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School safety essentials to give college students—and parents—peace of mind

**Kaleb A. Brown**

Reviewed

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As we approach the end of July, many are preparing to head to college. For freshmen especially, campus can be an intimidating place to be. Beyond being in a new environment, campuses also have the potential for danger and crimes. The National Center for Education Statistics reported 21,235 crimes committed in college institutions across the nation in 2020. This number may have climbed in the years as more campuses have opened back up in the post-pandemic era.

That said, students shouldn't let the fear of what *could* happen stop them from learning and having a great time at college. It's possible to stay safe as long as you take the necessary precautions. From bike safety products to at-home security measures, here are products and tips that can give students—and parents—well-needed peace of mind this upcoming school year.

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Products to prevent illnesses

While COVID-19 is no longer considered an emergency, the coronavirus, as well as the plain ol' flu, are still around. College students have it particularly bad, as typical semesters take

place during cold and flu season. It's better to be safe than sorry by making sure you're up to date with vaccinations and by wearing a legitimate mask.

Hand sanitizer will be another way to ward off sickness, be it COVID-19, the flu or a simple cold. Applying a spritz of sanitizer from a travel-size bottle before you eat or after you touch highly used objects like door handles can go a long way in keeping germs at bay. When you're in your dorm or apartment, you're better off using soap and water for all your hygienic needs, as it's more effective than killing germs than an alcohol solution.

\$14 from Amazon

\$14 from Amazon

Basics for when you're feeling sick

When you're feeling under the weather at school, there are a few steps you can take toward a speedier recovery and to feel more comfortable. With a thermometer, you can get an accurate reading of your temperature, meaning you'll be able to better gauge the severity of your illness and your needs. The Femometer HGO1 is a digital thermometer that uses infrared to give instant readings. It also has the option of sounding an alarm when your temperature is abnormal.

A humidifier can also be useful in fighting off sickness, as it can help relieve a stuffy nose, ease discomfort and make expelling mucous easier. We've tested several humidifiers and found the Levoit Classic 300S to be the best because it's quiet and can hold a lot of water at once. If that wasn't enough, the 300S is compatible with smart devices so you can set it on a schedule.

\$17 from Amazon

\$85 from Amazon

Ways to enhance your bike safety

Getting to and from your classes in a timely manner is essential in college. One of the ways to achieve this is by riding a bike. While you can do your best to ride safely, accidents can happen and when it comes to biking, the difference between a tragedy and a minor annoyance often comes down to one thing: a helmet. Injury to the skull can prove life-threatening and a helmet mitigates this risk.

Installing a light on your bike is a great safety measure to alert cars of your presence when it's dark. Similarly, a safety vest will reflect the headlights of a car, ensuring that drivers are aware of your position in the dark.

\$70 from Amazon

\$19 from Amazon

\$10 from Amazon

A flashlight in case of emergencies

Whether you're in the middle of a power outage or you find yourself walking in a part of town where streetlights are scarce, a flashlight is a tool you should always have in case of emergencies. The premium edition of the Olight Baton 3 is the best flashlight you can buy. It comes with a stylish, wireless charging case that will give the flashlight a whopping 37.5 hours of use. The Baton 3's small size makes it easy to hold and it has many lighting options that make it useful in a variety of contexts including a strobe light function to alert people of your presence.

\$65 from Olight

First aid essentials for accidents big and small

A first aid kit is another great thing to have at the ready. It isn't just for emergencies but can be used for everyday mishaps like getting a paper cut. It might sit in the medicine cabinet most of the time, but you'll be thankful you have it when you need it. Protect Life's 100-Piece first aid kit is one of the best kits you can buy online. This durable first aid kit is large enough to hold all first aid essentials, yet small enough to be portable. If your first aid kit has enough room, you can add other small items that you might need like a small bag of cough drops or ibuprofen.

\$15 from Amazon

A personal alarm to sound off when you need help

Alarms aren't just for your house or your car—a personal alarm is a great safety measure that can alert others of your presence, as well as prevent someone from approaching you unwantedly. This personal alarm keychain by KOSIN allows you to remove the attached pin,

emitting an ear-piercing, 140 decibel sound (for reference, an ambulance siren is only 112 decibels). If that wasn't enough, the personal alarm also comes with a flashlight.

