

# Don't depend on the police. Learn to survive by yourself (even in case of a terrorist attack)

Hello. This is the ex-editor of Kit and the author of the Telegram channel [“Culture worker”](#) Stepan Botarev.

Perhaps you didn't know but the name of our publication is short for “survival kit”. Someday the founders of Kit envisioned it as a media that would help you survive in a broken world. But, perhaps, never before have the editors of the newsletter had to take this as literally as today – we have prepared for you a real survival instruction. We hope that it will come as useful to you – and better yet, hoping that you'll never have to use these tips.

On 22nd March 2024, in Moscow's “Crocus City Hall” concert hall, one of the scariest terrorist attacks in the history of modern Russia has occurred. Terrorists [shot](#) the visitors and set the building on fire. No less than 139 people have died. Russian special services [could not](#) ensure safety nor arrest the terrorists at the crime scene.

In this message I'll tell you how to survive in an emergency: in a fire, a man-made or natural disaster, or if you ever – God forbid – happen to be in the middle of a terrorist attack. I'll explain how to overcome panic and not perish in a stampede, when it's the safest to run away and when to hide, how to provide first aid and if you should ever engage in a direct confrontation with a terrorist.



## Navigation

This message has **15 thousand characters**, reading it will take about 15 minutes.

**This is a script.** That's how Kit calls instructions for defining a vital strategy. We take a given situation, research the sources and recommend a list of actions. Complete them step-by-step or selectively – depending on the situation that you ended up in. We recommend reading the entire text to be prepared for everything.

### ■ First and foremost – always be ready

Yes, you can prepare for a terrorist attack wherever you are: in a cinema, a shopping mall, a night club, a restaurant or a gym. There are several ways to do that.

First of all, always pay attention to the escape routes in buildings, the Australian government's [memo advises](#). Try to “[play the firefighter](#)” – in any place try to remember where the entrance and exits are located, as well as considering evacuation routes. Former Navy SEAL and the host of a [TV show](#) on disaster survival Cade Courtley [recommends](#) to

remember at least three backup routes, as well as places and objects that could be used as temporary shelter in the future.

The Red Cross [suggests](#) writing down the phone numbers of emergency services and your close ones on paper. Always take this list with you – for example, in the cover of your passport or inside of your phone case. Also, work out a plan in a case where you'll have to quickly evacuate your home – in this case think how you can take care of your pets. When leaving your home, you'll need to turn off electricity, gas and water – learn to do this quickly.

In advance agree with your close ones on meeting places, in case a disaster strikes the region where your home is located. This talk can surprise your relatives – tell them that this safeguard definitely isn't excessive at this point in time. You can also choose a close one who lives far from your home and agree with your relatives: in case of emergency, you'll call that person to tell them your current location. When you and your relatives won't have signal (let's say that you've lost your phones), it's easier to call one person – for example, through police services – than to try calling each other.

### ■ Prepare a “survival kit”

It can be a backpack or a bag with everything important – so that in case of anything you won't have to gather resources in a hurry. The Red Cross [advises](#) always keeping a kit like that at home in case of a disaster. First of all, it should have water (4 liters per day per person) and nonperishable [food](#). For example: grain, pasta, canned food, vegetable oil, dried fruits, powdered milk, salt, coffee, tea.

There should be enough for at least 3 days if you plan on evacuating, or 2 weeks – in case you plan to survive through the disaster at home.

Other than that, the kit should have means of hygiene, a [first aid kit](#) (antiseptics, antibiotics, painkillers, a tourniquet, bandages, band aids, scissors, tweezers, gloves), the medication you need, a Swiss army knife, flashlight, battery-powered radio, an [emergency blanket](#), a map of your city and cash. If you're leaving your home for an extended period of time – you'll also need matches, duct tape and sleeping bags.

### ■ Calm down (but don't waste too much time on it)

Life-threatening situations inevitably cause panic – a short but powerful [attack](#) of fear. The breathing and pulse get faster, while the brain [goes](#) into autopilot mode: the activity in the prefrontal lobe – the most developed part of the brain that is responsible for making conscious decisions – [rapidly drops](#). That's why the first thing you should do to save yourself is to try not to panic.

Most [often](#), people [recommend](#) taking control of your breath. For example, slowly [inhaling](#) through your nose for 4 seconds, then holding your breath for 4 seconds, and then exhaling through your mouth for 4 seconds. Repeat that until you feel calmer.

The Australian charity organization *St John Ambulance Victoria* that teaches to provide first aid, [advises](#) to repeat a calming phrase to yourself. For example: “It'll all be okay”. Try to

[calm down](#) others too. Don't be rude, show compassion and offer the people surrounding you to [practice](#) breathing exercises together.

But don't spend too much time calming down, especially in the very beginning of an emergency situation. At this time, it's way more important to act – for example, running away. Especially if there's a terrorist attack happening, and people are shooting near you. And don't shoot videos: it's not only dangerous, but also takes valuable time, and very-very important now. "If you survive the first 10 seconds of this type of ambush, you have a much better chance of making it out alive", — [says](#) the former Navy SEAL Cade Cortley.

