

Let's face it: if a burglar really wants in your home, he or she will find a way to get there. However there are some things that you can do to make it difficult for them to get in, increasing the chances that they'll either get caught or move on to another house, or even get them to skip over your home altogether. Many of these tips will cost you little or no money and just a few moments of your time.

Keep the "burglary triangle" in mind. Visibility, audibility, and time are the three factors that 99% of burglars consider when choosing a target. The chances of you becoming a victim increase exponentially with each "side" that you take away. For example, a crook that knows he can get in and out quickly and quietly might not care that he's in plain sight, and a crook that can't be seen or heard will be free to take all the time in the world.

Basic Tips

- An unlocked lock is not a lock. If you are gone from your home, even for just a moment while you check your mail or take something over to your next-door neighbor's house, lock the door. The same goes for while you're asleep. It only takes a few seconds for a burglar to get in undetected when the door is unlocked. Locks should really be locked at all times that you're not actively passing through the door, even if you're watching TV.
- Don't leave notes on your door, window, gate, garage, or mailbox indicating that you aren't home, or when you will return. This gives burglars a green light to break in without fear of discovery.
- DO NOT leave a key hidden under the doormat, above the door frame, under a rock, in the mailbox, in a planter, or any other place around your home—burglars know ALL the hiding spots, including some you've probably never even considered. If you must leave a key for a family member or in case yours gets lost, leave it with a trusted neighbor instead.
- Never put a tag on your key ring with your name, address, or phone number on it. Should your keys ever get lost or stolen, or you hand them

off to an unscrupulous valet, you could find yourself the victim of a burglary.

- Also don't keep your gate or garage remote in plain sight in your car—this, combined with your address on your vehicle registration, can make you a target for burglary. Keep it in your purse instead or lock it in the glovebox.
- If you return home and find evidence of a burglary (broken glass, kicked-in or pried door, etc.), **DO NOT ENTER**. Instead call the Sheriff's Department and wait for deputies to ensure no one is still inside before you enter.
- Should you ever come face-to-face with a burglar, **let him or her go!** It is far better to lose money or property than to lose your life. Instead, be the best witness you can and get as good of a description as possible, and give this information to law enforcement.

Exterior

- House numbers should be clearly visible from the street. Don't assume that the painted numbers on the curb will suffice—if a car is parked in front of them, they'll do no good. Numbers should be at least 3" tall and on the front-most street-facing wall of your house or garage. If they are not already lighted, consider installing a small light above them to make them easily visible at night. Law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical personnel will need to be able to find you quickly when you call them.
- Never put first names on mailboxes. If you must put a name, use last names only (and first initials if necessary). Street numbers on mailboxes are okay to use.
- Shrubbery should be planted as close to the wall as possible, particularly below windows and other potential access points, to prevent crooks from hiding behind it. Also make sure to keep it trimmed back so that the windows and doors are clearly and completely visible to onlookers.

- Trees should be trimmed to allow a clear line-of-sight below the branches for the same reason. Branches should also be pruned back to prevent them from allowing access via upstairs windows, balconies, or the roof.

- When selecting plants for landscaping below windows and around the inside of your backyard fence, try to select varieties that burglars won't want to go through. Rose bushes and cacti are great options, due to the unpleasant thorns and needles. Bushes should be at least two feet wide (front-to-back) to minimize the chance that a burglar will "plow through" or jump over the plant.

- All sides of your home should be well-lit at night, particularly around windows and doors. If you have a side gate or a particularly large front or back yard, add additional lighting to ensure that all portions of your property can be seen at night. Use vandal-proof fixtures to prevent a crook from disabling your lights.

- Don't turn off the exterior lights when you go to bed! They won't do any good if they're not on. As an alternative, install motion-sensor lights, but make sure to check them whenever you notice that they've activated—the first five times may be the neighbor's cat, but what if the sixth one isn't?

- Never leave tools, gardening items (such as hoses), bicycles, toys, or other items outside; put them in the garage or bring them in the house. If you must leave a bike outside, put it in the backyard and make sure to use a sturdy bike lock (cable locks are best as they are more resistant to cutting), threading it through both the front wheel and the frame.

Doors

- All exterior doors should have interior-mounted hinges (the hinge pins are on the interior side of the door and the door swings inward). If an exterior door has exterior-mounted hinges, either:

- Rehang the door so that the hinges are mounted on the inside, or
- Replace the hinges with a set that has non-removable pins, or
- Install locking pins in the hinges: remove the center screw from each hinge plate on the door jamb and replace them with a headless screw or bolt, leaving it extended 1/2" from the

door jamb. Remove the matching screws from the door-mounted plates, drilling the hole slightly deeper or wider if necessary. This way when the door is closed, the headless screw will be in both the door jamb and the door, and the door cannot be removed even if the hinge pins are (assuming the door is locked).

