

What behaviors do police consider to be suspicious?

Please note: While the below behaviors have been known to be consistent with criminal activity, it is entirely possible that there is a simple explanation for what you are seeing. For example, a person observed trying the handles of vehicles *may* be misinformed as to which car belongs to a friend or family member; a person observed loitering within a park *may* be a neighbor's relative making a phone call before heading inside.

Consider the context. Take, for example, a person sitting in a parked car across the street. During the day, someone might pull over to make a phone call or send a text message and then drive away. At night, the context has changed, especially if the lights in the vehicle are off in a residential neighborhood.

Police associate these behaviors with potential criminal activity:

- Someone walking down the street looking into multiple vehicles and/or trying door handles to see if the doors will open.
- Someone taking a package from someone else's property (keep in mind that sometimes neighbors leave or pick up packages for other neighbors).
- A person who is not your neighbor walking about your neighbor's home and looking into windows, or trying to gain access by forcing open a window or door.
- A person knocking on your door and asking to speak with someone who does not live there and who may also go to other homes knocking on doors. This is a tactic used by people with the intent to burglarize to see if people are home. (Keep in mind that people may mistakenly go to the wrong home.)
- Someone claiming to represent a utility company who is either not wearing a uniform, does not produce identification upon request, or does not have a company logo vehicle.
- Someone using binoculars or other devices to peer into your or your neighbors' homes.
- At night, a person sitting inside a vehicle that you do not recognize with the lights off for extended period of time.
- A pushy salesperson not producing identification upon your request or asking to come into your home.
- A vehicle you do not recognize that is circling multiple times around the neighborhood.
- An unusually high flow of people coming and going from a particular home and visiting for just a couple of minutes. (NOTE: Police prefer that you report this to them, rather than post about it.)
- If you feel you are being followed when walking home or to a neighbor's home, and you cross the street and back again and the person(s) crosses along with you.
- Sales crews selling products door to door saying they need to make a quota and who refuse to produce identification upon your request. (The criminal activity may not be what you think. These salespeople may be victims of labor traffickers and can be reported to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline 1 (888) 373-7888. For more information, [read this article on new research about this type of crime.](#))

Why is giving a full description so important?

In the rush of posting about a person or situation that concerns them, many people identify the person involved simply by sex and race. This is a problem for a couple of reasons:

1. It doesn't give your neighbors enough detail to identify the suspect.
2. It casts suspicion on every person of that sex and race who may legitimately be in or live in your neighborhood.

For example, if you saw this post, how would you know who to be on the lookout for?

Suspicious car in neighborhood: Black male in blue Ford sedan doing drive-bys on Shelby Street, near my house at 52 Shelby. Didn't get a photo of the car. Never seen this car before. Keep eyes open.

If you saw this post, you'd know who to look for. However, there is no information that supports the allegation of suspicious behavior:

Look out for suspicious male: There is a black guy, early twenties, walking up and down Arden Avenue, wearing blue jeans and a black hoodie. Please be on the lookout.

The post below describes a behavior that is known to be consistent with criminal activity (trying door handles of multiple cars) and does a better job of helping your neighbors be on the lookout for a specific person rather than a whole race of people, and makes sure that any other Hispanic male who happens to be walking down the street doesn't get pulled over when the police arrive.

Guy checking door handles on Oak and Main: Earlier today at 3:00 pm, I witnessed suspicious behavior on Main and Oak streets. The guy was walking down Main Street looking into vehicles and trying the door handles of multiple cars. He was a tall Hispanic male and was wearing dark blue jeans, a red t-shirt, Nike sneakers, and had a scar on his right arm. I called 911 and reported what I saw.