



RESIDENTIAL SECURITY ADVISE

Best advice of course is to have a professionally installed alarm. *The Home Office* state "**Many burglars will avoid breaking into a property with an alarm**" Most burglaries are opportunist where a criminal mind sees an opportunity and takes advantage of it. Did you know that in 20% of burglaries entry was gained via an unlocked door or window with no need for physical force, in other words they've just walked/climbed in and helped themselves! Approximately one third of burglaries are via a window, and two thirds via a door. Below are some home security tips for you to help beat the burglar.

Windows

Fit window locks with keys to all windows that are easy to reach – for example, those at ground floor, above a flat roof or near a drainpipe or other scalable framework. Before fitting locks to PVC-U or metal windows, talk to the installer to make sure this will not affect your warranty. Remember to keep windows locked. Remove the keys and keep them out of sight in a safe place.

If you are replacing windows, you can ask your installer about ones that are certified to British Standard BS7950 'Windows of Enhanced Security' and consider using laminated glass, which is much harder to break.

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Doors

If you are replacing a door, ask your installer about doors certified to *British Standard PAS 24-1* '**Doors of Enhanced Security**'. Also ask for it to be fitted with a security chain or bar and a door viewer if it doesn't have a window or other means of checking who's at the door. Remember to check your warranty before undertaking any DIY to existing doors.

Glass panels on or around doors are especially vulnerable, so replace them with laminated glass. Or, we can provide special film that will do a similar thing. Make sure the doors and frames are strong, in good condition and well protected from the elements. Wooden doors should be solid, preferably hardwood and at least 44mm (1 3/4") thick. Wooden doors can be made stronger by fitting a steel strip and plates to the door frame and around the lock.

For all outside doors, including French doors, fit five-lever mortise deadlocks '*Kitemarked BS3621*' and remember to use them. Keep your doors locked even

when you're at home to stop opportunism. Use the mortise deadlock or, on PVC-U or other enhanced security doors, the fully or double-locked mode.

Fit mortise bolts/rack bolts to the top and bottom of all outside doors, including both sides of French doors. These are inexpensive and easy to fit. Hinge bolts are available for the side of the frame and again are inexpensive and easy to fit. Hinge bolts and special security hinges are important if your doors open outwards. Remember to fit all hinges and security devices with long strong screws or where applicable bolts.

Ensure your sliding patio doors have anti-lift devices as well as locks fitted to the top and bottom to stop them being removed from outside, unless they already have a multi-locking system. If you are considering new or replacement patio doors, make sure you ask your installer for their high-security specification.

Letterboxes

Letterboxes should be at least 400mm (16 inches) from any lock. Consider fitting a letterbox cage or other restrictor, which prevents thieves from putting their hands through the letterbox and trying the latches from the inside.

Avoid having your keys in sight or reach of the letterbox. Some thieves have been known to use a fishing rod or magnet on a stick to steal them through the letterbox to gain access to your home or steal cars from your drive.

Keys

You will be surprised how many people do this, but never leave a spare key in a convenient hiding place such as under the doormat, in a flowerpot or behind a loose brick – thieves know all the usual hiding places.

If you move into a new home, change the locks as soon as possible as there may be other people who have keys that fit. Look for a local locksmith who is a member of the Master Locksmiths' Association.

Never leave your house or car keys in sight from a window or a door.

Burglars do break in to steal the keys of high-value cars. It is an increasing cause of 'professional' criminal activity. Be responsible with your keys and, if you have a garage, try to keep your car in it rather than on the drive.

If You Live In A Flat / Apartment

Doors on individual flats are often not as strong as those on houses and can be easier for a thief to break in.

Consider having a phone-entry system fitted to the main door to your building. Never 'buzz' open the door for strangers or hold the door open for someone who is arriving just as you are leaving or entering the building.

SECURITY AROUND THE HOME

Outside Lighting

Thieves don't like being lit up and good lighting can put off a thief altogether. Simple motion activated lights are inexpensive and effective, however, they can be annoying to neighbours and dangerous to passing traffic so should be angled downwards. A good form lighting to use is low-energy lighting, controlled by a light activated switch so that it comes on only when it's dark. It provides a constant level of light, is inexpensive to run, creates a more reassuring environment and is less obtrusive to neighbours. Lights should be out of easy reach and ideally at a height of at least 2.5 metres (eight feet).

Gardens, Gates & Fences

Installing strong fencing or gates will help prevent intruders getting to the back and sides of your home. A trellis fixed to the top makes them much more difficult to climb over. A thorny hedge along the boundary of your property or under windows can also be a deterrent. It is a good idea to make sure that passers-by can still see the front of your home so that a burglar can't work without being seen.

Gravel paths and drives are noisy to walk on and where possible are a simple deterrent although may be popular with local cats!

Try to avoid building pergolas, gazebos and so on too near to the house as they can give access to upper windows.

Solid fences or walls are relatively easy for a burglar to climb over. Do not be tempted to use barbed wire, or broken glass – you could be held legally responsible for any injuries caused. Safer alternatives exist and are designed not to cut or injure. Alternatively, fixing trellising to the top can make it more difficult.

If you have a side or rear passageway fit a strong, lockable, high gate across to hinder access to the back of your home as long as there is no public right of way. If you share a passageway with a neighbour, ask their permission and for help with the costs.

Garages & Sheds

Garages and sheds are often full of expensive tools, which as well as being attractive to thieves themselves, are ideal for breaking into the rest of the house. Never leave a garage or garden shed unlocked, especially if it has a connecting door to the house. There are tailor made locking devices available for these areas.

Fit strong padlocks and hasps to shed and garage doors, and make sure that the doors are solid enough not to be kicked in.

Make sure ladders are securely locked inside your garage or shed to stop a thief using them to reach upstairs windows. If there is no room in your garage or shed, chain or padlock them to a sturdy bracket on an outside wall.

Consider having lockable steel boxes fitted to the floor to store tools in, or anchor posts fitted to the floor to secure larger tools and valuable equipment. Visibly and

permanently mark property you keep in sheds and garages and keep photographic evidence of your goods for insurance purposes.

Remember, most burglaries happen when a house or flat is empty so make it look like you are at home when you are out and remember they are also more likely to happen during the evening or at night.

If You're Going Away

Ideally get a friend or neighbour to look after your home while you're away. Ask them to collect your post, draw your curtains at night and open them in the mornings, and generally keep an eye out and make the place look lived-in. Obviously be prepared to do the same for them.

If this is not possible, don't leave curtains closed during the daytime. Consider the use of time switches to turn on lights, radios and other appliances when you're out, ideally upstairs so it cannot be seen that no one is home. You can buy these from DIY shops. Keep all valuable items out of sight and preferably in a secure place which is hidden. Remember to cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries while you are away, cut the lawn and so on before you go and don't put your home address on luggage labels when on your outbound journey.

Bogus Callers

Some burglars try to trick their way in. They will often pretend to be someone else, i.e from the local council, water, gas or electric company. Or, any other story they can think of to get in. They can be of any age or sex and might work alone or in teams. Unfortunately they often target the elderly.

Remember to keep your doors and windows locked, even when you are at home.

Are you expecting a visitor? Put the door chain or bar on before you open the door and ask for ID.

If you are not happy ask them to come back when someone is there with you or ask them to make an appointment. A genuine caller will understand why you are being cautious. Call the number for the company from directory enquiries or the phone book, NOT from the number on the card. If you are suspicious call the police immediately.

You can get more useful advice from:

www.crimereduction.gov.uk, www.neighbourhoodwatch.net, your local Police station

CALL US NOW FOR A FREE QUOTE

Call: 0330 222 0021