If you're locked out of your home, can you still get in? ...through an unlocked window in the back, or using an extra key hidden under a flowerpot or up on a ledge?

If you can break in, so can a burglar.

A small investment of time and money can make your home more secure and can reduce your chances of being a victim of burglary, assault, or vandalism.

Get to know your neighbors. Watchful neighbors who look out for you as well as themselves are a front line defense against crime.

Check The Locks

In almost half of all residential burglaries, thieves walk in through an unlocked door or crawl through an unlocked window.

- *Make sure every external door has at least a 1" bolt* and can provide protection against picking, drilling, and other forms of physical attack.
- *Secure sliding glass doors* with commercially available locks or with a broomstick or wooden dowel in the track to jam the door against intruders. Insert a pin in a hole drilled in the sliding door frame that goes through the fixed frame to prevent anyone from lifting the door off its track.
- *Secure double-hung windows* by sliding a bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a downward angle in each top corner of the inside sash and part way through the outside sash. Secure basement windows as well.
- *Don't hide keys in mailboxes*, planters, or under door-mats. Give an extra key to a neighbor you can trust.

NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

Crime Prevention Tips from

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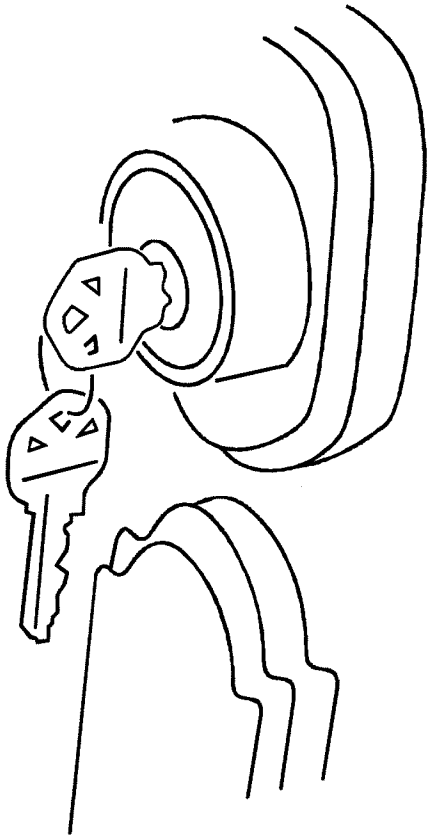
Invest in Home Security: Safety Tips



NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

- *If you've just moved into a new house or apartment,* rekey the locks and consider whether you need to upgrade to a high security lock.

- *Whenever possible, purchase keys that are protected* against unauthorized duplication.

Check The Doors

Locks aren't as effective if they're on flimsy doors.

- *Make sure all exterior doors* and frames are solid wood or metal.

- *Doors should fit tightly in their frames,* with hinge pins on the inside.

- *Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer* in all entry doors, so you can see who is outside without opening the door. Door chains are not a security device—they break easily and won't keep out an intruder.

Check The Outside

To discourage burglars from selecting your home as their target of opportunity, make sure to

- *Prune back shrubbery* that hides doors or windows. Cut back tree limbs that could help a thief climb into windows.

- *Light porches,* entrances, and yards—front and back. Consider timers that turn on outside lights or install motion detectors.

- *Keep your yard well-maintained.* Store ladders and tools inside your locked garage, basement, or storage shed when you're not using them.

- *Clearly display your house number* so police and other emergency vehicles can find your home quickly.

- *Help the neighborhood* stay in good shape. Dark alleys, broken street lights, abandoned cars, vacant buildings, graffiti, litter, and run-down areas attract crime. Work with the local government and neighbors to organize community clean-up days.

- *Put lights and a radio on timers* to create the illusion that someone is at home when you go away. Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions. Stop the mail and newspapers, or ask a neighbor to take them in.

- *Update your home inventory,* listing things like electronic and sports equipment and computers. Take photos or make videos of items, list descriptions and serial numbers. Check with law enforcement about Operation Identification—engraving your valuables. If your home is burglarized, this can help identify stolen items and make insurance claims easier to file.

What About Alarms?

If you have valuables in your home, or live in an isolated area or a neighborhood vulnerable to break-ins, consider an alarm system.

Before you invest in alarms,

- *Check with several companies* and decide what type and level of security fits your needs and available resources. Sources of information include your local police or sheriff's department, the public library, and the Better Business Bureau.

- *Look for an established company* and check references before signing up.

- *Learn how to use your system properly.* If you continually set off false alarms, your neighbors will ignore the noise and you could be fined.

Burglars Can Take More Than Your Property

Burglars generally don't want to run into their victims. But if they're surprised by someone coming home or pick a home that's occupied, someone may get hurt.

- *If you see a screen slit,* a window broken, or a door ajar, don't go in. Call the police from a neighbor's house or a public phone.

- *If you hear a noise in the night* that sounds like someone breaking in or moving around, call the police and wait for them to come. If you can leave safely, do so. Otherwise lock yourself in a room or, if the intruder is in the room, pretend to be asleep.

- *Think carefully before buying* a firearm for protection. Guns can be stolen and sold to anyone, or captured and used on you or the police. If you do own a gun, lock it up and learn how to use it safely.

Look Beyond Your Own Home

- *Join a Neighborhood Watch group.* If one doesn't exist, ask your police or sheriff's department to help you start one.

- *Look around for things that could contribute to crime* —poor street lighting, abandoned cars, vacant lots, littered playgrounds with broken equipment, homes that elderly owners have trouble maintaining. Help organize a clean-up/fix-up day.

- *If your neighbors are ever victims, help out.* Offer sympathy and support, and help with meals, repairs, or babysitting.