



# Home and Personal Property Security Advice



**POLICE  
SCOTLAND**  
Keeping people safe

# Home and Personal Property Security Advice

You work hard for your property – protect it from criminals and improve your chances of your property being recovered if it gets lost or stolen by looking at our advice on how to keep your home and personal property secure.

Although having your home broken into is something many people fear, it is not a common occurrence. There are however many ways that you can help secure your home from intruders. They don't all cost money – some are purely down to common sense and good housekeeping.

Think of your home as a series of layers -the more layers an intruder has to overcome, the harder it will be to break in, the longer it will take and the less likely they will be to make an attempt. If you do become a victim, there are things you can do to increase the chances of your goods being recovered.

## **What's the first area I should think about?**

First think about the outer perimeter of the home, which may be the garden or alternatively a common close or stairwell.

## Keep Stairwells Secure

Thieves often consider communal closes /stairwells to be a weak point they can exploit. This isn't just because of poor physical security, but also because people may not challenge why they're there and sometimes even actively allow them access without checking.

If your home is accessed via communal stairwell, there are many ways you can keep it secure:

- Make sure your door entry system is maintained in working order and doors are kept locked.
- If you live in a property served by a common close / stairway, talk to your landlord, factor or housing association about installing a telephone entry system if one isn't already there. This may be easier to organise if you get together with other residents.
- Don't let anyone you don't know follow you through a controlled entry door.
- Never let anyone into the building or through a controlled entry door unless you know them or have seen their identification. If someone should buzz looking for another flat, don't let them in – tell them to call the flat directly.
- If you're ordering a takeaway, don't give the delivery driver the keypad number for the door.
- Don't leave valuable items such as bicycles in a common close unless you have no other option.
- If you're concerned about people loitering in the common close or stairwell, contact the concierge or **police by dialing 101.**

# Keeping Your Home Secure

First, think about basic good housekeeping routines that aren't expensive.

- Many thieves are actually opportunists who do not have to break in at all because a door or window has been left open or unlocked. Keep your home securely locked at all times.
- Don't leave keys on the inside of door locks, under mats, on hall tables or anywhere else an intruder may easily find them.
- Don't leave house or car keys near open windows or near doors with letter boxes. Thieves can reach in and steal your keys and then your car.
- Don't put your name or room number on your keyring if you live in shared accommodation. If it is lost or stolen, the thief will have information that could direct them to your home and your property.
- Don't keep house keys and car keys on the same key ring.
- Avoid keeping large amounts of cash in the house. If you must then disperse it in various locations.
- Security mark your property with a UV marker pen. You can use this pen to place an invisible imprint of your postcode and house number on your possessions.
- Record details of your valuables, such as mobile phone, cameras, laptops and tablets on the national mobile property register at [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com).
- Don't leave valuables in sight of windows, particularly around the tree at Christmas time.
- If you have a wall calendar, avoid mounting it near a window from where appointments can potentially be seen – this may give an indication of when a property will be empty.

## **How strong should my doors and windows be?**

You can improve home security by making simple adjustments. Front doors are the primary route of entry and exit into the house. However, windows are often used as either an entry or exit route for thieves. Properties with windows left open or unsecured are an easy target for the opportunist thief.

All single glazed windows on both the ground floor and other accessible areas can be vulnerable to attack, as plain glass is easily breakable. Consider replacing ordinary or toughened glass with laminated glass (two pieces of glass bonded together with a sheet of laminate). This is far more difficult to break through as it will not shatter and will therefore delay an attempt at forced entry.

Locking systems in double glazed windows should be fitted at the time of manufacture. A general rule to follow is that the handle should not be the only means of keeping the window closed. The locking system should be fitted within the framework and the handle used as a means of engaging the internal locking system.

- Doors should ideally be fitted with a 5 lever mortice deadlock to BS 3621 standard and the frame should be strong enough to support the door, hinges and lock. Consider fitting additional mortice bolts at the top and bottom of the door and if practical, hinge-bolts give additional resistance.
- External doors should be solid core and a minimum of 45 mm thick.
- New doors should be manufactured and installed to meet standards PAS 024:2012 or equivalent and glazed panels within or adjacent to the door should have laminated glass in at least the inner pane to standards P1A.

- Letter boxes should have an internal cover plate and not be at floor level. Mail should be allowed to drop down so that it can't be retrieved from the outside.
- Consider fitting a door viewer and a door chain.
- Don't leave keys in the door, as they can be turned or stolen through the letter box.
- Consider having your door reinforced with a security door bar.
- Consult the manufacturer/supplier before attempting to fit any extra locks to double glazed windows or doors.
- Windows should have internal beading to avoid the glass being removed from the outside. Some systems which have external beading are secure because the glass is adhered to the frame or secured by special tamper-proof clips.
- New windows should be manufactured and installed to PAS 024:2012 or equivalent, which indicates set specific standards of design and security for windows.

For more information about security standards, visit [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)

### **What if I'm making home improvements or even carrying out routine maintenance?**

Your property can be more vulnerable whilst you're carrying out home improvements.

