Do you find the incidence of crime in today’s society alarming? Crime is never far, whether perpetrated by an unknown person, an acquaintance, or a family member. But are criminals your only enemy? Not necessarily. As you read the textbook that accompanies this course, you will soon realize that you might be your own worst enemy. In fact, you can play a significant role in preventing crime. Avoid becoming a victim, and shift your focus from passively wishing for change in others to actively implementing your own personal safety program. This course, “Personal Safety: Self-Defense Strategies,” is designed to help you do just that. Indeed, it promotes self-empowerment. The goal of this course is to enable you to make informed choices about effective self-defense strategies, thus increasing your safety as you go about your daily activities.

This course provides the information you need to help keep you as safe as possible at home, at
work, and in the community. The information is presented in the textbook entitled *Safe Without Sight: Crime Prevention and Self-Defense Strategies for People Who Are Blind*. The textbook, written by Wendy David, Ph.D., Kerry Kollmar, and Scott McCall, was published by National Braille Press. This information will enable you to develop effective self-defense strategies and techniques. This Assignment Manual, written by staff at The Hadley School for the Blind, includes questions and activities that enable your instructor to evaluate your progress.

The course is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on violence and sexual assault. Chapter 2 offers basic precautions to avoid an attack. Chapter 3 discusses specific safety issues at home, at work, and while traveling. Chapter 4 describes how you can increase your personal safety, whether you are working with sighted assistants or going out socially. Chapter 5 offers self-defense options. Chapter 6 explores the dynamics of physical fighting. Chapter 7 describes specific self-defense techniques. Chapter 8 offers
tips to make your self-defense techniques more effective. Chapter 9 concludes the course by suggesting resources that you can access.

Some of the information in the textbook covers controversial topics; for example, sexual assault or the use of weapons. The Hadley School for the Blind doesn’t recommend, endorse, or condone any particular approach to these topics. Moreover, the textbook describes actual self-defense techniques that may lead to injury. The Hadley School recommends that you do not practice these techniques on your own. Rather, the School encourages you to enroll in programs or classes where you can learn to use these techniques safely and efficiently under the supervision of a trained instructor.

You do not need any prerequisite skills to complete the course. You will, however, need the materials that The Hadley School for the Blind has provided and writing tools in the medium of your choice. If you are taking the audio version of this course, you will also need your own cassette player.
You are required to submit nine assignments. After reading each chapter in the textbook, complete its corresponding assignment in the Assignment Manual. As you complete each one, send it to your instructor at

The Hadley School for the Blind

700 Elm Street

Winnetka, IL 60093

You may send your assignments in envelopes labeled “Free Matter for the Blind” provided the assignments are in braille or large print (14 point or larger), or on cassette or computer diskette. To fax your assignments, contact your instructor for a fax cover page. If you plan to send your assignments electronically, contact your instructor to obtain an e-mail address.
Assignment 3

Assignment 3 is based on Chapter 3 of the textbook, *Safe Without Sight*. Complete the assignment in the medium of your choice. Begin by stating your full name, address, and phone number. Also mention the name of this course, Assignment 3, your instructor’s name, and the date you plan to submit this assignment. Then answer the following questions. Be sure to indicate the question number along with your answer. Directions for sending your assignments are included in the Overview to the course.

1. This chapter presented various personal safety tips. Describe one way that you can help circumvent crime in each of the following categories:
   a. at home
   b. in the workplace
   c. on the streets
   d. while traveling
   e. while using public transportation
2. Read the following article from the Fall 1997 issue of *Dialogue*, which is included here for your convenience. *Dialogue* is a quarterly magazine published by Blindskills, Inc., and is available in four formats: large print, cassette, braille, and IBM compatible diskette. For more information, call 800-860-4224. As you read the article, identify at least five precautions you could take to prevent theft, whether you are using a credit card, a debit card, or cash.

**Safe and Secure**

by Dana Nichols

“You must really have to trust people,” a sighted friend commented as I waited for my change at the counter of the fast-food joint where we’d stopped. “It would so easy for someone to take advantage you.”

His attitude was one I’ve met often. Many people think we visually impaired persons are easy targets for con artists and thieves. The truth, of course, is that if we take a few precautions, we are not easy
victims entirely dependent on the goodwill of others.

Most of the precautions we need to take are the same that anyone else would take. For instance, we should use credit cards with care. No one should ever give out his card number over the phone unless he has originated the call. This way, he knows for sure what business he’s dealing with and that it’s not a con artist in a boiler room operation, collecting card numbers for his own uses. We all need to keep a close watch on our card bills so we can report any items that are transactions we didn’t make. I confess I’ve been careless about this. I haven’t been keeping receipts to compare with the bill—but now that I’m keeping track of deductibles for my taxes, I plan to be more careful. By the way, when in a store or restaurant the employee says, “The yellow copy is yours,” all you need to remember is that the yellow copy is the one on the bottom of the carbons.

