

**KEEP IT SAFE.
KEEP IT HIDDEN.
KEEP IT LOCKED.**



STOP THIEVES GETTING THEIR HANDS ON YOUR STUFF!

Crime levels are falling in most places – the risk of becoming a victim is at its lowest for 20 years. But it hasn't gone away. There is still a risk of robbery, burglary and vehicle crime. Most of these crimes are 'spur-of-the-moment' actions, often taking advantage of an open window or valuables left on display.

Most of the steps suggested in this leaflet are common sense and don't cost much, but they can make a real difference. Basics like shutting windows and locking car doors even when you are only gone for a minute, or keeping your eye on your bag, can be all that it takes to prevent crime. Not securing your home, car and belongings just isn't worth the cost and hassle. **Keep it safe, keep it hidden, keep it locked.**

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PROTECT YOUR HOME

KEEP IT SAFE, KEEP IT LOCKED

Don't make your home an easy target for burglars.

Many burglaries are crimes of opportunity. A burglar only needs to spot an open window, unlocked side gate or dodgy alarm to make their move. Think about it – if you know your home security looks poor, so will a thief. Statistics show that properties with little security are 15 times more likely to be burgled than those with good security.

The good news is that it doesn't take much to secure your house – and put off thieves. Here's a list of tips.

Safety checklist

- I've checked that all the doors and windows are locked – even if I'm just popping out for a minute.
- I've fitted deadlocks to all outside doors. *(Burglars hate them because you need a key to open them from the inside as well as the outside.)*
- I've made sure the deadlock key isn't in an obvious place.
- I've fitted key-operated locks to all the windows. *(Burglars don't like having to break glass because of the noise it makes and the risk of leaving forensic evidence.)*
- I've installed a visible burglar alarm, and turned it on!
- My spare keys are not hidden outside, or in the garage or shed. *(Burglars always look there!)*
- I've left the lights and the radio on a timer for the evening (as little as £2 each from DIY shops) so that it looks like I'm in.

- Thieves can't get into the garden – there's a good fence, the side gate is padlocked (and it will take more than a good kick to get through it), and the shed is locked.
- I've made sure the TV, video and other valuables can't be seen from the window.
- There isn't any cash lying around.
- It's dark outside so I've closed the curtains and left a light on while I'm out.

Fire safety

Make sure your new security measures (such as window locks) don't block your escape route – and that you can get out of the house as quickly as possible. Fit a smoke alarm and test it regularly. Make sure you have an escape plan and that everyone in your household knows it.

Home security tip 1

Insurance – get it or regret it!

Getting insurance is cheaper than paying out a small fortune to replace your stolen belongings. At least get cover for your most valuable possessions such as your computer, TV and jewellery. Remember: if you don't lock your house, your insurance may not cover you.

Home security tip 2

Mark your property

Mark important and expensive possessions (such as your computer or DVD player) with your postcode and house number using special security markers. Keep a record of the make, model and serial numbers of all your electrical equipment for reference too. If the police recover them after a burglary, this record will be proof that they are stolen goods – and that they are yours.

Burglary

- Some burglars are looking for your car keys so they can steal your car. Make it hard for thieves. Don't leave car keys near a door or window.
- Visible burglar alarms and good outside lighting put burglars off. But make sure that your security lights don't disturb your neighbours, and that your alarm turns off after 20 minutes at the most (if it goes off when you're not there).



Computers: three must do's

Thieves love computers. As well as the money they might get from selling them, computers often contain personal information (such as bank details) that criminals can use to commit fraud. Following these steps will make your computer more secure.

1. Keep it hidden

Lock your computer in a cabinet or cupboard when you're not using it. Use security screws and bolts to make it harder for thieves to open the casing to steal parts (but check with the manufacturer that this does not affect any guarantee first). If you need to carry a laptop around with you, don't draw attention to it. Put it in a rucksack rather than a computer case.

2. Make sure your private information stays private

Keep PINs, passwords and personal financial information safe. Don't send your bank details by e-mail or store them on your computer.

3. Be secure

Back up all your work regularly and always keep disks separate from your computer so that you have proof of copyright and a copy of your files. If you're ordering goods over the internet, make sure the company has a secure server. (You will know the site is secure if you see a padlock at the bottom right of the screen.)



Extra precautions for older people

Older people may feel more vulnerable to some crimes, but they are actually less likely to become victims. A few simple steps can also help increase your safety even further.

- Think about getting a personal alarm to use if you trip or fall at home.
- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home – use a bank account instead.
- Look after your pension book carefully.
- Always follow the advice on bogus callers.
- Many councils have security schemes that are aimed at older or more vulnerable people. You could ask them for advice.

Bogus callers

Most people who come to your door will be genuine callers. But it's best to make sure.

- Fitting a door chain or spyhole will help you check who the caller is – your landlord or council may be able to help with this.
- **Lock, stop, chain, check.**

Keep your doors and windows **locked**.

