a deal	-10
Abandoned property	-10
No/poor cell phone coverage	-10
Total EAR Score	



Notes

Depending on your situation, experience, and policies of your brokerage and Association, you can customize the worksheet to meet whatever criteria you feel are important.

The overall risk score is not an absolute number, it is a relative number designed only to give you easy way to determine the risk of an appointment. Furthermore, there are only a few “absolutes” when it comes to when you should bring someone with you on an appointment.

ALWAYS bring someone with you on an appointment if:

- You have poor cell service at the property
- The property is vacant
- The property is in a rural area and the prospect found you on the Internet
- You have an uncomfortable feeling prior to the appointment
- You are desperate for a sale

Using the Initial Prospect Call to deter predators

There are several techniques you can use during the initial prospect call to deter a predator whether their motive is power or profit. Most of these techniques use the information you’ve learned from the neighborhood and property evaluation you’ve already done. Additionally, most of that information is valuable information you would pass on to a legitimate prospect because it could make the property more attractive to the legitimate prospect, while making meeting you at that property less attractive to the predator.

Neighborhood and property Information

If the property is your listing, and the statements are true, you’ll want to mention the following in the initial call:

- “There’s an active neighborhood watch.”
- “It’s a tight knit little area and the neighbors seem to socialize regularly.”
- “You’ve got a county sheriff just 3 houses away.”
- “The house very light and open, with plenty of windows.”

Anything you tell the prospect that would be generally attractive to a legitimate buyer but makes it a less attractive crime location, you should mention.

Obviously, if it is not your listing you would know any of this information until after the initial call. An effective sales, as well as security technique, is to follow-up with the prospect prior to the appointment to convey the information and confirm the appointment.



Establishing Control and avoiding “Victim Stance”

Remember that criminals with a power motive will be more attracted to a victim that is subservient, therefore establishing control of the conversation and the situation can act as deterrent to a predator. This can be easily done with a few simple techniques:

- When the prospect suggests a meeting time (say 6pm) don't automatically accept it; say you need to make it 6:30. Don't ask if 6:30 is OK, tell them that's when you can meet.
- Set the expectations up front, “The house has a finished basement, and during the showing you are more than welcome to explore it while I wait upstairs”.

If your association or MLS has deployed Real Safe Agent:

- After setting the appointment, tell the prospect that you are going to enter them into your CRM, phone, or calendar and that you are going to send them a text with a link in it; just click the link, take a selfie, type in your name and hit send. This way you won't have to type it into your phone or CRM, and you can put a face to the name.
- For a higher level of security, you can tell the prospect that as a matter of policy, if you're taking someone into a seller's home, you're required to obtain a picture of a photo id. Tell them that you're going to send a text message, and all they need to do is click the link and take a picture of their driver's license or selfie, type in their name, and tap submit.

In both cases a predator will likely not comply or stop targeting you altogether; either way, it gives important information you can use to make decisions about your safety. This step will also allow you to find out if this individual has previously met with other agents and if those agents felt uncomfortable with the prospect.

An important part of establishing control is not displaying “Victim Stance” or expressing that the reason for a particular situation or rule is because of something that happened to you beyond your control.

For Example, don't say “I can meet at 6:30 because my car is at the shop and I have to pick it up”. Just say, “I can meet you at 6:30”. Don't say, “I won't go into the basement because I've had a bad experience”, just say “I'll wait up here, take all the time you wish”.

The idea is to make yourself an unattractive target to someone seeking to do you harm, without making the legitimate buyer uncomfortable with you.



Notes

The Training Play

During the initial call or follow-up, you'll find the "Training Play" a useful tool in assessing the prospect. The Training Play is simple: during the call mention that your office has asked you to help train a new agent and he will be joining you. The prospect's reaction to that news may provide you with valuable information.

If you choose not to bring someone with you on the appointment, you can simply mention that he/she had something come up or that he/she is on their way, if the prospect even mentions it.



Showing Safely

Even though you have taken all the steps possible to ensure that the person you are meeting with is safe, you can never be 100% sure, so it's best to follow a safe showing routine.

Arrival & Parking

Arrive Early

Make sure that you arrive early enough to the appointment so that you can prepare the home and be ready before the prospect arrives. Expect the prospect to be running early.

Parking

It is commonly assumed that it is best to park in the street where possible so that cannot be blocked in. However, where you park is insignificant. In the time it takes you to unlock the car door, open it, and get in it is likely that the person chasing you will reach you before you have had a chance to close and lock the car door.

The truth is that if you are being chased, your best bet is to run to a neighbor's house or down the middle of the street making as much noise as possible.

