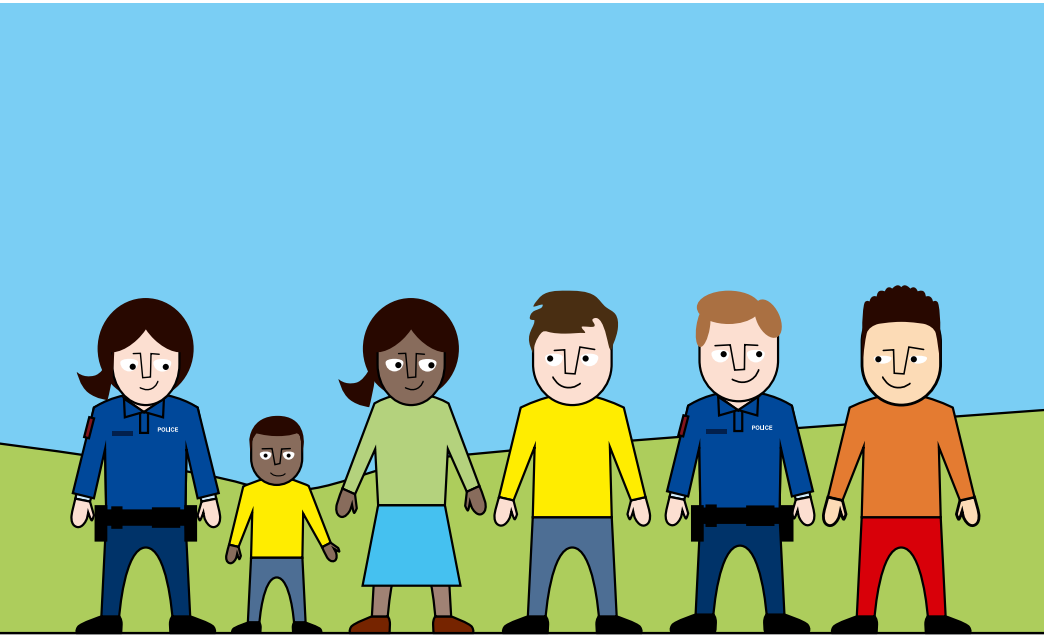
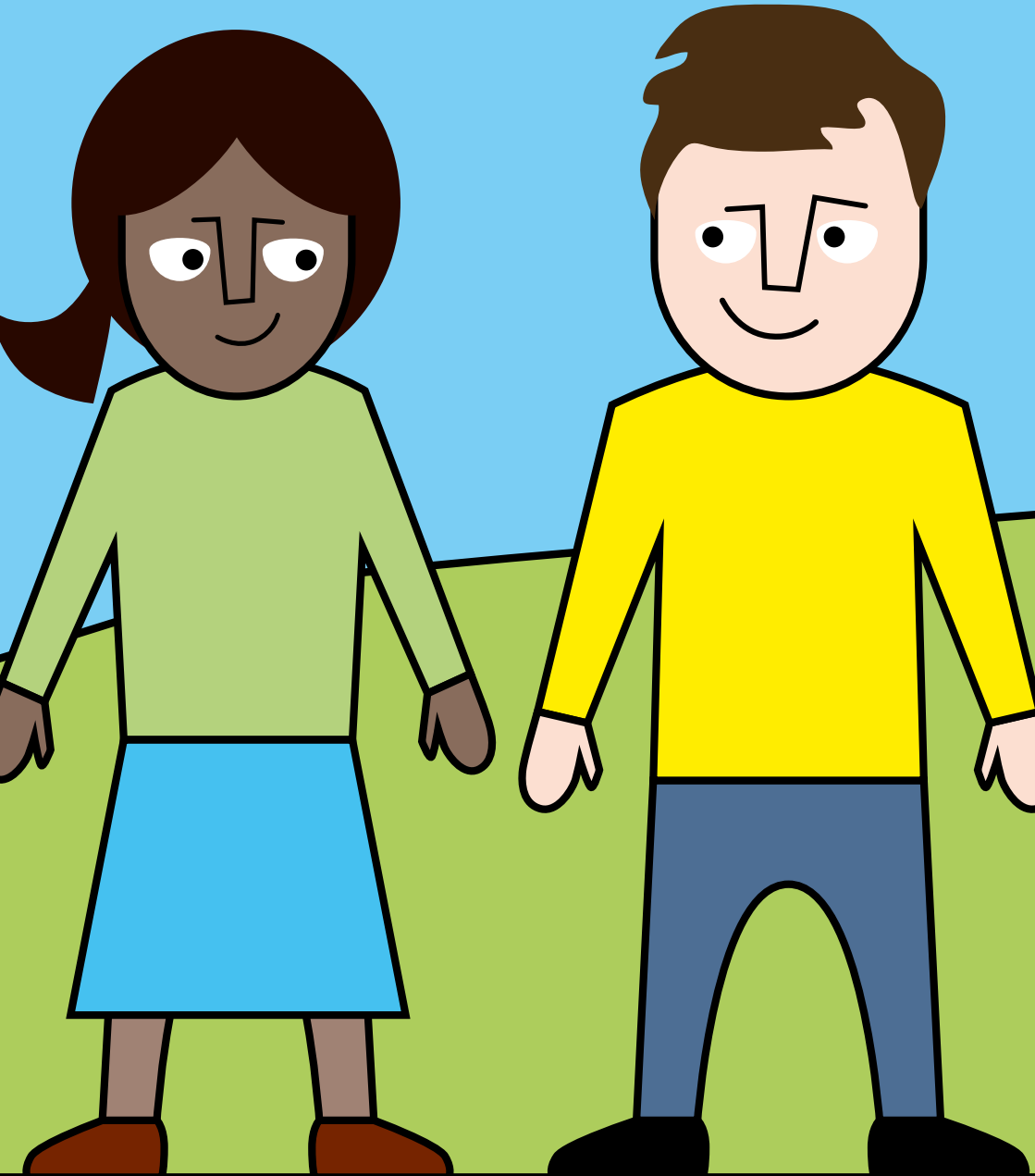