## ■ Run

Your main [tactic](#) during a terrorist attack is "Run, Hide, Tell". **Run the moment you see a safe route**, the Australian government's [memo explains](#). Leave the attack zone as quickly and silently as possible. Invite others to follow you, but if they struggle to, don't slow down. If you forgot your phone or other valuables, don't go back. Your life is more important.

Stay away from open spaces – for example, corridors and lobbies. Run from cover to cover while the shooter isn't aiming at you, Cade Courtley [advises](#). If you have to run through an open space, wait for a pause in the shooting – most likely the criminal is reloading their weapon.

"You should run in short, swift and zig-zagging sprints. [Such] dashes make it hard to aim and hit. Three steps forward, one to the side", — [writes](#) Gennadiy Sarayev, the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Republic of Karelia, in a memo to schoolchildren in case of a terrorist attack. An American servicemember with 20 years of experience Lucas Eyre [thinks](#) differently: "The further away you are the harder you'll be to hit. <...> Zig-zagging takes too long." That is why he recommends to run straight.

In any case, the firearm [experts](#), for example Greg Ellifritz from the Tactical Defense Institute, [declare](#) that there is no proof that one specific way to escape from a shooter is better than another. Most importantly – run away as far as possible from the place of shooting. But first give it a good thought if you should run away right now to not become an easy target, Cade Courtley [warns](#).

## ■ Act responsibly in case of a stampede

To escape from a large gathering of people alive you should follow several rules, [writes](#) Mehdi Moussaid, a French expert on crowd behavior.

First, move as fast as possible, letting the flow guide you. Don't stop, or else the crowd will just take you down.

Second, try not to fall and don't let yourself get pushed against a wall – that is one of the most dangerous places. If you end up falling down, [turn](#) on your left side and take a fetal position: that's how you protect your heart and lungs. Try to get up as quickly as possible.

Third, control your breath and don't scream losing oxygen, because the most frequent cause of death in stampedes is caused by suffocation. Keep your hands at chest level, so that other people won't crush it and so that you can breathe.

### ■ Hide in case you don't have other escape routes

Many people in "Crocus City" managed to save themselves because they hid in a basement. "We somehow got out of the hall with a pretty large group. Here the security guard helped us. He quickly led us to the very bottom, to the basement. He shut the metal door, men began to hold it down so that terrorists wouldn't get through and shoot us all up. At this time there was still shooting happening above," — [said](#) a woman that survived the terrorist attack.

**You must hide if you think that running is risky.** It's best to take cover where there is a physical obstacle between you and the terrorists. For example, in a building where you can lock the door and barricade it with a heavy object, the Australian government [explains](#) in a memo. Searching for somebody through locked cabinets or trying to breach the door is a time waster for terrorists, Gennadiy Sarayev [assures](#).

In a closed room you can attempt to quietly call for help using a phone. The single emergency number in Russia and [most](#) countries of the world is 112.

In a hideout turn off the sound and vibration on your phone, ask others to do the same. Be as quiet as possible. Think where you will run if you have to leave the hideout. Don't stay there if it gets dangerous – for example, in case of smoke blanketing.

### ■ Know how to behave during a fire or explosion

In a burning building – keep close to the ground, because smoke rises to the ceiling – and leave the premises ASAP. [Do not](#) use the elevator – run down the staircase. Before opening a door, carefully touch the handle. If it's hot – there's likely a fire behind it. In this case, the London fire brigade [advises](#) searching for a different exit.

If an explosion happens, [do your best](#) to leave the building as quickly as you can – you don't have much time. If the ceiling starts crumbling, [get under](#) a table or other cover. If you can't escape the building but are sure that the perpetrators already left it, send signals so that you can be rescued: loudly scream and whistle, bang on pipes and use the flashlight.

### ■ Be ready to talk to the police and the emergency services

The more information you relay to the police by phone, the better. Try to speak clearly and calmly. If you can, tell them where the attack happened, what did the terrorists do, how many of them are there, which direction they're moving in, what weapons they use, how many people are in the threat zone and how many are injured. If the motives of the terrorists are known – mention them too.

You might be asked to stay on the line but remember that your main priority is safety. So, stop speaking if it puts your life at risk.

When the police come, be ready that they will act harshly and may even point weapons toward you: they need to make sure that you aren't the perpetrator. In that case, [raise](#) your arms so that the police can see you're unarmed. Do everything that they tell you. Avoid sharp movements and don't scream, the London police's memo [advises](#). The main task of the police is neutralizing the attackers, they [can](#) leave you where you are and evacuate later – when it gets safer.

## ■ Learn to help the wounded

If there are no doctors nearby and you want to help the people nearby – and know how to do it – first, make sure that you're in safety. Immediately think where you'll escape to if the terrorists come back, the British Counter Terrorism Policing network [recommends](#).

