



DON'T ADVERTISE YOUR STUFF TO THIEVES

**LET'S KEEP
CRIME
DOWN**

and other practical information to help you keep yourself and your things safe

www.direct.gov.uk/letskeepcrimedown

Many crimes happen on the spur of the moment, with thieves often taking advantage of an open window or valuables left on display in a car. However, by taking a few simple steps, you can avoid many of these crimes.

Most of the suggestions in this leaflet are practical, common sense and don't cost much – but they can make a real difference. Basics like shutting windows and locking car doors – even when you are only gone for a minute – or keeping your eye on your bag, can be all that it takes to prevent crime. It is really about remembering not to advertise your stuff to thieves.

Not securing your home, car, belongings or identity just isn't worth the cost and hassle.



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Protect your home. Keep it safe, keep it locked

Don't make your home an easy target for burglars

Many burglaries are crimes of opportunity. A burglar only needs to spot an open window, unlocked side gate or dodgy security alarm to make their move.

Think about it – if you know your home security looks poor, so will a thief. Statistics show that properties with little security are over 5 times more likely to be burgled than those with good security.

The good news is that it doesn't take much to secure your house – and put off thieves.

Here's a list of tips.

Safety checklist

- I've checked that all the doors and windows are locked – even if I'm only popping out for a minute.
- I've fitted deadlocks to all outside doors. (Burglars hate them because you need a key to open them from the inside as well as the outside.)
- I've made sure that neither my house keys nor my car keys are in sight or easy reach of my windows or doors, and that I don't keep them in an obvious place in the house.
- I've fitted key-operated locks to all the windows. (Burglars don't like having to break glass because of the noise it makes and the risk of leaving forensic evidence.)
- I've installed a visible burglar alarm, and I turn it on whenever I leave the house.

- I haven't hidden my spare keys outside, or in the garage or shed. (Burglars always look there.)
- I leave the lights and the radio on a timer for the evening when I'm out, so that it looks like I'm in. (You can buy a timer for as little as £2 from DIY shops.) If it's dark outside I also draw the curtains.
- I've made sure thieves can't get into the garden – there's a good fence surrounding the house and the side gate is sturdy and padlocked (so it will take more than a good kick to get through it). The garden shed is also locked.
- I haven't left any ladders or tools outside, which someone could use to get into the house.
- I've made sure that valuables like laptops can't be seen from the window.
- I haven't left any cash lying around or any documents with my name, address or other personal details (such as a bank statement or bill) that fraudsters could use.

- If I'm going on holiday, I've arranged for a friend or neighbour to collect the post and put the bins out.

Fire safety

Make sure your new security measures (such as window locks) don't block your escape route – and that you can get out of the house as quickly as possible. Fit a smoke alarm and test it regularly. Make sure you have an escape plan and that everyone in your household knows it.



Home security tip 1

Insurance – get it or regret it!

Getting insurance is cheaper than paying out a small fortune to replace your stolen belongings. At the very least get cover for your most valuable possessions such as your computer, TV and jewellery. Remember: if you don't lock your house, your insurance may not cover you.

Home security tip 2

Mark your property

Mark important and expensive possessions (such as your computer or DVD player) with your postcode and house number using special security marker pens. Keep a record of the make, model and serial numbers of all your electrical equipment for reference too. If the police recover them after a burglary, this record will be proof that they are stolen goods – and that they are yours.

Burglary

- Some burglars are looking for your car keys so they can steal your car. Make it hard for thieves. Don't leave car keys where they are visible.
- Visible burglar alarms and good outside lighting put burglars off. But make sure that your security lights are positioned out of reach of a burglar, and that they don't disturb your neighbours. Your alarm should turn itself off after 20 minutes at the most (this is in case it goes off when you're not there).



Computers: three must-dos

Thieves love computers. As well as the money they might get from selling them, computers often contain personal information (such as bank details) that criminals can use to commit fraud. Following these steps will make your computer more secure.

1. Keep it hidden

If you need to carry a laptop around with you, don't draw attention to it. Put it in a rucksack rather than a computer case.

2. Make sure your private information stays private

Keep PINs, passwords and personal financial information safe. Don't send your bank details by email or store them on your computer.