Living safely together in Switzerland





Welcome!

The Swiss Federal Constitution outlines the fundamental rules for living together in Switzerland and takes precedence over all other laws. No other law may violate the Constitution.

All those living in Switzerland have rights and obligations that are granted under the Swiss Federal Constitution and by law. These apply independently of whatever political, religious, social or other beliefs or convictions a person may have.

The Federal Constitution enshrines the most important fundamental rights.

The following applies

- > Everyone is equal before the law. Discrimination and racism are forbidden.
- > Men and women have equal rights and determine their own lives.
- > Everyone is free to express their opinion, provided they do not insult, threaten or incite violence against others.
- > Everyone is free to choose their religion and practise their faith peacefully.

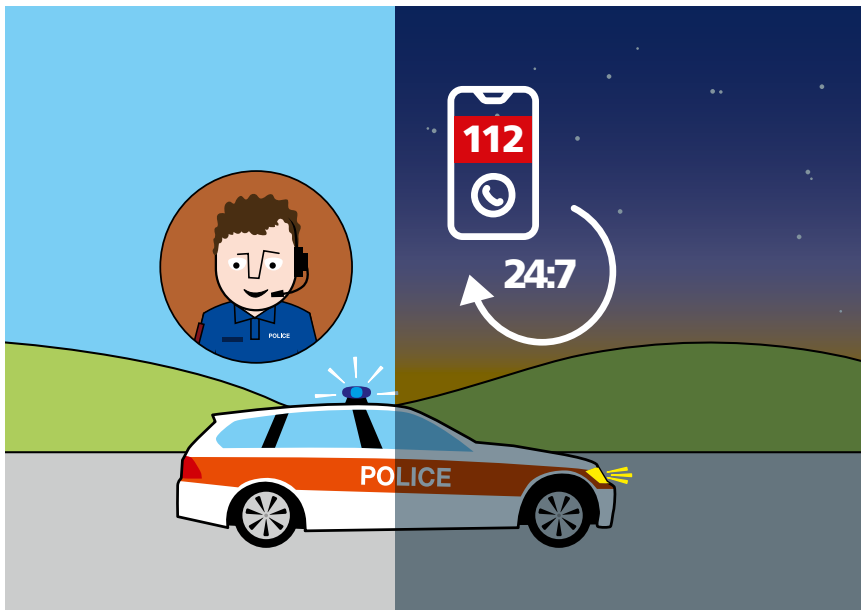
Everyday policing

Switzerland is a safe country. Nevertheless, crime does occur; for example,

- > in public spaces such as parks, restaurants, trains, buses and railway stations,
- > in private settings such as the home, but also at school or work, or
- > online.

It is the job of the police to protect everyone in Switzerland. They enforce the law and prosecute crimes.

The police are there for you. Be sure to notify the police if you experience or witness a crime. If you are in danger, call the **112 emergency number** immediately.



Checks carried out by the police

The police are there to ensure public safety and order, and can therefore carry out identity checks. In such cases, it is important for everyone to show respect. This eases any tension and allows checks to be carried out smoothly.

If you have to undergo a police check, you must show your ID or identify yourself in another way.

The following applies

- > Follow police instructions and be polite. If you don't understand a question or instruction, simply say: «I don't understand.»
- > Always keep your hands visible and never touch a police officer.
- > Giving a false name and address is a crime.
- > Police officers have the right to take you to the police station for further questioning.
- > Police officers are allowed to look through your clothes, bags and other items you may have with you in order to investigate or prevent a possible crime.

However, police officers must also observe the rules and act appropriately.

- > They must have a reason (specific cause) for conducting a personal check. As a rule, they must explain why they are conducting the check.
- > A police uniform is considered an ID document. Police officers in civilian clothes must identify themselves by showing their police ID.