If you can't arrive early

If you can't arrive early call the prospect to attempt to postpone the appointment long enough to allow you to arrive early. However, if that's not possible you'll be in a situation where you must open the lock box and front door (and/or back door) without turning your back to the prospect. You can also ask the prospect to give you a few minutes to go through the house to make sure everything is ok.

Every home is a little different so you may need to adjust the following procedure to meet the needs of layout:



Notes

1. If your Association or MLS has implemented Real Safe Agent, be sure to place your phone in Showing mode prior to getting out of the car.
2. Always greet the prospect outside the home. Use a tour of the outside of the home to as a way to “feel out” the prospect and unlock the front and back doors, so that if you need an escape path once you get inside the home the doors are unlocked.
3. As you open the lock box, stand so that the prospect is on one side and the lock box is on the other; this will allow you to keep an eye on the prospect without having to turn around. If possible, you’ll want to make sure the lock-box is mounted in a spot that does not require that you’re hidden from the street in order to access it.
4. When opening the front/rear door, stand so that you are perpendicular to the door and off to the side of the door. If the knob is on the left, stand off to the left so that you are out of the path of the open-door way, place your left hand on the jam or wall, and open the door with your right. This will make it more difficult for someone to push you into the house while allowing the prospect to enter the home before you in a natural way.

Preparing the home

Assuming you have arrived early, you’ll need to prepare the home for safe showing. The following are things you’ll want to make sure to do:

- Lights – Be sure to turn on all lights. Not only is it a good presentation habit, but it also makes the inside of the home more visible from the outside which makes you safer.
- Drapes – Be sure all drapes and blinds are open and there is maximum visibility into the inside of the home.
- Exterior Doors – Make sure all exterior doors are unlocked.
- Interior Doors – Make sure all interior doors are open.
- Garages – Open the garage door if possible. If not possible, avoid entering the garage with the prospect.
- Obstructions – Be sure to clear any possible obstructions from potential escape paths.
- Dangerous Objects – Be sure to put away any items that could be used as a weapon against you (Easily accessible vases, trophies, bats, knives, pans, etc....)
- Cameras – Video cameras, whether fake or real, are great deterrents. Make sure they are very visible, perhaps even place them next to focal points in a room; you can even mention them during the conversation.



There is a school of thought that tells agents to lock the exterior doors during a showing to prevent an intruder from entering the home. Whereas this may be a good practice with an established client, it elevates the risk with a new prospect. Someone who comes up on a home during a showing and enters through an unlocked door is committing a crime of opportunity. Crimes of opportunity are usually profit crimes (theft) committed by criminals who are typically inexperienced and therefore easily startled and scared off. They are not looking for a confrontation, they are looking for a quick easy score. The greater risk to your safety is the new prospect in the home with you.

Meeting the prospect

Now that you have prepared the home, it's time to meet the prospect. The following are safety best practices:

Greeting the prospect

As mentioned in a previous section, always greet the prospect outside. However, in that section we were talking about greeting the prospect in the event that you were arriving after the client, this section is focusing on the scenario that you have arrived early, prepared the home, and are waiting for the client outside.

Keep in mind that the greeting sets the tone, and an authoritative tone makes you less attractive to a predator with a "power motive". If at all possible, "take the high ground"; position yourself so that you are above the prospect when they come up to shake your hand or come close during the initial greeting. A front step is a great place to position yourself. Additionally, do not come off that ground to come to him/her, let him/her come to you.

In a previous section we mentioned using a tour of the outside of the home as a way of "feeling out" the prospect and giving you an opportunity to unlock the front and back door. During this outside tour if there are outbuildings, be sure they are unlocked prior to the tour. **DO NOT ENTER OUTBUILDINGS** with a prospect!!

If while touring the outside of the home, you develop an uneasy or uncomfortable feeling about the prospect:

- If you are using Real Safe Agent-
 - Press and hold your screen for 3 seconds, this sends out a "drop-in" alert (I'm uncomfortable can someone drop in) to all the agents in the immediate area (agents that can get there quickly).
 - Delay entering the home as long as possible, or until a second agent arrives. The presence of a third person will prevent a crime if the prospect was a threat without endangering the sale if they weren't.



- If you are NOT using Real Safe Agent-
 - Call your office and pretend you are seeking information about the property you are showing. For instance, “I’m here at 1313 mockingbird lane with Mr. Johnson, can you look up the tax information for me?” Your office should have a code word for a “drop-in” alert, make sure you include the code word.
 - Chances are your office will not be close to where you are, so you may have to wait some time before someone arrives. Delay entering the house as long as possible to minimize the time inside without a third person. Since you’ll probably have to be inside for some time until that person arrives, try and stay on the first floor and keep yourself positioned so that you are easily visible from the outside of the house.