3. Be secure

Back up all your work regularly and always keep disks separate from your computer so that you have proof of copyright and a copy of your files. If you're ordering goods over the internet, make sure the company has a secure server. (If a site is secure, you will see 'https' in your address bar or a padlock symbol in your browser.)



Extra precautions for older people

Older people may feel more vulnerable to some crimes, but they are actually less likely to become victims. However, a few simple steps can help increase your safety even further.

- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home – use a bank account instead.
- Always follow the advice on bogus callers (see opposite).
- Ask your council for advice – many have security schemes that are aimed at older or more vulnerable people.
- Think about getting a personal alarm to use if you trip or fall at home.



Bogus callers

Most people who come to your door will be genuine callers. But it's always best to make sure.

Fit a door chain or spyhole so you can check who the caller is without having to open the door – your landlord or council may be able to help with this.

Remember: Lock, stop, chain, check.

Keep your doors and windows **locked**.

Before opening the door, **stop**. Are you expecting anyone? Are the back door and windows locked so no one can sneak in?

Put the door **chain** on.

Check the caller's identity by asking to see an ID card from the organisation they represent. Keep the door on the chain while you look it over. Check the number on their card matches the number for their company in the phone book

or call directory enquiries. Don't call the number on the card to check as that too may be fake.

Genuine callers will not mind waiting outside while you contact their company to check if they are genuine.

Most utility companies, such as gas, water and electricity suppliers, now operate a password scheme. Contact your suppliers and set up a unique password with each of them that you will remember. When a representative calls, they will give you your unique password. This means that you can be sure people at the door are who they say they are.

If you are in any doubt, don't let them in. Ask them to make an appointment to come back at another time.

For more information, phone the Age Concern information line free on 0800 00 99 66 or visit www.ageconcern.org.uk.

Protect your identity. Keep it private, keep it safe

Keep it to yourself

If thieves find out your personal details, they can use them to open bank accounts or get credit cards, loans and benefits in your name. Thieves may also use them to try to get documents in your name, such as a driving licence or a passport.

The information criminals are after includes your name, date of birth, address, National Insurance (NI) number, and bank and credit cards details. Keep these details safe – both online or offline.

Keeping safe online

- Protect your computer with the appropriate firewalls and security software. Always log off after using a shared computer and clear the history when you finish using it.
- Be sure you know who you are dealing with – do not enter sites through links in unsolicited emails. Only use recognised websites.
- Only carry out financial transactions on secure websites. Look for 'https' in the address bar or a padlock symbol in your browser. These tell you are on a secure web page.

- Keep passwords and PIN numbers safe. Don't use the same password for more than one account and never use banking passwords for any other websites. Choose passwords that no one can guess. Don't use obvious words and numbers that people who know you might be able to guess.
- When using social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace make sure you don't give away too much information about yourself – identity thieves can piece together your identity from public information bit by bit, like putting together a jigsaw.



Keeping safe offline

Post

- Shred or destroy documents that contain your personal details before you throw them away – particularly receipts, bank statements and other financial mail. Just a few personal details from your discarded post or junk mail can provide all the information a criminal needs to commit ID fraud.
- Don't leave your post lying around in communal areas of buildings. If possible, secure your letterbox. Set up online banking and billing options as this will reduce the amount of post that gets sent to you.
- Know what dates you should receive your bills from your utility companies. Your bill may contain payment information and other sensitive information. If your bill does not arrive contact your supplier.



- Redirect your post when you move house. If you suspect your mail is being stolen, contact the Royal Mail – it's possible someone has made a mail redirection order in your name without your knowledge.
- Ask a family member or someone you trust to regularly pop in and remove any mail from your letterbox or from behind the front door when you are away. Alternatively, use the Royal Mail Keepsafe™ service, which can store your mail for you for up to two months.

- If you live in a shared-access property, arrange to collect bank cards and cheque books direct from the bank.

You can contact the Royal Mail on 08457 740740 or at www.royalmail.com



Other

- If you are worried that someone may have tried to get credit in your name, ask for a copy of your personal credit file from one of the three credit reference agencies: Callcredit, Equifax and Experian.
- Check bank statements as soon as they arrive. If any unfamiliar transactions are listed, contact the company concerned immediately.
- Never give out passwords, personal or bank details over the phone or by email. If someone calls claiming to be from your bank or utility company, ask for their name and call them back using the official number printed on their communications.