If you think a check is being carried out unlawfully, ask for the police officer's name and note the date, time and place. You can then report the incident to the complaints office of the relevant police station.



What to do in case of violence

Violence in general

All forms of violence count as a criminal offence in Switzerland – regardless of whether they happen in public or at home within the family. Here are some recommendations to protect and support you.

The following applies

Victims of violence are not responsible for what happened. The perpetrator alone carries the blame.

Ask for help. In an emergency, call 112. Talk to someone at a help centre or the police, even if the act of violence occurred some time ago.

During an act of violence

If an act of violence is committed against you, try to do the following:

- > Inform the police by calling 112 if it's an emergency. Doing too much is better than doing too little.
- > Keep your distance from the perpetrator and remain friendly.
- > Directly ask others for help or draw attention to yourself; for example, by saying: "You in the red jacket, call the police."

After an act of violence

- > Don't change anything at the crime scene: don't destroy any evidence.
 - > Don't tidy up or clean anything.
 - > And don't wash the clothes you were wearing.
- > Ask your family doctor or hospital to document any injuries as quickly as possible (within 72 hours). Such documentation counts as important evidence.
- > Get help. Contact a help centre or the police (call the 112 emergency number or a police station of your choice).
- > Help centres or police stations will assist you free of charge.
- > You can contact a help centre without informing the police.
- > People without proper residence status also have the right to advice.
- > You have the right to an interpreter if language is a problem.

Assistance from a help centre

Various help centres will support you if you have experienced violence (see last page). They will:

- > listen to you,
- > explain your rights and the legal procedure that may follow,
- > provide psychological help and
- > take you to the police if you wish.

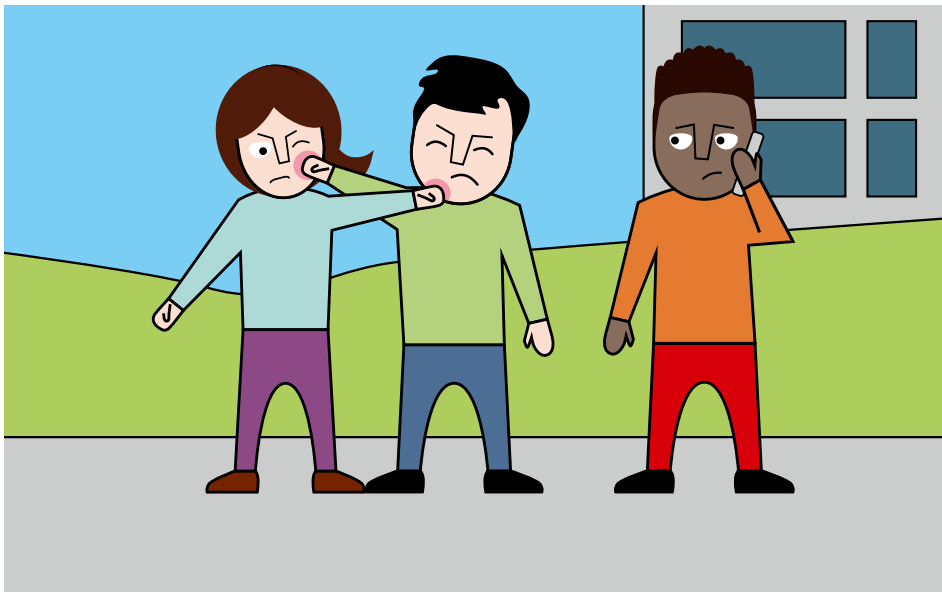
You can contact a help centre without the police being notified. Help centres must ask you for permission before they contact the police.

Getting help from the police

If you want to report a crime to the police or file a complaint, you can go in person to any police station in Switzerland.

- > A police officer there will question you about the incident and note down your answers. This can be stressful, depending on the situation.
- > You have the right to get advice from a help centre and bring someone you trust with you.
- > If the incident involves sexual violence, you will be interviewed by someone of your gender if possible.
- > Take any evidence, such as photos, clothing, etc., with you and make it available to the police.
- > You have the right to an interpreter if language is a problem.

Serious incidents will be investigated even if someone other than the victim has informed the police. The public prosecutor or the court will decide on the punishment.



Violence in the family

Domestic violence is violence that occurs within a family or partnership and is punishable in Switzerland. This includes humiliation, taking money, verbal abuse, serious physical violence, sexual assault and coercion against one's children, parents or partner. Mutilation of girls' or women's genitals is also prohibited, as is forced marriage and violence on the grounds of 'honour'.

Victims or persons aware of domestic violence (e.g. children, neighbours or friends) should inform the police. They are legally obliged to take action in cases of domestic violence.

The following applies

- > Ask for help. Talk to a help centre staff member or police officer.
- > Find out in advance where you can get help in an emergency, for example, in your neighbourhood.
- > Note important numbers, such as those of the police (the 112 emergency number) and people you trust, and keep them close at hand.
- > Keep important documents about you and your children with someone you trust.

