

# 5 Top Tricks To Survive Dangerous Gangs

- *Be confident and make brief eye contact. Don't look like a victim but check your ego and show respect.*
- *Maintain situational awareness. Scan waists and hands for weapons.*
- *Learn what gangs are active in your area, how to identify members.*
- *Learn what kinds of crimes they commit and how it goes down. Understanding that, you can reduce both your risk and your exposure to it.*
- *Caches give you the ability to start over should you be forced by a superior force to capitulate or flee.*

## Gangs

When Survivopedia readers were asked what the greatest threat was in their neighborhoods, the number one answer was ... gangs! I can't say I'm surprised at that.

Gangs are already a serious problem in the US today, with more than a million and a half members of street gangs, but in the chaos and disorder of emergencies, gang membership skyrockets, making gangs an even bigger problem whenever the rule of law gives way to anarchy.

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At times like these, people want to know that somebody has their back, so the stress, volatility, and change that accompanies catastrophes drives people to group up. Prison gangs are a well-known example of this behavior.

# Situational Awareness & Avoidance

Learn what gangs are operating in your area and how they operate. Each gang has its own SOP and its own IFF (Identification Friend or Foe). Depending on the type of gang, they may use colors (hats, T-shirts, bandannas) or tattoos. Biker gangs, for example, will often wear sleeves (tattoos on their forearms) with symbols that carry meanings to anyone familiar with them. Catalogs of gang tattoos are available from various law enforcement agencies online. Download catalogs and research gangs active in your area. The gang units of police departments and correctional facilities sometimes have online resources such as catalogs of gang tattoos where you can look them up and decipher their meanings.

In an area of Brazil that I visit, two of the local gangs are called Estados Unidos (United States) and Al-Qaeda. And the EU (US) gang used the US Flag as their colors, which I found out when I brought Zippo Lighters emblazoned with the US Flag to give away as souvenirs. I wanted to bring something made in the USA but could have caused trouble for people I liked if they used them in public.



On situational awareness, in the favelas (slums), Brazilian

gangs employ low-tech methods to warn the residents of raids by the police or by rival gangs. Chief among these fireworks touched off by lookouts. They are cheap and effective. When people hear them, they know to get behind hardcover because bullets are about to fly.

Two examples of SOP of Brazilian gangs are robbing buses and kidnapping. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuban communist revolutionaries experienced major cashflow problems. One of their solutions was to train operatives to carry out kidnappings for ransom, some of which took place in Brazil. Some claim that when the communist kidnappers were caught and imprisoned, they trained Brazilian criminals to carry out kidnappings, but judging by the SOP, I think the idea was more largely disseminated through the media, giving small gangs the idea that they could make money by pulling off kidnappings for ransom, mostly without professional training.

Aware of the fact that local gangs kidnap foreigners to make money, I investigated restraint escape and SERE techniques, started restraint escape training, and integrated restraint escape gear into my EDC.

In the bus robbery scenario, armed thugs board a bus. One puts a handgun to the driver's head to stop the bus and the other walks from one end of the bus to the other with a backpack or bag. He instructs everybody to drop their wallet, cellphone and jewelry in the bag. If someone doesn't hand it over and he feels like they are holding out, he unceremoniously shoots that individual in the head and moves to the next person.

Where possible, use superior situational awareness to avoid problems. That doesn't mean that when you see them, and they see you, you stop, turn around and head in the other direction. That will make you look like prey, triggering a predatory pursuit response. You wouldn't do that with a dog and it won't be any more effective here.

Do what you should be doing anytime you come in sight of another on the street, scan their waist and hands for weapons.

## Reduce Risk & Exposure

Understanding the SOP greatly improves one's chances of surviving this type of robbery, not to mention limiting exposure to lose. To mitigate risk in this scenario, as well as muggings, my wife and I, employ various techniques:

- **Don't Say, "What?"** – Understand criminal SOP and stay alert. Even if you speak the same language (more or less), it may be hard the slang of some thug's slang. Just hand over what you have. My brother-in-law was walking with some Americans one night and this very situation happened. The gangbanger lifted his shirt to show them his handgun, one of the Americans didn't have his head on a swivel and didn't understand what was happening or what the guy he was asking. It didn't go like the scene in Pulp Fiction Jules tell the kid to, "Ask me, 'What!' one more time!" either. The banger got frustrated and shot the guy in the head. Fortunately, he lived and made a full recovery, but gunshot wounds to the head don't always work out like that.
- **Report Binder Money Clips** – When carrying a lot of cash, break it up into smaller amounts instead of rolling it in a single, easy to find roll of cash. That way you lose some of your money, not all of it. With minor modification, the handles on the report binder clips can open a range of handcuffs and it's easy to pinch one-off.
- **Drop Wallet** – Put some expired credit cards and a believable amount of cash in a wallet so you have a wallet to drop in the bag.
- **Decoy Cell Phone** – Robberies and muggings are so common that quite a few locals save their old cellphones when they upgrade. They carry their old cellphone in their

hand or back pocket and their new cellphone goes in their waistband, at least while out on the street.