Protect your stuff. Keep it safe, keep it hidden

Take care of your possessions

You hear about people having their bag snatched or their mobile phone stolen. In fact, the chances of it happening to you or your family are low and there are plenty of things you can do to make it even less likely.



Keep safe on the move

What you can do

- Carry your bag close to you with the clasp facing inwards. Keep it zipped up, and make sure your wallet or purse can't be seen. Don't carry large amounts of cash.
- Have your bags where you can see them. When in public places, such as a bar or restaurant, try to make sure a handle or strap is secured on a hook or under a chair leg, so that the bag can't easily be taken away.
- If you are wearing expensive jewellery or carrying other valuables, be discreet. Talking on your mobile, listening to music on headphones or carrying a laptop all show thieves you have things worth taking.

- Think about your route, especially if you're going to be on your own or carrying lots of shopping bags late at night. Avoid dark areas such as alleyways or unlit passages.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Think about keeping your valuables in separate places so if you lose your bag you haven't lost everything.
- Keep your valuables in deep pockets or ones that fasten or close fully.



Take extra care when listening to music in the street – your headphones will tell thieves that you have something to steal, and you may be less aware of your surroundings due to the music.

Places to be extra careful

Robbery is more likely to take place in quiet or dark areas, and pickpocketing is more likely in busy areas. Thieves also work in crowded places, for example near tube and train stations, and bus stops, where people are likely to use their mobile phones. If possible, wait until you get to work or home to make a call or send a text message.

Be extra careful:

- at tube and train stations
- at cash machines
- in car parks
- getting on and off buses, and
- in crowded areas, especially during rush hour.

Your bank cards

Take extra care with your bank cards and never write down your PIN or tell it to anyone else.

ATMs (cash machines)

If you need to withdraw money from a cash machine, try to do so during the day. Use a machine that is located inside a bank if you can, as it will be less likely to have been tampered with. If not, choose one on a busy street with good lighting.

Cover the keyboard with your free hand so that no one can see the number you enter. If someone starts distracting you or stands close by, cancel the transaction, retrieve your card and walk away. If you have withdrawn any cash, put it away immediately.

When giving your card details or personal information over the phone, in a shop, or online in a public place (eg an internet cafe), make sure other people cannot see your information or hear you providing it.

If your cards are stolen, contact your card issuer as soon as possible to cancel them so that they cannot be used by a thief. You should find a 24-hour emergency number on your statement which you could consider putting into your mobile or diary. A list of emergency numbers can also be found at www.cardwatch.org.uk

Your mobile

If your mobile phone is stolen, it's bad enough that it's expensive to replace. There's also the hassle of losing all those stored numbers,



messages, pictures and downloads. So how can you protect your phone?

Don't leave your phone on tables in pubs or restaurants and try not to use it in a crowded place.

Be aware when using your phone in areas where thieves often operate – like tube and railway stations, or bus stops. If you use a phone at these locations make sure that you are satisfied that it is safe to do so. If you are unsure it may be best to avoid using the phone until you are in a safer location.

Take care if you're using your phone when walking and make sure you are paying attention to what's going on around you.

Register your phone with your network operator. This means they can block calls if your phone is stolen so the thief can't use it. You can also register your mobile on a free property database such as 'Immobilise' (www.immobilise.com). Immobilise will tell the police, your insurer and the second-hand trade to assist in recovering your phone.



Record your 15-digit registration number (also known as the IMEI or International Mobile Equipment Identity number) and phone number. Keep these numbers separate and safe. You can find your IMEI number by keying `*#06#` into most phones or by looking underneath the phone battery.

If your phone is stolen, report it to your network operator (or call 08701 123 123) and to the police. Your phone can be blocked, just like a stolen credit card. Once blocked, it cannot be used again.

What if I'm a student?

Students often live in shared homes or halls of residence. This can make you and your possessions more vulnerable to theft. A few extra precautions will make you more secure – and could make all the difference.