For persons not directly involved

- > In emergencies: do not put yourself at risk. Inform the police immediately by calling the 112 emergency number.
- > If you suspect domestic violence: talk to the person in question about your suspicions. Offer to go with this person to a help centre or the police.

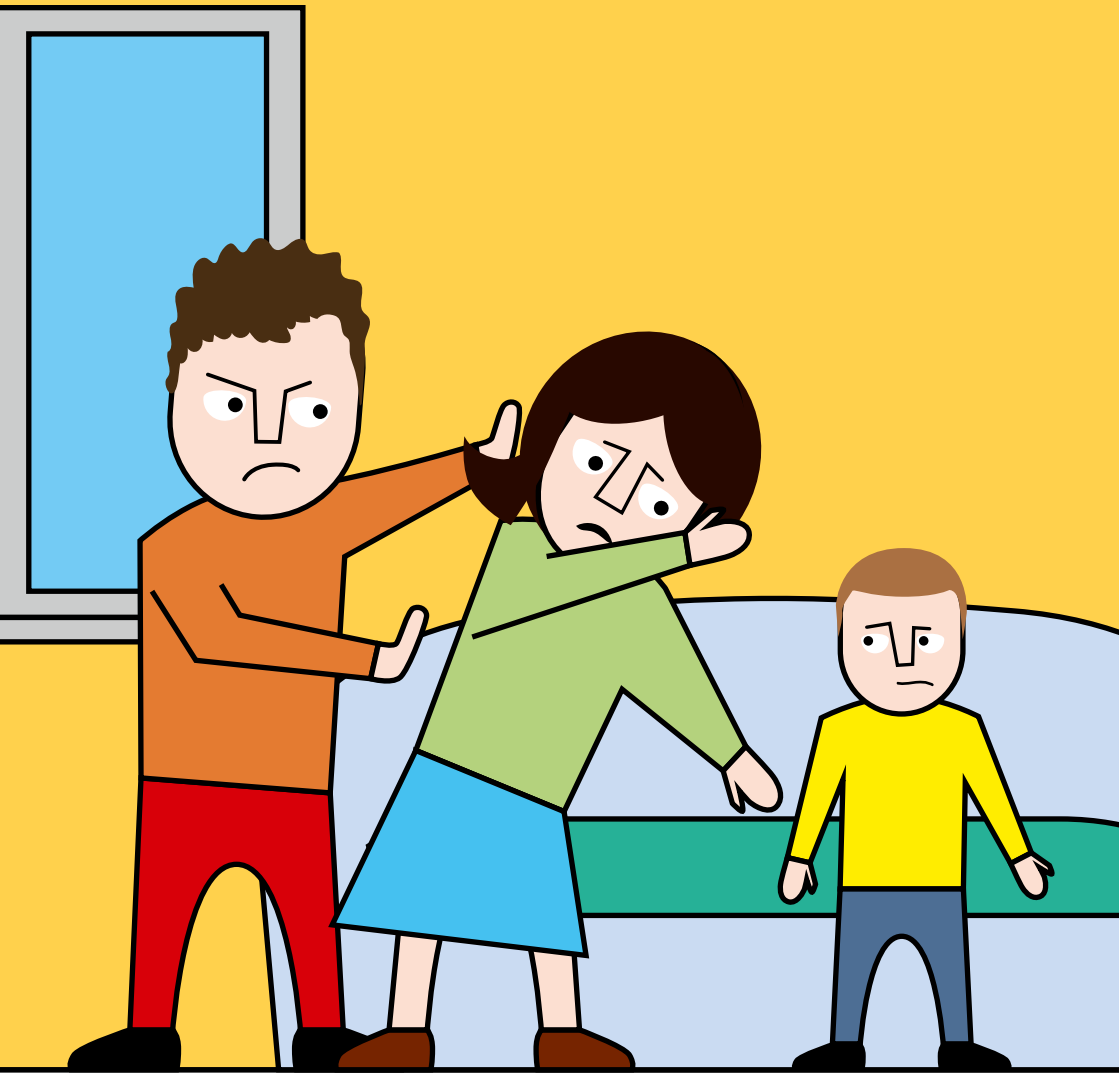
If the police are called, they can remove the violent person from the apartment and forbid them from returning for several days.

Shelter

A marriage partner and any children who are at high risk can be taken to a shelter, the location of which is kept secret. They can stay there free of charge. Even men can be taken to a safe place.

Right of residence

Family members who join a partner living in Switzerland under family reunification and then experience violence can separate from this partner and receive their own residence permit. For this, they must document their experience and show medical certificates, police reports and/or reports from victim advisory centres.



