

Burglary Prevention Tips

1. People are your best defense -- be a visibly nosy neighbor. Let anyone walking the neighborhood or sitting in a parked car see you watching them. Make a note of car license plates and if anyone behaves suspiciously or stays in their car for a lengthy period, call the police. Again please call the police and report anything remotely suspicious.
2. Tell close neighbors you trust if you plan to be away or expect any deliveries. If they're in the know they're more likely to notice something you didn't mention and spot unexpected callers at your home (burglars often call at the front door of a house to check if anyone is there). And, if you are going away, use timers to switch lights on and off at random, cancel newspapers and put a hold on your mail deliveries -- or, to guard your schedule, arrange for the trusted neighbor to collect them. Also notify the police so that we can keep an extra watch on your home while your away.
3. Having a dog is a huge deterrent. Ironically, burglars are far more likely to avoid a house with a small dog than a big one -- small dogs tend to be nervous and less easy to trick into calming down. They're less trustful and bark louder and longer.
4. Take a walk around your home, inside and out, to figure where the weakest link in your security might be -- like leaving a window open in a secluded spot. High-risk places include the door from your garage into the house, back doors, side "breezeways" where a burglar would not be seen, and large shrubs close to the residence where thieves could hide.
5. Take action to increase protection in these vulnerable places -- like installing keyed window locks and deadbolts on doors and using toughened glass in windows and doors. Remove those shrubs. If you leave windows open on the second floor, make sure your extension ladder is locked away.
6. Be wary about who you allow into your home and how much information you give about your belongings and schedule. This applies even with neighbors you don't know or fully trust ("inside" jobs are not uncommon). And don't leave valuables in view, inside or from outside the house.
7. If you're able, vary the times you leave and return home. If your household has several cars, vary who drives them, making it more difficult for an observer to know who is home and when.
8. If you have an alarm system, use it, even when leaving the home for a short period of time. If your home is monitored by a central station, notify them to contact the police immediately before making any other notifications.
9. Motion-activated cameras are another powerful weapon -- both as a home burglary deterrent and, linked to a computer (and, better yet, to a home network), to record images of your unwelcome visitors. These days, these devices are inexpensive. Network-linked cameras costing around \$85 can even email images so you have an off-site backup.
10. Avoid creating temptation. Don't leave things like lawn mowers and bikes unattended outside; lock them up. Inside, burglars are more likely to go for "middle of the road" valuables than expensive jewelry and appliances -- because they're easier to redeem for cash.