**Provide first aid to those who are significantly injured, and those who lost consciousness.** You don't need to try and help several people at once.

[Examine](#) the person. If there are several wounds, take care of the largest one first. If the person is bleeding, the wound should be covered with hands or cloth (for example, [a shirt](#)) and applied pressure to. The Red Cross [explains](#): “You need to create a kind of plug so that blood would stop flowing out”. Then call an ambulance and keep applying pressure to the wound. The person may feel hurt by pressure on the wound – tell them that this will save their life. Don't pull up the cloth to check if the bleeding has stopped.

[Do not](#) try to clean the wound if it's large. [Do not](#) use alcohol, hydrogen peroxide or iodine: they can damage body tissues. Don't worry about the sterility of the plug: antibiotics can deal with a possible infection later, and it's more important now to stop the bleeding, the American medics [explain](#). If the wound has a foreign object in it, for example a piece of metal, [do not pull it out](#): the bleeding may get stronger.

If the wound is on the head, lay the person on the floor, slightly raising their head and shoulders. [Apply](#) a clean cloth to the wound, but don't put pressure on it if you suspect that the victim has a skull fracture.

If the person turns pale and gets cold, [put](#) clothes under them and raise their feet above the body: this will increase the blood flow towards the heart and brain. Calm down the person and cover them with something so they won't freeze, the Red Cross [advises](#).

If the wound is on a hand or leg and the bleeding doesn't stop, and there is no way to wait for the ambulance to arrive, you can apply a tourniquet. But don't do it unless you know how to. The European Resuscitation Council [asks](#) that you don't use improvised tourniquets – for example, a belt or a scarf, – only tourniquets from a pharmacy and only if you have received special training.

By the way, about the training. To feel more confident, you can take courses on providing first aid – for example, at [Red Cross](#), the [National Resuscitation Council](#) or in training centers of “[Spasatel Ryadom](#)” and “[Vershina](#)” projects. The ability to help a wounded person is an extremely useful skill.

## ■ Pay attention to those who are unconscious or aren't breathing

If you think that a person lost consciousness, call out to them and give them a pat on the shoulders. Check if the person is breathing: [lay](#) them on a flat surface, raise their lower jaw and [put an ear](#) to their nose. While doing that, check if their chest rises. Monitor for 10 seconds. If you feel their breathing, turn the person on their side and [tilt](#) their head back: this will help them not to suffocate, the British Counter Terrorism Policing network [explains](#). Call an ambulance.

If a person isn't breathing, it's likely that their heart has stopped. Perform an [indirect heart massage](#) (CPR) so that the blood could again flow to the brain and other important organs.

For that, [lay](#) the person on the floor and sit on your knees next to them. [Put](#) your hands in the middle of the chest – one hand should cover the other – and push 30 times, twice a second. For simplicity: it's about the tempo of [Stayin' Alive](#). Push no less than 5 centimeters deep and let the chest come back to the initial position after each push.

After this perform artificial respiration: hold their chin with 2 fingers and hold their nose. Take a breath and exhale strongly into their mouth for about a second – so that their chest rises. Repeat that twice. After this, press on their chest 30 times again. After that – perform artificial respiration again. Do this until the person becomes conscious again or the ambulance arrives. If you can't manage to do it – continue to perform heart massage. If there are other people nearby, tell them how to act and [continue](#) taking turns.

You will be taught how to correctly provide first aid on special courses. So, we'll repeat the advice again: take them.

## ■ Be prepared to fight back

If you will get attacked – you can fight back against the criminal. But only do this as a last resort – if they are trying to kill you, and you can't run away or hide. In this case, by Russian laws, you [have](#) the full right to defend yourself “[by any means necessary](#)”.

Find items that you can use for defense – for example, a fire extinguisher or scissors. Hit their eyes, neck, crotch, nose or on the head, the Slovenian police [advises](#). Scream, throw heavy things at the criminal and call other people for help. Experts in self-defense from the Texas State University [add](#): “Fight with full force until the attacker is stopped”.

In a situation where contact is inevitable, it's [important](#) to be determined and aggressive, “trust your feelings” and believe in success. Doing this will be way easier if you take a [self-defense course](#).

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“Ever heard that advice? Take a deep breath and you'll feel better. It didn't help me even before a simple math exam. My heart was still beating wildly. And when I got lost in a forest 2 years ago – even more so”, — Martin Gebhardt, a survivalist from Berlin, [said](#) in 2023. After getting lost in a forest, the man panicked and started running in circles.

Remembering that experience, Gebhardt said: “Now I know: you need to have a strong will to calm down. You need to force yourself to stop panicking, and after that take a deep breath. And then tell yourself: ‘I’ll make it’.”

For it to be easier for you to pull yourself together and survive in a deathly dangerous situation, you need to be prepared. Do your best to remember the information from this text and, maybe, one day, it’ll save your life.

■

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