Sexualised violence

Sexualised violence includes all forms of coerced sexual acts as well as conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's integrity. There are various forms of sexualised violence. For example:

- > Inappropriate physical closeness by a stranger on public transport
- > Inappropriate sexual contact by a superior
- > Unwanted images of a sexual nature from a classmate
- > Sexual acts by one spouse against the will of the other

The following applies

- > Physical closeness is okay only if both sides agree.
- > Sexual acts by adults with persons below the age of 16 are generally punishable by law.
- > There are no rules on how someone should dress or behave when out and about. Regardless of how a person dresses or whether they consume alcohol, dance, flirt or stay out late, such behaviour does not mean they want to be approached or touched.
- > Words, looks and gestures by themselves can be understood as a form of sexual harassment.
- > Just because someone does not resist doesn't mean they agree to sexualised contact, touching, sex, etc. It is essential to first clarify whether the other person also wants to engage in a sexual act.



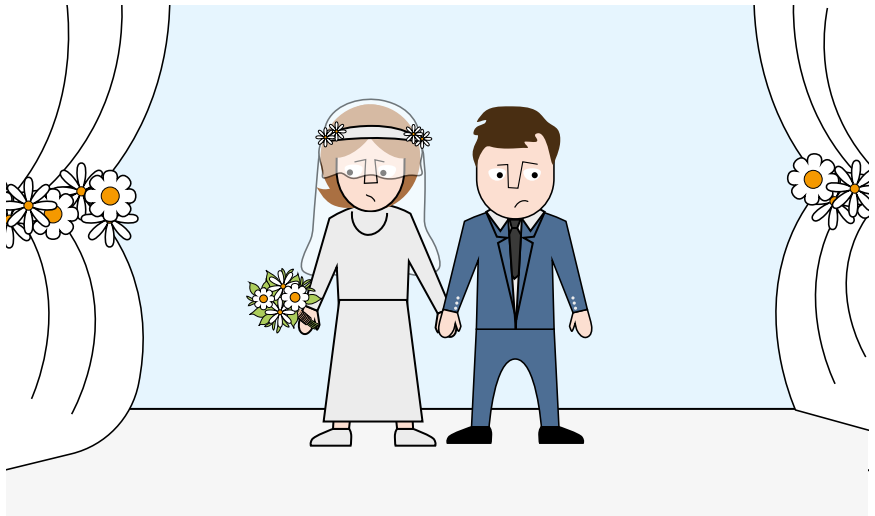
If you experience violence of a sexual nature

- > Go to a safe place.
- > Talk to someone you trust. This can be a teacher, the head of a centre, a doctor, or someone at a help centre or the police station.
- > Don't change anything at the crime scene: don't destroy any evidence.
 - > Don't shower.
 - > Don't tidy up or clean anything.
 - > And don't wash the clothes you were wearing.
- > Arrange a medical examination (e.g. at the hospital) as soon as possible.

Forced marriage

In Switzerland, everyone is free to choose whether and whom to marry. Same-sex partnerships are permitted. It is not permitted to coerce or put pressure on others. A marriage resulting from pressure or coercion will be declared invalid. Moreover, everyone is free to choose whether to stay in a marriage or partnership.

Inform someone you trust or contact a help centre if you or someone you know is being forced to marry or is in a forced marriage.



Stalking

Stalking means repeatedly contacting or harassing another person, even though this person has made it clear that such actions are unwanted. Stalking can be very stressful for the person affected. Acts of stalking include repeated phone calls, threatening messages, daily email messages, visits at the workplace or home, regular gifts, spying and observing. Even single acts of stalking can be punishable.

If someone is stalking you

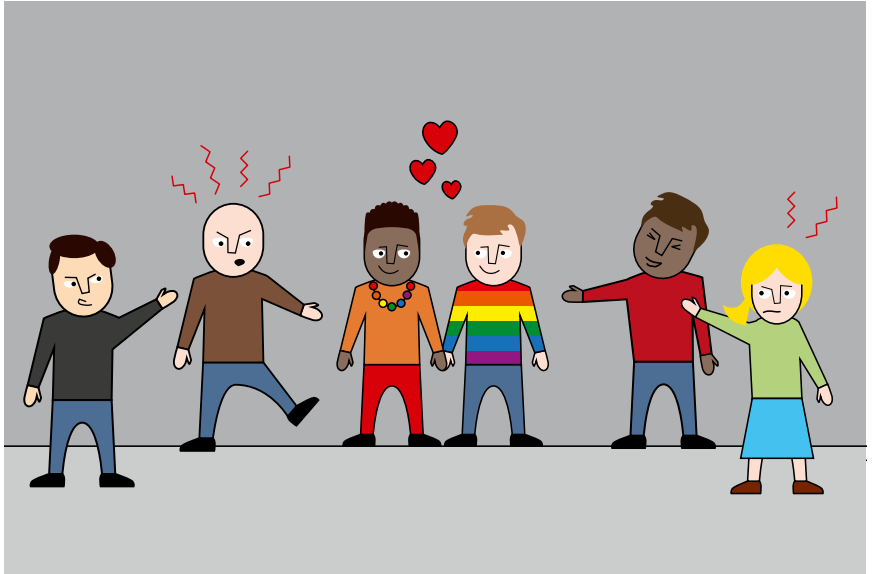
- > Clearly state once and for all that you do not want to have any contact.
- > Then act consistently: do not answer calls, emails, etc., and do not accept any gifts.
- > Inform people around you, such as family members, friends, work colleagues and neighbours. They may be able to help.
- > Note all acts of stalking with the date, place, time and witnesses (stalking diary).
- > Ask for advice. The help centres and police are there for you.



