



How to Deal with Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault in Public Spaces



With the aim of ensuring the right to sexual self-determination, German criminal law against sexual offences was extended and strengthened in 2016. Non-consensual sexualized touching of a person is a criminal offence; as is exploiting an element of surprise to startle the victim when committing sexual offences.

Public sexual offences may include, but aren't limited to:

- Forcible kissing
- Groping bottom or groin area
- Grabbing/ Touching breasts

Blame for sexual misconduct always lies solely with the perpetrator - never the victim!

The perpetrator makes an active decision to commit the offence and bears full responsibility for doing so.

If you find yourself in a situation where you are experiencing intimidating sexual behavior, numerous factors play a role in averting danger. There's no overall easy way to respond to an emergency. However, the following suggestions have proven to be helpful in such situations, and can additionally benefit your general sense of safety in public spaces.



Stay Alert!



Keep a Safe Distance!



Walk Away!



Request Help from Others!



Call the Police!

Polizei Berlin
Landeskriminalamt 13 / 14
Fachdezernate für Sexualdelikte
Keithstraße 30
10787 Berlin

1. Non-Consensual Touching in a Crowd

Someone gropes you e.g. on public transport? Even though it's hard, make brief, direct eye contact with the offender; assert yourself loudly and firmly: "Don't touch me! I don't know you!" This will set a clear boundary - that can be heard by bystanders.

Using formal language and addressing the perpetrator in a way that makes it clear you don't know the person, will also alert bystanders to your situation. If it's unclear who harassed or assaulted you, you can, for example, ask loudly: "Who just touched me?" and demand, "Stop!" Stay clear and keep your distance. If the perpetrator is persistent, demand the person stay away from you. The greater the physical distance between you and the perpetrator, the more options you have to take action.

And if nothing seems to help? Address bystanders directly and explain what happened. Insist on their help. Ask them to verbally support you, to call the police or to press the emergency call button (on S- and U-Bahn trains, as well as stations). If there's no other option, pull the emergency brake.

In Berlin, the S-Bahn/Deutsche Bahn offers silent passenger assistance via WhatsApp. You can alert authorities without having to make a call by sending a message to +49 (0)30 29712971.

2. Out on Your Own at Night?

Out alone in the dark, feeling afraid walking through an unlit park? Keep your head up, make sure your posture is upright; keep your core strong. Stay aware of your surroundings. Listen to your instincts. Take a detour along a well-lit and busy street. Keep an eye out for other people who appear trustworthy and are walking in the same direction as yourself. And, if that doesn't work?

Plan ahead where you might be able to go in case of an emergency (e.g. a shop, kiosk or restaurant). Most people can relate to situations that feel unsafe or frightening and are happy to help. Practicing your response to an emergency situation can help you react more quickly when under shock in an actual scenario. Call the police as soon as possible.

3. Attending Crowded Events

What if someone gropes your breasts or groin area during a large event? Plan your homeward journey in advance. Make sure you find your bearings around the venue. Where are the security staff located? Where can you get help in case of an emergency? Where can you withdraw to? Stay alert and take your gut feeling seriously. Avoid situations that seem dangerous!

If you're being harassed by a an offender, experience has proven that acting abruptly and contrary to the offender's expectations is helpful: Shout loudly, make a scene, attract attention. Quickly remove yourself from the situation and seek help from people who appear trustworthy.

What to do if that doesn't work? Address bystanders directly and insist on help. Call security and the police.

4. Report the Incident

Immediately reporting sexual harassment and sexual assault to the police increases the likelihood of solving the case: witnesses may still be at the scene and give statement; any video footage can be secured. However, you can always report the incident at any time afterwards - at any police station or via the Berlin Police "Online Police Station".

Your statement can help prevent further offences!



**Berlin Police
"Online Police Station"**



**Further information on how to help
with safety in mind - Civic Courage!**



**Further information for victims
and witnesses of crime**