Before opening the door, **stop**. Are you expecting anyone? Are the back door and windows locked so no-one can sneak in?

Put the door **chain** on.

Check the caller's identity. Genuine callers will not mind waiting outside while you contact their company. Most companies now have a password scheme. If you are in any doubt, don't let them in. Ask them to make an appointment to come back at another time.

For more information, phone the Age Concern information line free on 0800 00 99 66 or visit www.ageconcern.org.uk



PROTECT YOUR STUFF

KEEP IT SAFE, KEEP IT HIDDEN

You hear about people having their bag snatched or their mobile phone stolen. In fact, the chances of it happening to you or your family are low and there are plenty of things you can do to make it even less likely.



Keep safe on the move

What you can do

- Carry your bag close to you with the clasp facing inwards. Keep it zipped up, and make sure your wallet or purse can't be seen. Don't carry large amounts of cash.
- Spread your possessions about – for example, keep your mobile phone separate from your purse, and your keys separate from your credit card.
- Cover up any expensive jewellery and, if you must carry other valuables, be discreet. Talking on your mobile, wearing headphones (for a CD or MP3 player) or carrying a laptop all show thieves you have things worth taking.
- Have your house keys ready so you can get in the front door quickly – and carry them on you, not in your bag.



Watch it! Your MP3 player is music to a thief's ears. Don't use headphones while walking – stay alert!

- If you are in a wheelchair, on a bike or pushing a pram, keep your bags where you can see them.
- Think about your route, especially if you're going to be on your own or carrying lots of shopping bags.
- Be aware of your surroundings.

Where to look out for

Robbery is more likely to take place in quiet or dark areas, and pickpocketing is more likely where it is busy. However, thieves also work near tube and train stations, and bus stops, where people are likely to get their mobile phones out. If possible, wait until you get to work or home to make a call or send a text message. **Be extra careful:**

- at tube and train stations;
- at cash machines;
- in car parks;
- getting on and off buses; and
- in overcrowded areas, especially during rush hour.

Your credit cards

Follow this anti-theft advice

Keep your cards separate from your chequebooks.

Never let them out of your sight or pass on your PINs.

Don't leave them behind the bar or counter.

Staff could copy your details.

ATMs (cash machines)

If you need to use cash machines, do so during the day and use machines inside banks if you can. If not, choose ones on a busy street with good lighting. Cover the keyboard with your free hand so that no-one can see the number you enter. If someone starts distracting you or stands close by, cancel the transaction and walk away. If you have withdrawn any cash, put it away immediately.

If your credit cards are stolen, call your bank or credit card company to cancel them immediately. Don't even wait until you get home. You should find a 24-hour emergency number on your statement and on some cash machines.



Your mobile

If your mobile phone is stolen, it's bad enough that it's expensive to replace. There's also the hassle of losing all those stored numbers, messages, pictures and downloads. So how can you protect your phone?

Don't leave your phone on tables in pubs or restaurants and try not to use it in a crowded place.

Avoid using your phone near a tube or train station or when getting on or off the bus. Wait until you are further away from the stop or station.

If you need to make a call in public, make it brief and keep an eye out for those around you. Remember, if you're chatting you're less likely to be aware of what's going on around you.

Don't walk while you're sending text messages.

Always ask yourself, "Is it safe to answer my phone right now?"

Register your phone with your network operator. This means they can block calls if your phone is stolen so the thief can't use it. You can also register your mobile equipment on 'MEND' at www.menduk.org (MEND, or Mobile Equipment National Database, is a police-approved programme for registering mobile phones and other mobile IT equipment.)

Record your registration number (also known as the IMEI or International Mobile Equipment Identity number) and phone number. Keep these numbers separate and safe. You can find your IMEI number (a 15-digit serial number) by keying *#06# into most phones or by looking underneath the phone battery.

If your phone is stolen, report it to your network operator (or call 08701 123 123) and to the police. Your phone can be blocked, just like a stolen credit card. Once blocked, it cannot be used again.



What if I'm a student?

Students should follow all the advice in this guide. These extra precautions will make you more secure – and could make all the difference.

In your shared home or halls of residence

- Lock your door, even if you're just nipping down the corridor, or your flatmates are in.
- Avoid leaving notes on your door saying, 'I'm out!' (or similar). Don't advertise the fact to thieves!
- Do not lend your key or ID card to anyone.
- Don't buzz someone in without checking who they are visiting, and don't let strangers in with you. Don't give away access codes to food-delivery companies and so on.
- Thieves know student households are more likely to have items such as laptops, stereos and iPods than other households. Make sure all your equipment is covered by insurance.
- Over the holidays, when thieves know your house will be empty, take all your belongings with you, put them in secure storage or ask a friend to look after them.

When you're out

- Get to know the local area, and which routes around the university or college are safer. Walk quickly and purposefully – looking lost makes you stand out.
- Take a taxi home instead of walking home late at night, and think when you drink. A large proportion of robberies happen between 10pm and 2am, and thieves often target students outside pubs and clubs when they might be less concerned about safety.
- Male students are more at risk than females, so don't take risks.