- Exterior doors should be of solid-core construction and at least 1-3/4" thick. Steel plating on the faces of a hollow-core door is not an adequate substitute. Door frames should also be of solid construction. If you desire, inexpensive kits are commercially available to reinforce door frames against kicking in the door.

- Exterior doors should be fitted with a deadbolt that has at least a 1" throw (the distance the bolt sticks out from the door when in the locked position). Multiple locks are recommended. Never rely on the doorknob lock alone—these are notoriously weak and unsecure as a primary lock, and should only be used in combination with a deadbolt.

- All door locks should be located at least 36" from the nearest window (to prevent someone from smashing a window and reaching the lock). If this is not possible, such as with doors that have decorative windows, install at least one lock in an out-of-reach location, such as near the floor.

- French or other double-doors should have a flush bolt or cremone bolt installed on the inactive door to help reinforce the doors from being kicked open in the middle.

- Double-cylinder deadbolts (the kind that require a key on both sides of the door) are extremely secure, particularly where locks are within reach of a window, but may not be permissible in residential settings due to fire codes. Always check with the Fire Department before installing this type of lock in a residential setting. If you do install a double-cylinder deadbolt, leave a key in the inside lock whenever anyone is home to allow a quick exit during a fire or other emergency.

- Replace the standard screws in your locks' strike plates (the metal plate attached to the door frame) with screws that are at least 3" long or long

enough to penetrate into the nearest stud, whichever is longer. This will help the lock to hold if the door is kicked.

- Screen doors allow for the door to be left open and the breeze to come through your home, but are absolutely useless for security. A better alternative is a steel security door, which can be locked with a key but through which air can still pass. In addition, security doors often prevent unwanted visitors on the outside from peering into your home when you answer the door, though you can still see out. Remember to keep it locked at all times, even if you're home—a lock is only good if you use it.
- If your front door doesn't have one, install a wide-angle viewer ("peep-hole") through which you can see who might be at your door unexpectedly.

Windows

- All windows, particularly those on the first floor, should be dual-paned. Not only will this help you save on energy costs, but it can take longer to break a dual-paned window (and it makes more noise).
- Install wide blinds or opaque curtains in your windows, and keep them tightly closed whenever you're asleep or away from the home. Also install sheer curtains to let light in when you are home while still obscuring the view from outside. This will keep criminals from peering inside your home to make a "shopping list."
- All windows that open should have the movable portion on the inside track. If yours is installed with the moveable portion on the outside track, it should be reinstalled properly as soon as possible. It is next to impossible to secure a moveable panel on an outside track.
- For standard, horizontally-sliding windows (including sliding glass doors): Don't rely on the pre-installed thumb latch to keep your windows secure. Add a keyed or screw-type lock at the base track of the window, installed so that the window is well-secured when shut. Place a wooden dowel or other similar rod, at least 1/2" thick, in the track; make sure it's long enough that there is no more than 1-2" of leeway for the window to open, but do not use a rod that is longer than the

track (or it will sit an angle, allowing a burglar to force the window and allow the rod to "slide up").

Also install 3-5 thumb screws in the upper track, allowing them to stick out far enough that the window just clears them when closed—this will prevent the window from being lifted out of the track by burglars (easily done with most sliding glass doors and many newer standard windows).

- For vertically-sliding "sash"-type windows: extra reinforcement is necessary, as the latch in the middle can easily be overcome by prying the windows apart a fraction of an inch at the overlap. Using a hand drill, drill a hole on the inside of the window, through both panels at the corners of the overlap. Drill the holes on a downward angle, but don't go all the way through the outer sash (halfway should be sufficient). Insert double-headed nails or eye bolts through the holes to secure the windows shut and prevent the center latch from being pried apart. You can also drill a second set of holes 1-3" above the first set so that the window can be pinned open for ventilation.

Dowels or rods can be placed either vertically in the tracks on both sides of the window, or diagonally from corner to corner in the top panel. The dowels or rods should be at least 1/2" thick and fit snugly.

- For sliding glass doors: it is recommended that you drill and pin at the top of the window at the overlapping corner, just like with a sash-style window. This can also be done with standard windows. Also consider replacing the standard thumb latch with a locking version that requires a key from the outside.
- For all windows, any keyed locks should be left unlocked whenever anyone is home to allow for easy exit in case of a fire.
- Iron bars or other metal security framing is a great deterrent to burglars seeking quick and easy access through a window, but can be a hazard in case of a fire (not to mention unsightly to many people). If you do install metal security grates, make sure that they can easily be opened from the inside if needed in an emergency.
- Window films such as Armorcoat are commercially available that, when applied to the inside and outside of your windows, render them

virtually impossible to break out without compromising light passing through the glass. These films are especially recommended for any windows within 36" of a door lock, or replace those windows with Lexan or other similar glass-replacement.

