



Tracking the Stalker:

What you need to know about documenting the stalker's actions¹

Are you being stalked?

Is someone repeatedly following or watching you, showing up unexpectedly, or communicating with you in ways that seem obsessive or makes you concerned or afraid for your safety?

Stalking is a pattern of behavior that usually is very frightening, unpredictable, and dangerous. The stalker might be someone you have had a relationship with or someone you don't know or have barely met. Stalking can begin at any time including while you are in a relationship with a partner, or even after a no contact order has been issued. Stalking is a crime in most states, although the legal definitions vary from state to state.

There are many benefits to tracking the stalker's tactics by keeping a detailed log.

Why should I keep a log of the stalker's actions?

1. Document the intentional nature of the stalker's actions. Logging or tracking the stalker's actions will increase your credibility if, and when you seek help from others. Not only will it help you remember specific dates, times, and details but it will show others that you are not talking about a few minor instances that could be dismissed as "accidental." Tracking all of the things the stalker does shows others that what the stalker is doing is intentional, not accidental.

2. Collect evidence. Even though you may not want to involve the police or the court system at this point, having documentation or other evidence can be crucial if you ever do decide to pursue help through the court. The log, if you collect all of the information you need, may show a course of conduct, document your fears, and provide police with corroborating evidence or guide police to what evidence could be collected.

3. Help others understand. Detailing the full picture of the tactics the stalker is using against you and the harms or losses you have suffered because of the stalker can increase others awareness of how harmful this is to you and your family. This is key to getting others to take the stalking seriously.

4. Increase your safety. Stalking logs can show patterns and areas of risk and provide information that can help you target your safety. Keeping a log of the stalker's behaviors can also help others identify ways in which they may be able to increase your safety and intervene with the stalker.

What should I include in the log?

1. Incident description. Date, time, and specific description and location of the incident. Include everything, even if it seems small or insignificant, even if you are not sure it was the stalker, and even if it is being done by others associated with the stalker. It is unlikely that all of the things that are happening to you during the course of stalking are coincidental.

2. Corroborating evidence. All evidence should be preserved, including time, date, and location of each incident, and full name(s) and phone number(s) of any witness(es). When possible, take pictures or videos. You should collect and preserve evidence, including photographs. Keep all notes, emails, text message, gifts, and pictures. Keep documentation and evidence organized, easy to access, and with you at all times.

Whether or not the police are involved, be sure to write as much detail as possible about where and when the incident occurred, even if you do not have any other evidence. It is possible that police can get evidence through surveillance videos from stores or other businesses, or by tracing phone numbers. Also, any accommodations at your place of work or other places you frequent should be noted. If possible, have security document any work disturbance and accommodations.

All receipts for repairs, pictures or other evidence of damage should be kept. Also keep in mind that your cell phone and computer may be “crime scenes” containing important evidence. If you go to court you may want to bring witnesses with you, if possible.

Make sure you have copies of this information (texts, pictures, etc) that are printed out for others and make sure all of the information is organized and easy to access, and easy for them to copy and put into their agency/court records if needed. Always bring the documentation and corroborating evidence to court or to other agencies that may need to see it.

3. Police or court system notification and response or other agency notification and responses. You may or may not decide to involve the police, the court system, or other offices (e.g., Probation and Parole, victim services), but if you called the police or other agencies (e.g. probation officer, prosecutor, victim services) be sure to write down who you talked to, date and time of the contact, badge number or other employee identification, and the outcome of that interaction (e.g., report taken, no action taken).

4. Why this “contact/incident” made you feel concerned for your safety or upset. It is important to document the specific fear or emotional distress the incident caused you. This is primarily focusing on your immediate reaction to the contact or incident. Also, be certain to explain the context of the incident, including past threats or behaviors that make this particular incident seem so frightening or harmful to you.

Remember that police and others do not know the stalker as well as you do and you may need to help them understand what happened and what it meant to you. The log is a good place to help explain how certain actions convey threats of harm.

Stalking Documentation Log Example V1¹

Date	Time	Description of incident & location	Witness name(s), contact & evidence collected	Police called (badge #) Other Agency Notified	Police/other agency response	How the incident affected your life	Specific fear and emotional impact
2/5/99	10pm	Walked outside of my house to go to the grocery store and I surprised him because I guess he had been in the bushes trying to see into my house	None	Yes; #571	No report taken	I am afraid to walk out of my house. I cannot go out at night anymore which creates a hardship because I don't have time during the day to grocery shop	Afraid of being physically attacked. He has attacked me before and I don't know what he will do again-maybe even something worse. Angry that I am a prisoner in my home.
2/8/99	4pm	I got off work and my tires were slashed. Had to call tow truck. Was late to pick up the kids.	Co-workers saw tires slashed Sam Smith Mary Brown Have pictures and bill for repairs	No, what's the point? No proof		It cost me \$400 and my kids are now afraid that I won't be able to pick them up. I am concerned my work might get rid of me because of his harassment	I am angry and frustrated because I don't have the money to spend. I am tired of this constant harassment! I am afraid I will be fired. I am concerned about the health and well-being of my kids
2/9/99	3pm	Was filling my car with gas and he drove by and gunned his engine	Others at the gas station	No, no point.		He is always there. I am just tired of him	I feel nothing except anger.

5. Impact. Be sure to document how the incident impacted your life (e.g., any ways it changed your life, work or routines, any financial costs to you). This may be short-term or longer-term impact from contact or incident.

I don't want to write everything down; I just want it to go away!

Many victims of stalking just want to move on with their lives. Writing about everything the stalker is doing can be uncomfortable, hard, and time consuming. Unfortunately, ignoring or reasoning with the stalker often does not deter the stalker. Stalkers often persist in making life miserable for their target. This is why it is so critical to take active control of your safety and to document everything that the stalker does.

One key to making this work for you is to find some way to document or track the stalker's actions in a manner that is comfortable for you.

It may mean keeping a small notebook in your purse to pull out any time you need it. Or you can document the events on a formal documentation log such as in the example above, or in a password protected file on your computer or phone. Choose the easiest, safest, and most comfortable way to record what is happening so that you document the stalking as consistently as possible (including the elements that were mentioned above for each

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incident). It is important to see the whole picture and pattern of stalking behaviors. Also be sure to keep back-up copies (either electronically or in paper form) in case something happens to your original.

Find someone who can support you during this process. Having a close and trusted friend or family member or an advocate who can support you during this process is critical. He or she may be able to help you maintain the log and to provide the emotional support that you need.

Is it safe for me to write all this down and keep it?

Safety must be kept as your primary concern at all times. You will want to keep your log in a safe place, with a trusted friend or family member, or you may want to keep it electronically and password protected.

It is also important to stick to the facts when documenting incidents. Try to keep emotion and other details out of the log except where necessary to document the impact stalking has had on you and your family. Keep in mind the information in the log could potentially be used as evidence by police or the courts and if this happens, information in the log may be seen by the court and other people involved in the case.

You are not alone. About 1 in 12 women and 1 in 45 men will be stalked in their lifetime. 3.4 million people are stalked in the U.S. every year. Stalking is linked to partner violence and sexual assault. Below are some resources you can contact for more information.

National Stalking Resource Center
www.ncvc.org/src

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233
www.thehotline.org

National Network to End
Domestic Violence
www.nnedv.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-4673
<http://www.rainn.org>

OutrageUs
Turning outrage into action
<http://www.outrageus.org/>

