
Crime Prevention - Home Security



How do you get in your house?

If you were locked out of your house, would you still be able to get in? Maybe you keep an unlocked window in the back, or a hidden key under your mat, in a mailbox, or on top of a window ledge? Think about it, if you can get in so can a burglar! The following are tips that can make your home more secure, and reduce your chances of being a victim. These tips will take just a small amount of your time, and money. Remember that many burglars will spend no longer than 60 seconds to try to break into a home. Good locks, and good neighbors who watch out for each other can be big deterrents to burglars.

Checking Locks

Did you know that in almost half of all completed residential burglaries, thieves simply breezed in through unlocked windows or doors, so it stands to reason to keep all your doors and windows locked when you leave your home. Here are some tips to help make your home more secure.

- Make sure every external door has a sturdy, well-installed dead bolt lock. Key-in-the-knob locks are not enough.
 - Sliding glass doors can offer easy access if they are not properly secured. You can secure them by installing commercially available locks or putting a broomstick or dowel in the inside track to jam the door. To prevent the door from
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being lifted off the track, drill a hole through the sliding door frame and the fixed frame, then insert a pin in the hole.

- Lock double-hung windows with key locks or "pin" windows by drilling a small hole into a 45 degree angle between the inner and outer frames, then insert a nail that can be removed. Secure basement windows with grilles or grates.
- Instead of hiding keys around the outside of your home, give an extra key to a neighbor you trust.
- When you move into a new house or apartment, re-key all the locks.

Checking Doors

A Lock on a flimsy door is about as effective as locking your car door but leaving the window down. Keep the following in mind.

- All outside doors should be metal or solid wood.
- If your doors don't fit tightly in their frames, install weather stripping around them.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors so you can see who is outside without opening the door. Door chains break easily and don't keep out intruders.

Checking Outdoors

Look at your home from the outside, Make sure you know the following tips:

- Thieves hate bright lights, install outside lights and keep them on at night or install sensor lights that go on when any motion is detected around them.
 - Keep your yard clean, prune back shrubbery so it doesn't hide doors or windows. Cut back tree limbs that a thief could use to climb to an upper level window.
 - Clearly display your house numbers so police and other emergency vehicles can find your home quickly.
 - Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions.
 - Don't let your mail pile up! Call the post office to stop delivery or have a neighbor pick it up.
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- Make a list of your valuables---VCR's, stereos, computers, jewelry. Take photo's of the items, list their serial numbers and descriptions. Check with law enforcement about engraving your valuables through Operation Identification.

Alarms

One of the best investments you can make is an alarm, especially if you have many valuables in your home, or live in an isolated area or an area with a history of break-ins. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

- Check with several companies before you buy so you can decide what level of security fits your needs. Do business with an established company and check references before signing a contract.
- Learn how to use your system properly! Don't "cry wolf" by setting off false alarms. People will stop paying attention and you'll probably be fined.
- Some less expensive options...a sound detecting socket that plugs into a light fixture and make the light flash when it detects certain noises, lights with photo cells that turn on when it's dark and off when it's light

Burglars Do More Than Steal

Burglars can and do commit rapes, and assaults if they are surprised by someone coming home or pick a home that is occupied. The following tips could save your life.

- If something looks questionable--a slit screen, broken window, or an open door---DON'T GO IN--. Call the police from a neighbors house or a public phone.
- At night, if you think you hear someone breaking in, leave if you can, then call police. If you can't leave, lock yourself in a room with a phone and call police. The hardest one is if you feel an intruder is in your room, pretend you are asleep, wait till they are gone, and then call police.
- Guns are responsible for many accidental deaths in the home every year. Think carefully before buying a gun. If you do own one, learn how to store and use it safely. Above all keep them in a secure place away from children.

WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO HELP?

Well, we're glad you asked. Here are some suggestions on what you can do to help prevent crime in your home and your neighborhood.

- Join a Neighborhood Watch group. If one does not exist, start it up with help from your local law enforcement.
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- Never leave a message on your answering machine that indicates you may be away from home.
 - Rather than saying : "I'm not at home right now," say "I'm not available right now."
 - Work with neighbors and local government to organize community clean-ups. The cleaner your neighborhood, the less attractive it is to crime.
 - Remember Home Security is up to you. **INVEST IN IT NOW!**
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