- Louvred windows (made of several narrow panes that turn like blinds when opened), typically seen in bathroom installations, are next to impossible to secure. It is recommended that you replace these windows with sliding ones or non-moveable single panel windows. If you can't or choose not to, install a metal bar in the middle, crossing all the panes, that can't be removed (this can be installed 2-3" from the window to allow the panes to still be opened partway for ventilation); an alternative is to use epoxy or other construction-grade adhesive and glue the window panels shut.
- Casement or crank windows are easily secured by removing the crank. You can also add a heavy-gauge, wide, metal L-bracket anchored to the windowsill using a carriage bolt and wing nut; make sure the bracket is flush against the window when shut.
- Whenever you leave your home, make sure all the windows are shut and locked tightly; this should also be done before going to bed.

Garages

- An open garage is like an open front door! Never leave your garage door open unless you are actually in the garage or on the driveway in front of it. If you have to leave, even for a moment (such as to answer the phone or use the restroom), close the garage. A thief walking past will seize any opportunity, no matter how brief, to grab one or two valuable items and continue on their way—it only takes seconds.
- Don't expect that the door between the garage and your house is secure just because the vehicle door is closed—treat this door the same as any other exterior door. Keep it locked at all times and install a deadbolt if it doesn't already have one.
- For the same reason, treat your car the same way in your garage as you would out on the street. Keep the doors locked, roll up the windows, and remove any valuables (including GPS devices, MP3

players, cell phones, etc.) when leaving the car and going inside the house.

- When closing your garage with an automatic door mechanism, always wait to make sure the door shuts completely before going inside the house or driving away down the street. Most automatic garage doors have a sensor that will stop and reverse the door to prevent a person or pet from getting trapped underneath—and if you're already gone when a thief comes by, they can easily trip the sensor and get inside.
- While some items such as tools or gardening equipment, bicycles, and the like are normally kept in the garage, resist the temptation to use your garage for general storage. Valuables such as jewelry, coins, important documents, firearms, etc. should be kept in a bank safe deposit box or a secure location inside the home, and other "stored" items such as furniture, old toys and clothes, etc. should be stored in a locked shed or storage facility. Your garage is the safest place you can keep your car, and it only works if there's room to park inside.
- Manual garage doors typically have locks on the outside, but many automatic garage doors do not. These can be secured by drilling a hole in the track (if your track doesn't have pre-drilled holes), just above and as close to one of the rollers as possible when the door is fully shut, and putting a heavy-gauge padlock through the hole to block the roller from travelling up the track to open the door. Especially if you have expensive tools, golf clubs, or other valuables in your garage, the extra few minutes it takes to move your car out of your garage, park it on the driveway (make sure to lock it!), lock the garage, then come out the front door can be well worth it.
 - Even if you have a lock on the outside, you should still add a lock on the inside where it's protected from being cut.
- Any windows in your garage should be treated the same as the windows inside your home. Don't forget these when securing your windows.

Inside and More

- Keep all valuables such as expensive or heirloom jewelry, important documents, cash, firearms, etc. locked up in a safe, secure location,

such as a bank safe deposit box. If you choose to keep them in your home, store them in a fire-resistant safe that is hidden from view and bolted to the floor. Don't leave valuable items out in plain view, even if you use them frequently.

- Keep a record of the serial numbers of all items that have them, including electronics, appliances (large and small), cell phones, power tools, gardening equipment, recreational vehicles such as ATVs and dirtbikes, firearms, stock/bond certificates, etc. Also put any credit cards or identification you and your family members have on this list along with the phone numbers to call if your card gets lost or stolen. Make several copies, keeping one with your important documents, giving one to your insurance agent (if you have homeowner's or renter's insurance), and giving one to a trusted neighbor, friend, or relative for safekeeping.

Also take detailed, color photographs of those items which don't have serial numbers and can't be engraved, such as antiques, artwork, jewelry, etc., and keep a set with each copy of your serial number list.

- Participate in Operation ID. On any items that can be engraved, etch your driver's license number and state (ex., "CA A012345") in an inconspicuous location. Try to use the same spot for each item, such as the right-hand corner on the bottom. This way if your items should get stolen, it's much more likely that you'll get them back.