Regardless of the circumstances, when entering the home be sure to follow the procedures outlined earlier for safely opening a door.

In the home

While inside the home there are some guidelines you should follow to help keep you safe. It is important to remember that the ultimate goal is to make the situation unattractive to a predator, while not making a legitimate prospect feel uncomfortable.

Every home is different, so you may have to adjust some of the following practices to meet the layout of the home and your particular sales style:

- When at all possible, be sure to position yourself in such a way that you are clearly visible from the outside of the house. If a prospect is looking to assault you, they don’t want to do it where it can be witnessed.
- When moving from one area of the home to another, let the prospect explore before you enter the area with them. “The next area is the kitchen, go in get an initial feel of it and tell me what you think” - This is a “no influence sales strategy”.
- Do not enter bedrooms with the prospect if possible; stand at the edge of the door in the hallway.
- Master Suites – Be sure to familiarize yourself with the master bathroom because this is an ideal place for a prospect to isolate you. Therefore, they may ask a question as a strategy for getting you into the bathroom with them. **DO NOT ENTER A MASTER BATHROOM WITH A NEW PROSPECT!** If you must enter the bedroom to answer a question, stand outside of the doorway to the master bath. Furthermore, stand perpendicular to the doorway, this makes you a smaller target and allows for a faster escape if necessary.



Notes

- *General body position:*
 - Always try to stay at least two arm lengths from a prospect; it shows respect for body space to a legitimate prospect and makes it more difficult for prospect who is a threat to assault you.
 - Wherever possible, make sure you are visible from the outside of the home.
 - Always position yourself so that the prospect is never between you and your escape path.
- *If there are stairs in the home:*
 - Always allow the prospect to go up or down the stairs first and maintain at least a four-stair difference between the two of you, but don't lose visual contact with the prospect.
 - Do NOT allow the prospect to go completely up the stairs before you start your ascent.
 - Allow the prospect to move away from the top or bottom of the stairs (depending on the direction you are going) before completing your ascent or descent.
 - Remember that stairs are an ideal place for an attack; they are usually hidden from view, and it's easy to knock you off your feet.
 - If you are ascending stairs and there is a handrail, use it. If a prospect suddenly turns on you, you'll have an anchor point to use the prospect's own momentum against him/ her.



Reading the prospect

A few of the most useful tools you can use to keep yourself safe are your ability to read the prospect's body language, para-verbal communication, and verbal communication. Body language encompasses their body position relative to you; facial expressions, eye movements, hand position, etc... Para-Verbal communication is all the parts of speech that are not the words themselves; tone, cadence (speed), and volume.

When reading the following it is important to keep a few things in mind:

- If a prospect is meeting you for the purpose of harming you, they will likely look for a place to isolate you so that you are not visible from the outside of the home. If you are following the guidelines, it will be difficult for them to do so and, therefore, they will become frustrated. Signs of frustration are detectable if you are observant.
- When someone is preparing for an attack their adrenal glands will increase the amount of adrenaline in their body; this is also known as the fight/flight reaction. This increase in adrenaline produces observable signs.
- There is no hard and fast way to determine who is and is not a threat, nor is there a single telltale sign that someone has violent intentions towards you. However, the following are some potential red flags:

Body Language

The following can be indicators of someone who is ill at ease:

- A prospect continually looking out the window
- Invasion of body space, particularly uninvited touching (even if seemingly accidental)
- Lack of eye contact
- What appears to be intentional positioning between you and the door
- Hands in the pockets (especially if they are large pockets on a coat)
- Wearing cool weather clothing in warm weather
- Look for changes, particularly:
 - Dilated pupils
 - A look as if they are no longer paying attention to what you are saying or the house in general
 - Changes in breathing
 - Changes in facial expression



- Visible veins in the forehead or neck
- Wiping hands on pants/shirt or rubbing hands
- Fidgeting or repetitive body movements such as scratching, tapping, etc....

