



Practical Hijacking Prevention Tips

Hijackings are rapid, unpredictable, and often happen when you're distracted – pulling into your driveway, leaving a parking bay, or stopping at a robot. The intent is not to induce fear, but to encourage calm, repeatable habits that lower risk and support a safer response if the worst occurs.

According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), Gauteng accounts for the highest number of hijacking cases, with the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal ranked second and third.

A simple protective measure is the **20-second rule**. Before unlocking, opening, or exiting your vehicle, pause and assess your environment. Scan left and right, check your mirrors, and watch for people lingering, observing, or moving suspiciously, as well as vehicles parked nearby without a clear purpose. If you sense danger, do not proceed. Drive around the block, head to a busier area, or ask someone to meet you outside. A brief pause may prevent a dangerous situation.

Apply this awareness when entering your car and while driving. Keep your **keys** handy but hidden, as searching at the door increases vulnerability. Quickly **scan** the interior before getting in. At robots or stop streets, **leave space** ahead to manoeuvre if needed. **Reduce distractions** by hiding your phone, keeping windows closed while stationary, and concealing valuables. If a car repeatedly follows your turns, consider it intentional and drive to a public, well-lit area.

Avoid falling into **routine** near home, as predictability increases risk. If a situation feels staged or unsafe, call emergency services from a safe location rather than stopping.

Parking demands the same caution. Choose well-lit, busy areas and scan before unlocking. Avoid standing with your back to an open booth, and minimise time spent stationary. **At home**, treat your driveway as an intersection: slow, scan, then commit. If you notice an unknown vehicle, an open gate, or a loiterer nearby, drive past and reassess elsewhere. Enter promptly and wait for the gate to close completely before relaxing.

Preparedness is about awareness, consistency, and informed protection – practical steps that can make a real difference when seconds matter.

If hijacked, personal safety comes first.

DO

- Keep calm, comply, and focus on getting away safely.
- Keep your hands visible and movements slow.
- Follow instructions if threatened – your life is more important than your vehicle.
- Be observant (voices, direction of travel, vehicle details) without staring.
- Get to safety first, then contact SAPS and your insurer or tracking provider.

DO NOT

- Argue, threaten or challenge hijackers.
- Fight to keep your phone, handbag or wallet.
- Make sudden movements or reach beneath seats.
- Idle unnecessarily in your driveway or parking bay.
- Assume "it won't happen here".

After ensuring your safety, promptly report the incident to the South African Police Service, notify your tracking company if applicable, and inform your insurer to begin the claims process.

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