- Firearms are particularly favored by thieves, and while most are looking to get in and out quickly and won't search for guns if they don't know you have them, many will still check common "hiding spots" such as between the mattresses, in the underwear drawer, in the nightstand, on top of the fridge, etc. You may decide to keep a handgun accessible while you're home in case someone breaks in while you're asleep, but make sure to always lock it up whenever you leave the house.

Note: if you have a specialized gun safe, this will also work for storing your other valuables mentioned above.

- Alarm systems can be expensive but are a great tool in your anti-burglar kit. If you choose to purchase or lease one, make sure to have sensors installed on all doors and openable windows,

including those in the garage if possible.

Most systems also offer an option to install motion sensors at various locations inside your home. If you have pets, ask your technician if the sensors can be calibrated to only detect movement above a certain height or caused by something greater than a certain size or general weight, to prevent the cat or the dog from setting off the alarm.

Another (but typically very expensive) option involves installing "shatter sensors" on all your ground-floor windows, as well as those near decks or balconies. These sensors will trip the alarm if the window is shattered, unlike a standard magnetic sensor.

- If you have an alarm system, advertise it! Place the sign in a very conspicuous location in front of your home, and consider putting signs or stickers in other locations as well (such as the sliding glass door, by the side gate, etc.) where burglars might attempt to access your property. Even if you don't have an alarm system or your system is not active, ask around to see if anyone you know has a spare sign that you can have. Burglars often don't want to take the chance of setting off an alarm.

- You can also install surveillance cameras, either hidden or conspicuous (or both), at various locations around your property. If you choose to do so, get the best quality cameras that you can afford so that any video or stills you provide to law enforcement will help them to clearly identify the criminal.

Many recording options exist, including loop (the system will record for a set period of time before it begins to overwrite itself), archive-to-disk, and live feed. Some even have options for you to check your camera feeds remotely via the internet or your cell phone. If you select a system that overwrites itself periodically, make sure that it can be set to a long enough period of time that you won't lose any information if you leave town for a few days or more, such as on vacation.

Also consider these recording options: continuous stream (this will require the most disk space), interval stills (typically between 3 and 5 seconds apart), and motion-activated (in which the camera only records if it detects movement).

- Side gates should be tall enough, with a lack of footholds and other places to facilitate climbing,

that they will be difficult for most people to jump over. Make sure to keep them locked with a sturdy padlock (the circular type commonly used in storage facilities and on freight containers, with very little of the shackle exposed to guard against cutting, is recommended). Check periodically to make sure that the hasp on the gate is still securely attached on both sides, and tighten the screws or replace the hasp if necessary.

- If you have a dog, put “Beware of Dog” signs on your property (even if it’s a small breed such as a Chihuahua). If you don’t, consider putting signs up anyway! Should you choose to advertise that you have a dog when you in fact do not, or that your dog is bigger than he or she really is, make sure to also put some other “evidence” of the dog in visible areas, such as a large water bowl and food dish (with water and food), larger dog toys or rawhide bones, and even possibly a doghouse big enough for a larger breed. Burglars don’t want to risk the attention attracted by a barking dog, or potential injuries from the dog itself.

- Neighborhood Watch stickers or signs in various locations by doors or other access points are also a great deterrent, as they tell burglars that even if you’re not home your neighbors are still watching. Don’t have a Neighborhood Watch on your block? Call the Public Safety Office to start one! The phone number can be found at the bottom of this page.

- Don’t allow newspapers, mailers, phonebooks, and door flyers to collect on your porch—even if you’re home, this still acts as a strong signal to burglars that you’re not.

- Install a padlock or other locking device on your circuit breaker/fuse and meter boxes (if your meters are enclosed) if they’re outside, and give a copy of the key to the utility companies. Some thieves will attempt to circumvent alarm systems by cutting the power and phone lines.

Vacation Security

- Set various lights and electronic items, such as the porch light, the living room light, a bedroom light, a TV, etc., on timers with varying (but logical) on/off times, to create an impression that you are home and are moving through the house.

- The biggest tip-off to a family on vacation is when the house looks like no one’s home. Find a trusted neighbor who will agree to pick up your mail and newspapers, remove any flyers from your door or porch, and maintain your lawn and plants while you’re gone. Give this person a key so that they can check periodically to make sure no one’s gotten in. Make sure that they have your trip plans and an emergency contact number if something does happen.

- You can also submit a request for vacation patrol checks of your residence to the Sheriff’s Department; during these checks deputies or Sheriff’s volunteers-on-patrol will ensure that your home is still secured and there has been no damage or vandalism. If you’re going to be away for more than a few weeks, consider filing a Letter of Agency which permits deputies to arrest anyone found on your property that you haven’t authorized to be there. Both of these can be done by going into the Station lobby anytime, 24 hours a day.