- Don't give keys to workers as they can make copies quickly and easily.
- Intruders may try to masquerade as bona fide workers. Let your neighbours know about work being carried out, where workers are likely to be and who they are.

- Scaffolding may allow an intruder access to high level areas they wouldn't normally be able to access. Remember to lock windows.
- When planning home improvements, take crime prevention into account and use it as an opportunity to enhance your home's security features. Find out more about how our [Architectural Liaison services](#) might be able to assist you.

### **What should I do when I go on holiday?**

Go on holiday safe in the knowledge that you've taken some sensible steps to make sure your house doesn't appear unattended while you're away.

- Get to know your neighbours – if you're on good terms with neighbours you trust then they might keep an eye on your home, draw curtains and remove mail from behind the door.
- Make sure you cancel any regular deliveries such as milk or newspapers.
- Use timers on lights and if you have an alarm then make sure it's set.
- Don't broadcast on social networking that you're going on holiday – criminals can search for this kind of information to identify empty houses.

### **How can I protect myself and my property when I'm moving home?**

- If you're selling your home, don't show people around on your own. Ask your estate agent to send a representative to accompany anyone who wants to view the house. Opportunist thieves can use opportunities like this to steal your possessions.

- Never allow anyone into your home that has approached you directly from the street having seen your 'For Sale' sign. Tell them to go through the agent regardless of how urgently they want to view your property.
- When you move to a new property where other people, such as previous tenants, could still be in possession of keys, change the locks.

### **What help is available?**

- To make their communities safer and more resilient, many people choose to form Neighbourhood Watches. You can find out if a group exists in your local area by entering your postcode at [www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/LocalArea](http://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/LocalArea).
- If there isn't already one in your area why not start one? For some tips on getting started have a look at [www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/pages/2698/1/Getting\\_Started.html](http://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/pages/2698/1/Getting_Started.html)
- For general crime prevention advice and tips on how to keep your home secure, speak to your local community policing team by dialing 101.
- For more in depth advice about building crime prevention into your home, get more information about what our [Architectural Liaison services](#) can offer you.

**If you see signs of a break-in at your home, like a smashed window or an open door, then DON'T enter - the intruder may still be inside. Instead, go to a neighbour and call the police on 101 or, if you believe the intruder is still there, via 999.**



## **Secure your Garden & Outbuildings**

If you have a garden, it's the first thing an intruder will have to deal with if they want to try and break into your house. There are also items in your garden or which you may keep in a garden shed or garage which a thief will find attractive. Take some simple steps to secure your garden, shed and garage.

### **What can I do to stop thieves entering and stealing from my garden?**

- Keep hedges low and walls / fences in a good state of repair and no higher than 4 feet – this will make it harder for an intruder to work unseen. If you do have higher fences, consider fitting a topping such as a trellis or Prikka Strip.
- Consider nature's own defences - growing aggressive shrubbery which is harder for intruders to climb through. Ideal plants include berberis, blue spruce, common holly, giant rhubarb, golden bamboo, firethorn, shrub rose, pencil Christmas tree, juniper and rubus (bramble).
- Security lighting around an unobservable place will only benefit the thief. Ensure that illumination around your property is appropriate for your use but not a thief. Automatically operated lighting works best as a deterrent where there are adjoining properties where neighbours would be able to notice it being activated.
- Make sure bins are located in an area which doesn't allow them to be easily used as a step to climb over fences / walls or access windows.
- Lock away any garden implements, furniture or tools in a secure shed, garage or outside store. They may not only be an attractive target for theft, but also items such as ladders which are useful for breaking into your home.

## What can I do to protect property in my shed and garage?

- Photograph valuable items of garden furniture and / or garden tools. Note and keep a record of make, model, colour and serial numbers and use a UV pen or similar to security mark them with your house number and postcode.
- You may wish to use a chain or other device to lock garden tools and furniture together to the structure which will make them harder to remove.
- Fit a good quality hasp and padlock to the door, fitted with dome headed or non-returnable screws to prevent tampering. Appropriate products that are approved as 'Sold Secure' or 'Secured by Design' should be considered. For more information visit [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)
- Secure windows and don't give intruders the opportunity to see inside. Depending on the type of window, you could consider fitting internal window grills, heavy wire mesh or reinforced glass. You could also use curtains or opaque film. If the window opens, a window lock should be fitted.
- If you have an intruder alarm, consider extending it to cover sheds, garages and outbuildings and ensure that there is a visible external sounder box.
- If you do not have a secure shed then bring items inside – don't leave them lying out.
- If your garage adjoins your home and there is a through door, keep it locked.

# Keep your Car Secure

There are many things you can do to prevent from your car from being stolen or broken into:

## What should I think about before setting off?

- Permanently mark any valuables you use in the vehicle, such as a Satellite Navigation System (Sat Nav), with your postcode and house number/name. You can register all of your equipment at [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com).
- Fit a car alarm.
- Use locking wheel nuts to prevent the theft of your wheels.
- NEVER leave your car unattended to defrost windows with the keys in the ignition. Many car thieves actively target this – even first thing in the morning when darkness can provide cover. Any insurance claim could be adversely affected as it may be considered driver negligence. It's also an offence to leave a car unattended on a road with the engine running.