Hate crimes

Hate crimes are offences in which someone is attacked because of the group to which they belong; for example, their religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, or impairment or disability.

Regardless of whether it involves insults, threats, physical or psychological assault, or violence of a sexual nature, notify the police about any hate crimes by calling the 112 emergency number or go to a police station.



Radicalisation and extremism

Radicalisation happens when someone develops extremist views that may lead them to become violent. Radicalisation can have political, social, ideological or religious reasons. Young people, especially, can easily become radicalised.

Possible signs of radicalisation include changes in personality or lifestyle, seeing the world only from a single perspective, glorifying extremist violence and/or passing on problematic videos.

Contact a counsellor, a local help centre or the police if you notice such changes within someone close to you. They may be able to prevent problems at an early stage.

Living safely without weapons

It is prohibited to bear or carry firearms, banned knives and dangerous objects that can be used to threaten or injure others. The police will confiscate such items.

The following applies

- > Leave any knives at home. This will prevent you from being tempted to use one in a conflict situation. Carrying a knife is not a form of protection because it can quickly be turned against you and thus puts you at risk.
- > Remember: merely carrying a knife may be a crime.

If someone threatens you with a knife

- > Don't try to confront them.
- > Try to get away.
- > Call the 112 emergency number straight away.

Important: Even small knives can cause serious injury or even death.



Alcohol and drugs

Alcohol consumption is permitted from the age of 18; wine and beer consumption are permitted from the age of 16.

Anyone with more than 0.25 mg/l of alcohol in their blood is not permitted to use a car, motorbike, e-scooter, bicycle or other vehicle.

Smoking is not permitted on trains, trams, buses, boats and in closed public spaces such as restaurants.

It is not permitted to possess, consume, produce and sell drugs such as heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, hashish and marijuana. However, cannabis products (less than 10 grammes) are permitted for personal use.

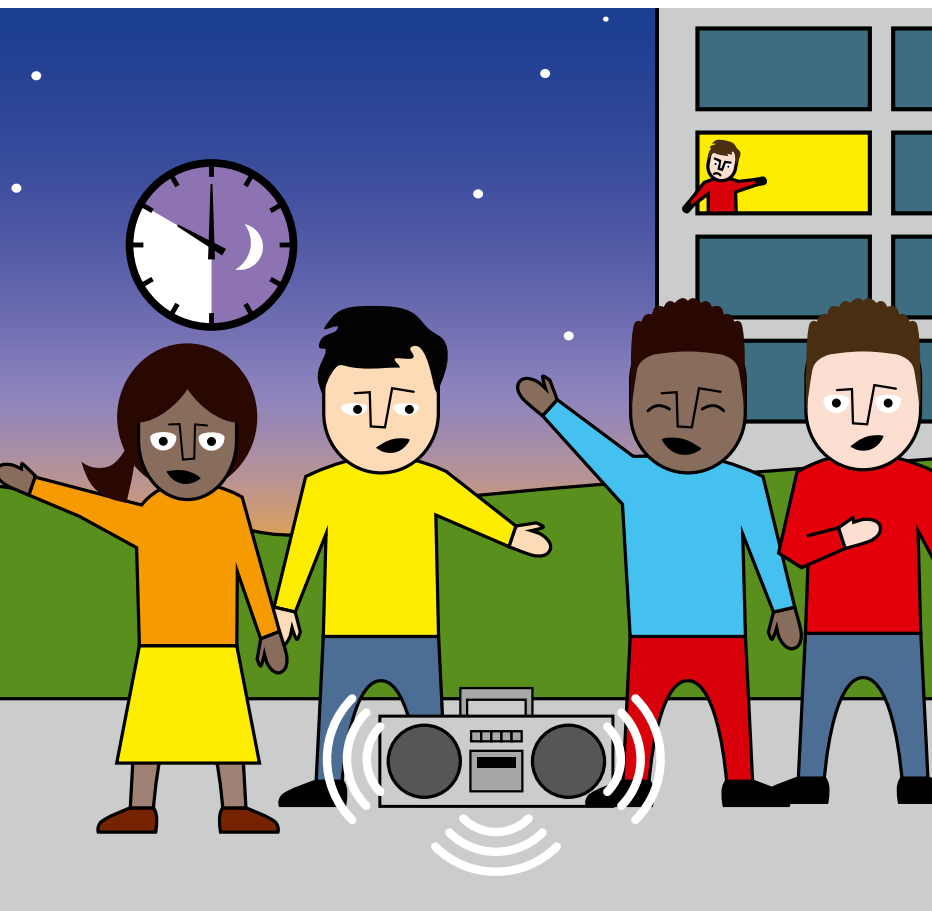


Disturbing the peace and noise at night

It is important to be quiet at night in Switzerland. Rules are in place to ensure everyone can rest and relax in peace. It is therefore not permitted to make unnecessary noise at night.