- **Don't Wear Expensive Jewelry** – This should just be common sense, but then every time I look at an EDC group or an EDC lineup on Uncrate, all the jewelry, expensive watches, and matching everything make me wonder. I suppose you could have that rare survival situation in Beverly Hills or on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Scottsdale, where you need to impress some gold digger while simultaneously saving the day but why would you want to? And carrying a bunch of expensive accessories makes you a target everywhere else.
- **Carry Concealed** – If things do go sideways, sometimes your chances of survival are better if you fight. Train regularly and learn when it's better to fight and when it's better not to. I carry concealed in the USA, but for the time being Brazil is a non-permissive environment, so I only carry what I can get away with there. Fortunately, Brazil has a new president and his platform included the restoration of gun rights, which Brazilians voted for in a referendum. Unfortunately, last time around, they voted a corrupt socialist regime into power that refused to approve any permits, arguing that the country had enough police to protect the citizens.



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# Respect

Gangs are usually trying to control what they see as their territory. When you disrespect a gang banger, you might as well break out the dueling pistols because it's the modern-day equivalent of removing your glove to slap him across the face with it or insulting a gentleman in public. Only he and his buddies are going to jump you five to one. Once you disrespect him, he has no choice but to act or he'll lose face with other gang members, pissing away hard-earned street cred.

When you encounter someone on the street that you think might despite what you may have heard, don't avoid eye contact. Walk confidently, make brief eye contact and give one of them a curt nod to acknowledge their presence. Don't scowl or frown in disapproval, but don't smile either. Give them the respect they are looking for. If challenged, verbalize the message, "I'm not disrespecting you."

# Check Your Ego

Checking your ego is a whole lot less painful than what you'll go through if you pull your weapon. The best case is, you win, they lose and now you get to go to court and defend yourself a second time. Unfortunately, it seldom works out that way. More often, innocent bystanders get shot, the victim gets shot and lives get changed for the worse.

I moved from a wealthy suburb to an urban area with a lot of gang activity. I was assaulted twice, mugged, had two cars stolen, stopped an attempted carjacking, I walked into a dry cleaner after an armed robbery and found the cashier on the floor and have cleaned up after so many break-ins that I lost track. I have lost acquaintances, have had family traumatized, and had a friend go to prison for homicide.

The first time, I felt violated. I was furious. I already had

an alarm system, so I installed cameras (which didn't have a deterrent effect.) I spent the night in my business in case they came back. But by the third or fourth time, it started becoming routine. Eventually, I hardened my store to the point where it wasn't successfully broken into again. Criminals tried to cut the back door off with a cutting torch and still didn't succeed in gaining entry. It got to the point where I knew exactly how much everything cost and could determine whether I needed to file an insurance claim within a couple of minutes.

It was educational. I learned all about crime and how to make a place hard to break into. I also learned how to check my ego, but more importantly, I learned why it is usually the smarter play to do so.

Eventually, I relocated to one of the safest places in the country and am glad I did.

## **Post-SHTF Gangs**

Depending upon which lines society fractures, people may group up based on ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, economic class or geography. They group up with others they think are like them in some way, because they see the world from an adversarial paradigm: "us vs. them". In groups, numbers and the perception of authority granted by them turns people capable of acts of cruelty that they would not be capable of as individuals.

You may have seen this behavior in dogs. One or two is no big deal, but three or more turns them into a pack, awakening predatory instincts even in pets. When boys get together, instead of increasing the collective IQ, the number seems to diminish it: one boy, one brain ... two boys, half a brain ... and the larger the group, they collectively dumber things they become capable of.

Absent the rule of law, gang membership skyrockets. Consider grouping up for security. Groups form around existing logistics infrastructures, geography, and so on, so having indispensable skills and being able to arm, feed, and train a new group or to quickly expand one can help position you.

To set the record straight, regardless of your neighborhood, the thing that's most likely to kill you is probably microbes, since they kill more people than violence or combat-related injuries even in past wars. But gangs are certainly the more visible, and in some cases, more urgent threat.

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