\$15 from Amazon

A video doorbell to guard your house and belongings

A helpful product to buy if you're living in a house is a video doorbell. Video doorbells, like that from Ring, monitor movement outside your door so that you'll never be caught unaware if someone tries to break into your home or steal your packages. A Ring doorbell can also sound an alarm if someone does end up entering your home while you're away. If you're looking for an inexpensive Ring model, we recommend Ring Video Doorbell Wired, which doesn't sacrifice functionality for affordability. It sports 1080p resolution and helpful modes like the "People Only Mode," which notifies you only when people cause motion as opposed to animals and objects.

\$100 from Amazon

A smart speaker to alert you or make emergency calls

Smart speakers offer many features that will help you to feel safer in your home. These devices are all about convenience and can therefore communicate vital safety information at a moment's notice. For example, you can set up important alerts such as one that informs you of severe weather. It's as simple as saying "Alexa, tell me when there's a severe weather alert." You can also call relatives or emergency services in the event of an urgent problem. We found the fourth-generation Amazon Echo to be the best smart speaker we've tested on account of its cool design, multiple ways to connect to other devices and its high sound quality.

\$100 from Amazon

A water bottle to stay hydrated

It's important to stay hydrated, particularly when you're in school, as it's been found that dehydration can lead to cognitive decline. To make sure you're getting enough water no matter where you are, you should keep a filled water bottle in your backpack at all times. The Brita stainless steel filtered bottle is the best water bottle we've ever tested because of its insulation that keeps water cold for up to 24 hours and filter that keeps away odors and smells.

\$31 from Amazon

Fire safety products are always a must

If you're living in your own house or apartment this semester instead of a dorm, you'll need to make sure your space is equipped with extra safety supplies—you'll be responsible for certain products that would have been included as part of the dorm. One of these products is a fire extinguisher. When a fire becomes too big to handle, you'll need to evacuate. However, if you have an extinguisher, you might just be able to put out a flame before it becomes unmanageable. For small blazes, we recommend getting the Kidde Pro 210 thanks to its lightweight build which makes it easy to use. For bigger flames, you'll want the larger, Kidde Pro 10 MP, which is similar to extinguishers used by professionals.

\$50 from Amazon

\$79 from Walmart

Make sure your living quarters are equipped with a working smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm, too. Just be aware of what type of smoke a given detector reacts to— the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) states that ionization alarms respond to smoke from a flaming fire, while photoelectric alarms tend to react faster to a smoldering fire. As such, the USFA recommends a dual sensor smoke detector that alerts to both kinds of smoke. We prefer the Nest Protect Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm. With a monthly self-test feature and the ability to send push alerts to your phone, we feel this alarm does a great job protecting one's home. Plus, it's reasonably priced.

\$119 from Amazon

A portable battery pack to make sure you always have power

When it comes to safety, there are few devices more vital and convenient than your cell phone. However, a phone is only as good as its charge. Believe us when we say that you don't want to spend all night studying at your school's library only to realize as you begin your walk home that your battery is dead. To prevent situations like this, you should charge a portable battery in advance of being out for a long time. It'll allow you to charge your phone or other small devices even when you're on the go. We recommend getting the Mophie Powerstation Pd, which we found to be the best portable battery pack thanks to its compact build, fast charging capability and large power capacity.

\$34 from Amazon

A tracker to keep tabs on your phone or keys

Whether you misplace them or have them stolen, there are many things you don't want to find yourself without on a college campus including keys, phones and your wallet. To give yourself peace of mind, we recommend using a tracker such as a Tile or AirTag. We've given both a test and found that AirTag is better to use if you have an Apple ecosystem, while Tile is a fine tracker if you need support across more platforms. It's as simple as latching a tracker onto the item you want to keep tabs on and if you ever find yourself without that item, use the handy location tracking on your phone to find the tracking device.

\$28 from Amazon

\$34 from Amazon

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