Para-verbal Communication

Changes in Para-Verbal communication can be signals that something has changed in the emotional and physical state of the prospect. Examples are:

- Changes in volume when there is no change in the noise level or distance – This will be a subtle change, but noticeable and accompanied by other observable changes as well; frustration is typically associated with elevated volume.
- Changes in cadence (the speed at which someone speaks) - Frustration is typically associated with increased speed.
- Changes in tone – Frustration is typically associated with a sharper tone, clearer diction, and an emphasis on the first syllable of a word.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication that could indicate red flags include:

- Showing more interest in you than in the house
- Issuing orders (“Come here” vs. “Please come here and look at this”)
- Asking you to move closer
- Excessive sharing of personal information
- Suggestive or “double meaning” language
- Complimenting you on your looks or an article of clothing in an unprofessional manner
- Escalating verbal communication from seemingly professional to too familiar/intimate

Escalation behaviors

If you identify a pattern of behaviors that seem to indicate that the prospect is attempting to escalate the meeting from a professional encounter to an unprofessional encounter, as if they are “testing the waters” to see how open you will be to an advance, AND you notice isolating behaviors such as constantly looking out of windows, you should be particularly wary of this combination.

It is worth noting that everyone exhibits the behaviors mentioned in this section at one time or another and each behavior in and of itself does not indicate that an individual is a threat. However, it is the combination of behaviors without a seemingly apparent reason for the changes, which should act as a red flag.



Control your emotions

If you begin to feel uncomfortable, it's important that you control your emotions and reactions to them. Reacting calmly and deliberately will ensure you are making safe decisions, and the apparent lack of reaction on your part will make the situation less attractive if the prospect intends harm.

Community Safety

When all is said and done you are part of a community of real estate professionals and it is the responsibility of the community to keep each member safe! The problem of agent safety is impossible to solve if we see each agent as a "lone wolf". However, the problem becomes easy to solve if we see ourselves as part of a community of professionals committed to each other's safety through collaboration and cooperation

What should the MLS be doing to support the associations?

- Reinforce safety through regular messaging when agents sign in to the MLS
- Foster a "We are a community of real estate professionals" attitude
- Deploy an MLS wide crime prevention system in partnership with member associations
- If the MLS has deployed Real Safe Agent:
 - Foster the paradigm shift, from "Any agent could need help on any day" to "Every Agent can help any other agent every day"
 - Display important safety information, such as individuals who are victim shopping when agents log in to the MLS
 - Display positive reinforcement messages, such as giving public kudos to agents responding to "drop-in" alerts

What should the association be doing to support the brokerages?

- Deploy an association wide crime prevention system in cooperation with your MLS
- Foster a "We are a community of real estate professionals" attitude
- Host regular safety classes that teach agents how to prevent crime, not just react to it
- Form a safety committee to develop safety best practices for your area
- Create Safety Awards



Crime Prevention for Real Estate Agents

Notes

- If your MLS or the association has implemented Real Safe Agent:
 - Foster the paradigm shift, from “Any agent could need help on any day” to “Every Agent can help any other agent every day”
 - Periodically send members safety statistics for MLS zones
 - Give public praise, through newsletters and emails, to agents who are responding to “drop-in” alerts and supporting the safety of their colleagues
 - Distribute information about individuals known to be a threat or menace to agents
 - Implement the phrase “Are you listening?” as a reminder to use EAR and respond to “drop in” alerts

What should brokerages be doing to support the agents?

- If your association or MLS has not already implemented a crime prevention system, urge them to do so
- Implement safety procedures
- Create “drop-in” code words or phrases
- Have 3 – 5 minutes of every sales meeting dedicated to a safety topic
- Foster a “We are a community of real estate professionals” attitude
- Implement the EAR system
- If your association or MLS has implemented Real Safe Agent:
 - Foster the paradigm shift, from “Any agent could need help on any day” to “Every Agent can help any other agent every day”
 - Encourage Agents to respond to “Drop-in” alerts
 - Encourage Agents to use the Accompany Me feature
 - Encourage Agents to respond to Accompany Me requests
 - Implement the phrase “Are you listening?” as a reminder to use EAR and respond to “drop in” alerts
 - Utilize the visual safety symbol in high traffic areas of the brokerage



What should agents be doing to support each other?

- If your association or MLS has not already implemented a crime prevention system, urge them to do so
- Share information about individuals that made you feel uncomfortable
- Post safety related information about your listings in an MLS field that is not syndicated
- Share safety information about your listings with buyer's agents when called, texted, or emailed
- **KEEP EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE FOR SAFETY!**
- If your association or MLS has implemented Real Safe Agent:
 - Utilize the Prospect Link feature
 - Rate prospects with whom you felt uncomfortable and respond to clarification requests
 - Issue "drop-in" alerts when you first become uncomfortable with a prospect
 - Respond to other agent's "drop-in" alerts
 - If you are going on a high-risk appointment and don't already have someone to accompany, utilize the Accompany Me Feature
 - Respond to other agents Accompany Requests even if they are from a different brokerage