

## Home Security

Many crimes are committed when opportunity presents itself. It is always a good idea to take a few simple steps to protect your family from crime, by eliminating any opportunities for potential break-ins and/or thefts. Always take the time to secure your home and belongings - even for a short amount of time. Even if it's the middle of the day, when most people are at work, school, or running errands; a criminal could easily take advantage of an unsecured yard or home. Take a moment to review the following tips from the [National Crime Prevention Council](#) on securing your home.

***Walk around the exterior of your home and look for weaknesses.*** Protect your home from the outside by surveying it with the eyes of a burglar. If you can easily tell that a window could be pried open, a thief will be able to come to the same conclusion. Take note of any expensive electronics, art, or furniture that is easily spotted through windows. You don't have to move around your entire home to keep expensive items out of sight, but it doesn't hurt to make small adjustments where you can to lessen the temptation of would-be thieves.

***Keep shrubbery around entrances and patios trimmed.*** This will help to eliminate the cover it may provide for a thief to hide in when attempting to break in, so eliminate his options for hiding spots.

***Stow expensive items like grills, cars, and bikes in the garage.*** Though it may seem like a hassle to roll out the grill for every barbecue, leaving it out makes it an easy target for thieves. If you utilize open or street parking, always lock your car and be sure to park in a well-lit area.

***Get to know your neighbors.*** Crime tends to be lower in tight-knit communities because neighbors are more likely to look out for each other and can easily spot a stranger. Your neighbors can be one of your best assets in home crime prevention because they offer extra eyes and an outside perspective. Plus if they have a different schedule from yours, they might be around during the day when you're away and can alert you to any suspicious activity that may occur in your absence.

***Keep your yard free of toys, tools, and ladders.*** A yard littered with toys signals to a thief that the house may be filled with equally interesting entertainment, like game consoles, tablets, or laptops. A ladder or toolbox left out even briefly for an afternoon can give an opportunistic thief help in gaining access to your house.

***Keep fences, gates, and garage doors locked.*** It's worth investing in a quality padlock for each outside entrance, even if you only lock it at night. Never leave your garage door open if you aren't in it or outside and able to keep an eye on it.

***Secure your car.*** If you must park on the street, do so in a well-lit area and bring valuables like cell phones, purses, GPS devices, and satellite radios inside. Never leave anything of value in plain view, and always lock the doors and roll up windows. Break-ins can occur in even the safest neighborhoods, and an unlocked car is one of the easiest possible targets. Never leave a spare key in the visor or anywhere else inside, even if the car is locked.

***Keep all doors and windows closed and locked at all times.*** An open exterior window or door is an invitation for burglars to easily enter your home, so keep them shut and securely locked whether you're home or not. Never leave your home without locking the front door, no matter how brief your trip. Even if it's pouring rain, don't forget to take the extra moment to lock up. Burglars don't take days off due to weather! Don't forget the door attached to the garage. It's one of the easiest targets and a likely route of entry. Don't depend on your automatic garage door for full security.

***Don't label your personal keys or hide spares outside.*** If your keys are labeled and get lost or stolen you could be in big trouble, especially if your wallet with your ID and address are with them. And thieves know to look under mats and in the gravel for fake rocks to find hidden keys, so instead leave a spare with a trusted neighbor, use a lock box, or call our 24/7 maintenance line in the event of a lock out.

Home invasion and burglary may never truly be eliminated from society, but their threats shouldn't cause you to live your life in fear. Take these simple measures to secure your home and reduce the chances that a crook will even look at it twice!