At your university or college

- Most campuses run security or safety programmes. This will include providing 'after dark' buses for students and advice on areas to avoid.

VEHICLE CRIME

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Drive down vehicle crime

Vehicle crime has actually fallen by over 30% during the last five years. Even so, there are still more than two million vehicle-related thefts each year, and a lot of them could be prevented. Here's how.



To outwit the thief

Rule number 1: Always keep your car locked. This includes closing the sunroof and windows, even if you only leave it for a few seconds. That's all it takes for a criminal to steal your car or belongings.

Rule number 2: Don't leave anything in your car, particularly when it's parked overnight. 63% of thefts of and from vehicles happen when they are parked outside the home.

Rule number 3: Park with care. Park in busy or well-lit areas near CCTV cameras, or in police-approved car parks (look out for 'ParkMarkTM' on signs) if possible. You can find out which car parks are approved at www.saferparking.com

Always chain bikes, motorbikes and scooters to something fixed like security rails and ground anchors (see picture).



Secure your car

Fact! You're more than twice as likely to have your vehicle broken into than stolen. On average, that means paying out £100 – just for the repairs.

- Never leave the keys in the ignition, not even in a garage when you are paying for petrol.
- Don't leave anything on display (even when you are parked in your driveway). That includes a jacket on the back seat, loose change in the ashtray, a chequebook in the glove compartment or mail with your address on it under the seat. Remember: thieves know all the usual hiding places!
- Fit a stereo with a removable front panel (also known as a fascia) – and take it with you when you leave the car.
- Never leave car documents or spare keys inside the car. Hide them at home, but not by the door. Thieves will use a hook and cane through the letterbox to steal car keys from hall tables.
- Get a professionally fitted car alarm or a Thatcham-approved electronic immobiliser (you can find an approved installer through the Vehicle Systems Installation Board at www.vsib.co.uk), or you can use a steering lock on older cars. You can find information on products that have been tested by Thatcham at www.thatcham.org (phone 01635 868855) or by Sold Secure at www.soldsecure.com (phone 01327 264687).
- Have your car's registration number etched onto all glass surfaces, including the windscreen and headlamps.
- When you're driving, keep doors locked and windows up, especially in slow traffic. Keep bags and mobile phones out of view. A thief can lean in and steal what's on your passenger seat in the time it takes for a red light to turn green.
- If you're leaving your car, put your shopping or anything else in the boot if you can't take it with you.



Secure your bicycle

Fact! Over 100,000 bikes are stolen every year.

- Buy a good-quality lock because chains can be easily cut. D-locks or combination locks are best, but a good bicycle shop or DIY store can advise you. You could even use two locks for extra security (and to make thieves think it's not worth trying to steal your bike).
- Always lock both wheels and keep the lock off the ground. This makes it harder to break.
- Take away any extras, like lights and helmets.
- Have your bike frame security-marked with your name and postcode.



Secure your motorbike and scooter

Fact! Motorbikes are popular targets for thieves because they can be sold easily or broken up for parts, which are harder to trace.

- Put a steering lock on and use a strong steel cable or D-lock to attach your bike to security rails or ground anchors.
- Get a professionally fitted combined alarm and immobiliser (you can find an approved installer through the Vehicle Systems Installation Board at www.vsib.co.uk). Thatcham and Sold Secure can advise you on the best products.
- If you've got a garage, use it. Or, cover your motorbike or scooter when you're not using it.

MORE INFORMATION

Home

For more information and copies of the following leaflets, visit www.homeoffice.gov.uk or contact your local Crime Prevention Officer.

- 'Be safe, be secure: Your practical guide to crime prevention.'
- 'Peace of mind while you're away.'
- 'Peace of mind while you move home.'
- 'Coded for keeps.'
- 'How to beat the bogus caller.'
- 'A guide to home security.'

Vehicle

For more information and copies of the following leaflets, visit www.homeoffice.gov.uk or contact your local Crime Prevention Officer.

- 'Steer clear of car crime.'
- 'Steer clear of caravan crime.'
- 'Steer clear of bike crime.'

Also visit www.secureyourmotor.gov.uk and www.saferparking.com

Sold Secure provides a list of recognised security products. Visit www.soldsecure.com or call 01327 264687.

Thatcham gives information on immobilisers and other security devices. Visit www.thatcham.org or call 01635 868855.

Students

For more information and copies of the following leaflet, visit our website at www.homeoffice.gov.uk or contact your local Crime Prevention Officer.

- 'Student Survival Guide.'
- Also visit www.good2bsecure.co.uk

General

Call Crimestoppers free on 0800 55 51 11 or visit www.crimestoppers-uk.org or www.crimereduction.gov.uk

Mobile phones

Visit www.immobilise.com and get your phone blocked if it's been stolen.