To avoid other kinds of credit card fraud, it’s a good idea to cut up any old cards or any
unsolicited cards you receive. And, of course, be careful with the scissors. I recently spent an evening in a walk-in emergency room and a week with my thumb taped to my hand after slicing myself with scissors while destroying an old card. In addition, put half the pieces in one trash can and half in another so they can’t be pieced together and used. Do the same with the checks the credit card company sends.

Another precaution that is highly recommended is only taking with you the card you mean to use. If you are headed to Sears, put your Sears card in your pocket and leave all the other cards at home. This way, if your pocket is picked, you have only one charge account to untangle. A coworker of mine had one of those wallet organizers with slots for cash, credit cards, and checkbook. When it was stolen, she spent nearly a month hassling with stores, canceling cards, stopping payment on checks, and replacing her driver’s license and insurance card.

One thing to remember about pickpockets is that
they operate everywhere. When you are trying on clothes, do not set your purse on the floor or leave it unattended while you model your choices. It’s too easy for someone just to walk out with your purse or to lift your wallet out. When you are at the counter paying, go through the tedious routine of zipping and snapping your purse shut each time you take your wallet out so no one can reach into your purse while your attention is focused on signing a check. Taking out your wallet before you reach the checkout counter makes it easy for someone to walk by and grab it, so leave it in your pocket or purse until you are actually ready to pull money out of it.

If you like the convenience of plastic better than cash, but not the idea of paying interest, you may want to try a check card. It can be used like a VISA card, but it debits your bank account directly. Stores, especially grocery stores, love it because they don’t have the inconvenience of the paperwork involved with checks. The only problem is remembering to enter each transaction in a check register so as not to overdraw the account.
The check card can also be used at the automatic teller machine (ATM) and has a personal identification number (PIN) assigned to it. Discretion with PIN numbers is another essential precaution. Often we have sighted people aid us with getting money from the ATM or using a check card at the store. These people are usually friends who can be trusted, but the people around the machine may not be. Never recite your PIN number aloud. The privacy and security of your account is worth the effort involved in putting your own hand on the number pad and entering the PIN yourself.

Of course, taxis and some other businesses honor only cash. I like to use cash for small purchases. Like most visually impaired persons, I have a system of folding bills for identification, and I never pay with a bill that will get me any bills but ones as change. That is, if the tab is eight dollars, I pay with a ten, not a twenty. If the tab is fourteen dollars, I pay with a ten and a five, not a twenty. This way, I don’t have to trust anyone’s honesty or skill in helping me identify bills. It’s also faster when there are nineteen impatient people in line.
behind me.

There are other aspects of potential victimization. A family member used to worry that if I walked alone, someone might follow me home and break into the house—not a far-fetched idea nowadays.

A few precautions are reasonable here. One thing we can do is stay alert. Often people walk while listening to a Walkman on headphones. This is unwise, because the headphones block out not only the traffic cues, but also the sounds a stalker might make. One obvious precaution is to vary your routine. If you don’t take your walk down the same street every day or let your dog out at the same time every day, it makes you a more difficult target. Also, studies have shown that a brisk, confident manner of walking makes you less attractive as a victim than does a hesitant shuffle.

If you still feel unsafe, you can walk with a friend. There are several personal protection devices to try. I don’t recommend Mace, because it is too easy to accidentally spray it at yourself. For about ten dollars, however, you can purchase what’s
called a body alarm. Tucked in a pocket, it makes an earsplitting noise when set off. It would certainly wake up your neighbors and scare away any thug who had followed you home.

A variation of this kind of alarm for someone who’s been followed home is a part of a home security system. One variation works by entering the system code backwards on the control pad. It makes the system show that it is deactivated, while a silent alarm has been transmitted to the police. Other security systems offer handheld controls with a range of several hundred feet, so you could summon the police or paramedics if something happened to you while you were out checking the mail.

Speaking of security systems, a home alarm system is a good investment. They range widely in cost, but you can get a bare-bones system for about $100. Most offer monitoring for $15 to $25 per month. Some people use them to deter burglars, but I don’t care that much even about my computer. I just don’t want to wake up with a
knife at my throat. If you live alone in a rough area, it’s worth the money for peace of mind.

I’ve installed intercoms at the doors, cheap ones from a local electronics store, so I won’t have to open the door to find out who’s there. Recently, when the doorbell rang, I pressed the intercom and asked, “Who is it?” After a moment, a small voice answered, “It’s just me. House, do you want to buy some Girl Scout cookies?”

So, with a few reasonable precautions, we visually impaired persons don’t have to be the victims everyone thinks we are. We can be safe, even from little girls selling Girl Scout cookies.

Now that you have finished the article, identify at least five precautions that you could take to prevent theft, whether you are using a credit card, a debit card, or cash.

Once you have completed this assignment, mail, fax, or e-mail it to your instructor. Then begin Chapter 4: Your Personal Safety with Readers, Drivers, Helpers, and Dates.