

## Perpetrator Techniques

The phrase ‘perpetrator technique’ is primarily used by law enforcement officers and those from the crime prevention community, to describe the characteristic ways criminals commit crime. It suggests that there are patterns and styles to how crimes are commonly committed. The phrase ‘modus operandi’ (often abbreviated to MO) meaning ‘mode of operation’ is also used in common English to mean something similar i.e. the habits of manner of working, the method of operating or functioning of criminals as well as individuals.

We list perpetrator techniques for 2 reasons:

1. designers can understand them and figure out how to design against them
2. individuals can familiarize themselves with them and figure out how best to behave safely, in public places, where some scam crimes, linked to bag and bike theft, are common.

The Design Against Crime Research Centre, is unique in that it has argued publicly that it believes visual material is central in the fight to design against crime, and that it should be included in more designing out crime briefing documents.

Our research centre has taken time to visualize perpetrator techniques, not just because for many people seeing things helps them understand, but also because the visual dimension of the ways scams occur often identifies, for the designer, intervention sites, where design can operate to block crime and make an difference.

Below we visualize common bag theft perpetrator techniques. We are always happy to receive emails from colleagues updating scams or identifying new ones – please email [l.gamman@csm.arts.ac.uk](mailto:l.gamman@csm.arts.ac.uk) if you have new observations for us.

### Dip



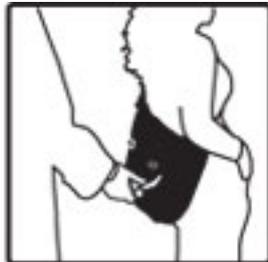
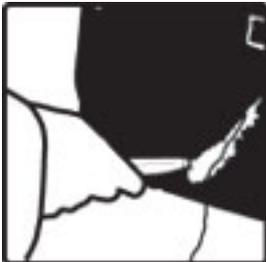
**Dipping**, also known as pick-pocketing involves discrete access gained through bag or pocket; property removed by nimble fingers. Possible tactics include distraction / blocking.(1)

### Lift



**Lifting** is defined as theft of property from a static location. Characteristics include: Opportunistic theft; owner inattentive / bag unattended. Thief conceals or kicks away bag, picks it up and walks away.(1)

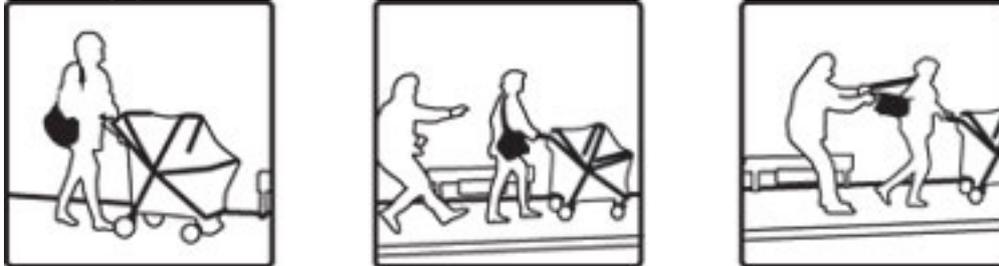
### Slash



**Slashing** often occurs in crowded situations. Victims do not have their eyes on their bags and are unaware when contents have been removed.

Characteristics include concealed blades used to cut the body of the bag. Contents fall out or are removed by nimble fingers.(1)

**Grab (a)**



**Grabbing**, also known as Snatching, is defined as theft from person, unless force is used, then the crime is classified as robbery or 'street robbery.' Characteristics of Grabbing include: Strength / stealth involved Force used to pull bag from victim. Straps of bag used as pulling point.(1)

**Grab (b)**



**The Scippatori** - is Italian slang, referring to thieves who rob people of their belongings, while riding a scooter or pedal bike. Usually associated with Mediterranean climates and city locations such as Naples or Barcelona, Bob and Bambi Arno suggest the "scippatori are marauding teams of pirates on motor scooters...(who) ply their vicious bag snatching chicanery on unsuspecting tourists" (2)

**Please Note:** Items of plunder commonly include watches, wallets and bags - the straps of which are sometimes sliced by the perpetrator to make the getaway faster(2). Variations on this scam have been recorded

by the police in many cities, including London and Manchester, where it is less frequent than other bag theft perpetrator techniques. More common in Summer time, typical bike related bag grabbing has been described here, 'a guy came flying up on a mountain bike, thumped me and grabbed the bag' by the actress Linda Robson, who was assaulted and robbed in summer 2003 outside her front door in Islington, London'.(3)

#### References

- (1) L. Gamman, *In The Bag, CD rom Design Resource*, 2001, Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design
- (2) B & B Arno, *Travel Advisory: How to Avoid Thefts, Cons and Street Scams While Travelling*, Chicago, Bonus books, 2004.
- (3) B. Wilks, *Call the Poo-lice*, *The Sun*, September 2003.