The following applies

Quiet time always starts at 10 p.m. This means you must avoid making noise, such as playing loud music or talking loudly, from this time. This applies at home as well as in public spaces.

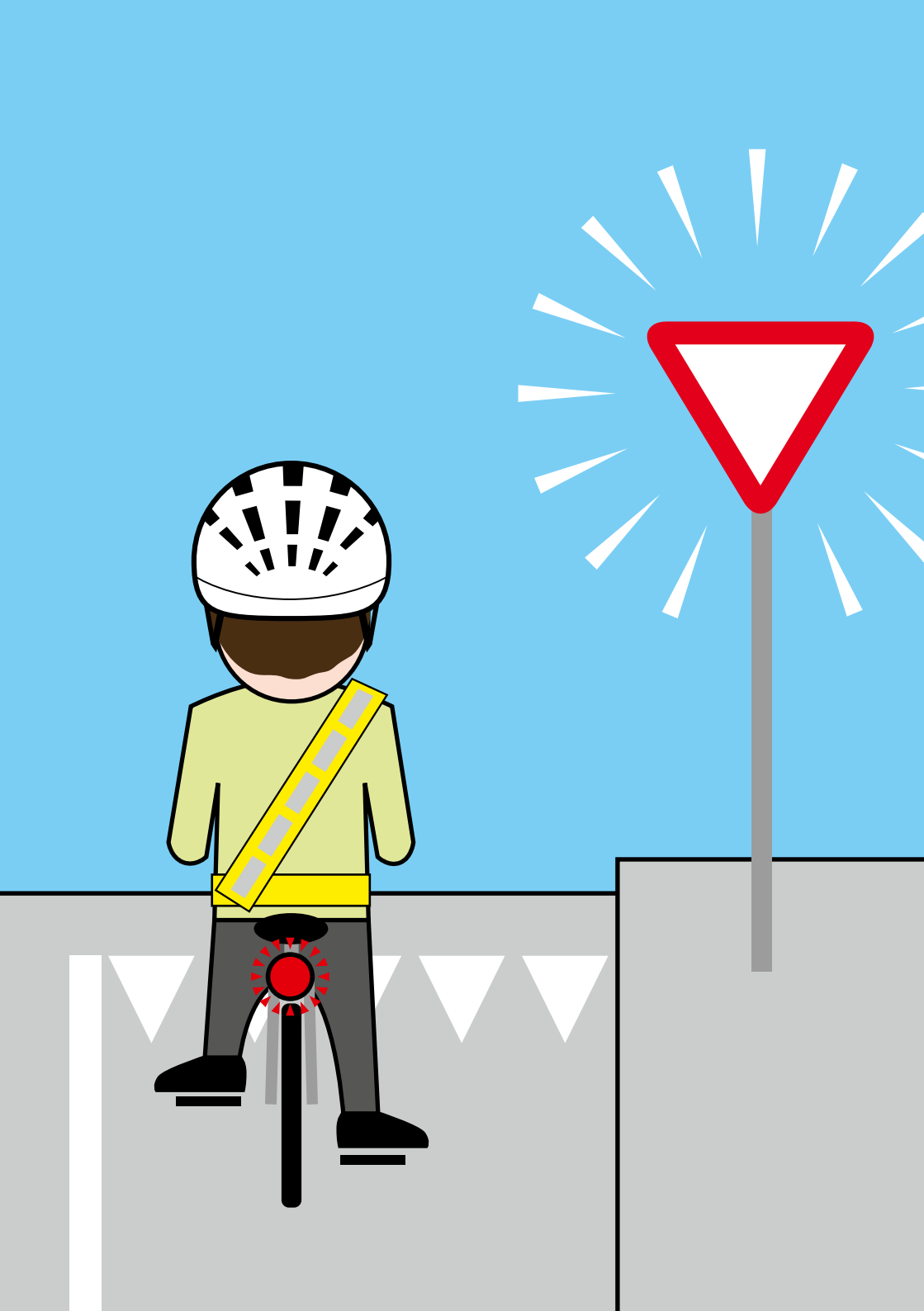


What happens if the law is violated?

Possible consequences for offenders

- > Consequences under criminal law:
fine, monetary penalty, prison
- > Consequences under civil law:
financial settlement (damages, compensation)
- > Personal consequences:
barred from the home (e.g. in the case of domestic violence), access restriction or exclusion, problems with family members, difficulties in finding a job or flat, effect on residence status

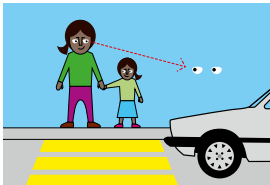




Road safety

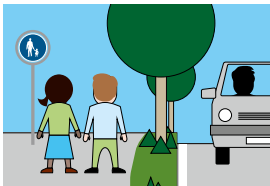
Certain rules apply to ensure that everyone can use public roads safely. These must be observed on foot, on a bicycle, or in a car and in connection with other vehicles. In order to avoid accidents, it is important that all road users behave in a respectful and exemplary way and show consideration to other people and vehicles.