## What should I do when re-fuelling at a petrol station?

- Always remove keys from the ignition and lock your car if you need to walk to the petrol station shop to pay for your fuel. Again, some car thieves actively look out for insecure cars that can easily be taken from the forecourt and any insurance claim could be affected.

## **Where should I park?**

- Keep your car off the street if possible. If you're at home and you have a garage then use it. Make sure you lock both the car and the garage.
- If you don't have a garage, make use of the driveway if you have one.
- If parking in public or using airport parking, look for a car park with the Park Mark sign. These designated car parks have complied with specific measures to deter crime and anti-social behaviour. Find a location at [www.parkmark.co.uk](http://www.parkmark.co.uk)
- Don't park in isolated or remote areas. Whenever possible, park in a busy, well-lit and CCTV covered area.
- Try and park close to the exit – this will increase the amount of traffic which will pass your car, making it harder for thieves to operate undetected.

## **What should I do after I park?**

- Lock all items out of sight. Don't leave anything on display and take valuables with you.
- Leave the glove box empty and open.
- If you have a Sat Nav, hide the cradle and take the system with you. Don't forget to wipe the suction marks off the window.
- If you have personal correspondence in the vehicle, then take it with you. Don't give others access to important personal information or your home address.
- Use an electronic or mechanical immobiliser such as a steering lock.
- If you have an alarm then make sure it's set.

# Keep Your Bike Secure

More than 500,000 bikes are stolen in the UK each year because they're poorly secured or not secured at all. More than half of all bikes stolen are taken from the owner's property.

Help protect your bike by following these guidelines:

## What can I do before I set off?

- Photograph your bike and record all of your bike's details and distinguishing features and keep in a safe place. The serial number can be found on the bottom bracket.
- Register your bicycle securely online at the National Cycle Database, [www.bikeregister.com](http://www.bikeregister.com) or on the National Property Register [www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com). Doing this may help to recover your bike if it goes missing. On registering, you can also download a bike logbook where you can record your bike's details to keep at hand.
- Security mark your bike's frame with a UV pen or other method such as a bike marking kit - the mark should include your home postcode and house number.
- Insure your bike, either on contents insurance or separately if required.

## How can I secure my bike if it's kept in common close or stairwell?

- Always keep your bike out of sight as best you can.
- Lock your bike with two locks to a secure banister or ground anchor.

## What if I store my bicycle in a garage or a shed?

- Lock your bike with two locks to a ground anchor.

## **How should I secure my bike and its accessories when out and about?**

- Lock your bike up every time you leave it using secure locks (i.e. D-locks or thick cable locks).
- Ideally, use two different types of lock - a thief will need more tools to steal it.
- Locks are considered more vulnerable when close to the ground, so keep them off the floor.
- Fasten your bike through the frame and wheel to a fixed object.
- Lock your bike in a busy, well-lit place, in view of people or CCTV cameras.
- Lock the bike closely to the object it's attached to so it is difficult to manoeuvre.
- Lock the wheels and remove small parts / accessories that cannot be readily secured, such as lights, pumps, water bottles, saddles etc.
- Vary your routine - lock up your bike in different ways and place.

## **What type of cycle lock is best?**

- Buy the best lock you can afford. It's tempting to spend more money on the bike, but this is pointless if it gets stolen. As a guide, spend about 10% of the cost of your bike on a lock.
- Choose a 'Sold Secure' badged bicycle lock with a gold, silver or bronze rating.

# Contacting Us

In an **emergency** you should always **dial 999** if:

- There is a risk of personal injury or loss of life
- A crime is in progress
- Someone suspected of a crime is nearby

Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or speech-impaired callers using a Textphone (minicom) should dial 18000 in an emergency.

Alternatively, if you are deaf, hard of hearing and speech-impaired, you can register with emergency SMS text service. The emergency SMS service lets people in the UK send an SMS text message to the UK 999 service where it will be passed to the police, ambulance, fire rescue, or coastguard.

## 101 Non-Emergency Number

For non-emergencies and general enquiries, 101 is the number you call if you need to contact the police. Using 101 for situations that do not require an immediate police response helps keep 999 available for when there is an emergency.

Calls to 101 from landlines and mobiles cost 15 pence per call, no matter what time of day you call or how long your call lasts. Calls to Police Scotland may be recorded for training and service improvement purposes.

To find out more about making calls via 101, visit the website at [www.scotland.police.uk](http://www.scotland.police.uk)

## Website

You can also get in touch with Police Scotland via the Contact Us section of the website. Further information and advice on all of the contact methods available to you can be found there too.

If you have been the victim of a crime call the police on 101 or dial 999 in an emergency.

For more in-depth advice on home security visit our website.

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