On foot



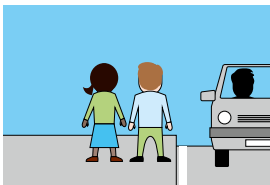
Pedestrian crossings:

Walk only when the car has stopped (eye contact).



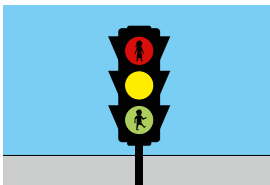
Footpath signs:

Use the footpath.



Pavement:

Use the pavement. If there is no pavement, walk by the side of the road.



Traffic lights:

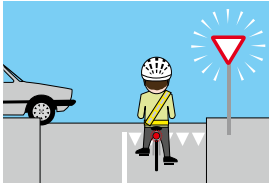
Wait when red; walk when green.

On a bicycle



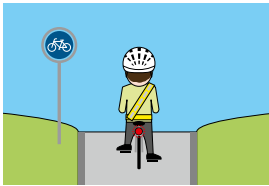
Bicycle helmet:

Be sure to always wear a bicycle helmet.



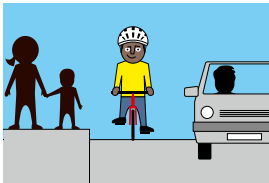
Crossings:

Observe the signs and right of way.



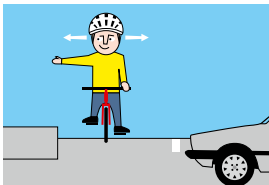
Signs for bicycle paths:

Use the bicycle path.



No bicycle path:

Use the road and ride on the right-hand side.



Before turning:

Look around and signal with your hand.



On a bicycle:

Only one person on a bicycle.

Other important considerations, laws and signs



In the dark:

Wear light-coloured clothing and use the light on your bicycle.



Mandatory seatbelt:

Always wear a seatbelt when in a car. This also applies to those in the back seat.



Mobile phones:

Do not use your mobile phone while driving.



Alcohol and drugs:

It is not permitted to use alcohol or drugs while on the road.



Observe signs:

Signs indicate who has right of way and where you can drive. They also indicate possible hazards.



Obligation to have a ticket:

Public transport is not free and requires you to have a valid ticket.

Help and advice

Help in emergencies (freephone numbers, available around the clock)

Emergency calls	112
Police contact number for women (answering machine; an officer will call back)	031 332 77 77
The Dargebotene Hand – anonymous help and advice for adults	143
Pro Juventute – anonymous help and advice for children and adolescents	147

General and legal advice

ISA – information and advice centre for foreigners	031 310 12 72
www.isabern.ch	
Bern legal advice centre for people in need	031 385 18 20
www.rechtsberatungsstelle.ch	
Swiss Refugee Council	031 370 75 75
www.fluechtlingshilfe.ch	
Asylhilfe Bern	076 700 49 40
www.asylhilfe.ch	
CSP Berne Jura	032 493 32 21
www.csp.ch	
Frabina – help centre for women and men in binational relationships	031 381 27 01
www.frabina.ch	
General information and support services	www.hallo-bern.ch/hg
Complaints office of the Bern Cantonal Police	beschwerdestelle@police.be.ch

Advice for domestic and sexualised violence

Victim support, Bern **031 370 30 70**
www.opferhilfe-bern.ch

Victim support, Bienne **032 322 56 33**
www.opferhilfe-bern.ch

Lantana (against sexualised violence) Bern **031 313 14 00**
www.stiftung-gegen-gewalt.ch

Vista (against sexualised and domestic violence) Thun **033 225 05 60**
www.stiftung-gegen-gewalt.ch

Child Protection Group **031 632 94 86**

Domestic Violence Centre, City of Bern **031 321 63 02**
www.bern.ch

Stalking Counselling Centre – Bern **031 321 68 97**
www.bern.ch

Zwangsheirat.ch (forced marriage) **0800 800 007**
www.zwangsheirat.ch

Programme for perpetrators
Bern Intervention Centre Against Domestic Violence **031 633 50 33**
www.big.sid.be.ch

Radicalisation

Centre for the prevention of radicalisation and violence **031 321 76 53**
www.bern.ch

Centre for the prevention of extremism
and violence in the city of Bienne **032 326 18 80**
www.biel-bienne.ch

Racism/discrimination

gggfon – Gemeinsam gegen Gewalt und Rassismus **031 333 33 40**
www.gggfon.ch

LGBTIQ helpline **0800 133 133**
www.lgbtiq-helpline.ch

Our website has informative videos in this and other languages about living in harmony:



[police.be.ch](https://www.police.be.ch)

Bern Cantonal Police

Waisenhausplatz 32
CH-3011 Bern