- Lock your door, even if you're just nipping down the corridor, or your flatmates are in.
- Avoid leaving notes on your door saying, 'I'm out!' (or similar) – this advertises the fact to thieves.
- Do not lend your key or ID card to anyone.
- Don't buzz someone in without checking who they are visiting, and don't let strangers in the door with you. Don't give away access codes to food-delivery companies and so on.
- Make sure all your possessions are covered by insurance – thieves know student households are more likely to have items such as laptops, stereos and MP3 players than other households.
- Take all your belongings home over the holidays or put them in storage – thieves know your house will be unoccupied at these times.

When you're out

- Get to know the local area, and which routes around the university or college are safer. Walk quickly and purposefully – looking lost makes you stand out.
- Think when you drink – instead of walking home late at night get a bus or share a taxi with friends. A large proportion of robberies happen between 10pm and 2am, and thieves may target students outside pubs and clubs when they might be less concerned about safety.

At your university or college

Most campuses run security or safety programmes. These include providing 'after dark' buses for students and advice on areas to avoid.

For more information go to www.nus.org.uk

Vehicle crime. Keep it safe, keep it hidden, keep it locked

Drive down vehicle crime

Vehicle thefts including bicycle and motorcycle thefts are crimes of opportunity. One-fifth of motorists say that they regularly leave their cars unlocked, meaning that a lot of vehicle crimes could easily be prevented. Here's a list of tips.



To outwit the thief

Rule number 1: Always keep your car locked. This includes closing the sunroof and windows – even if you only leave it for a few seconds. That's all the time it takes for a criminal to steal your car or belongings.

Rule number 2: Avoid leaving anything in your car, whether valuable or not, particularly when it's parked overnight. Almost 63% of thefts of and from vehicles happen when they are parked outside the home. If you need to leave anything in the car, put it in the boot, or out of sight. Be particularly careful about expensive stereo, mobile phone or satellite navigation equipment.

Rule number 3: Park with care. Park in busy or well-lit areas near CCTV cameras, or in police-approved car parks (look out for 'ParkMark®' on signs) if possible. You can find out which car parks are approved at www.saferparking.com

Always chain bikes, motorbikes and scooters to something fixed, like security rails and ground anchors. You can make it much harder for a thief to break your chain by making sure it does not rest on the ground.

Secure your car

- Never leave the keys in the ignition, not even in a garage when you are paying for petrol.
- Don't leave anything on display (even when you are parked in your driveway). Take your satellite navigation or DAB radio converter device with you if you can. Wipe off any suction pad marks on the windscreen as these may alert a thief to their presence in the car.



- Never leave car documents or spare keys inside the car. Hide them at home, but not by the door. Thieves might use a hook and cane through the letterbox to steal car keys from hall tables.
- If your car doesn't already have one, consider fitting a car alarm or approved electronic immobiliser; or you can use a steering lock on older cars. You can find information on products that have been tested by Thatcham at www.thatcham.org (phone 01635 868855) or by Sold Secure at www.soldsecure.com (phone 01327 264687).

- If you own a high-value vehicle, including a 4x4 or high performance car, consider fitting a tracking device that meets the Thatcham Category 5 standard. Visit www.thatcham.org for further details.
- Have your car's registration number etched onto all glass surfaces, including the windscreen and headlamps.
- Ensure your number plates are secured properly to prevent theft. Ideally use theft-resistant plates. Don't use screwless stick-on number plates, which a thief could put onto another vehicle. Stolen number plates may be attached to another vehicle that is then used to commit a crime – but you could receive any fines or charges involved. If your number plates are stolen make sure you report this to the police.
- When you're driving slowly through unfamiliar places, keep doors locked and windows up. Keep bags and mobile phones out of view. A thief can lean in and steal

what's on your passenger seat in the time it takes for a red light to turn green.

- If you have to leave anything in the car, put it in the boot – even if you're only leaving your car for a few minutes.

Secure your motorbike and scooter

- Put a steering lock on and use a strong steel cable or D-lock to attach your bike to security rails or ground anchors.
- Get a professionally fitted combined alarm and immobiliser. Thatcham and Sold Secure can advise you on the best products. You can find information on products that have been tested by Thatcham at www.thatcham.org (phone 01635 868855) or by Sold Secure at www.soldsecure.com (phone 01327 264687).
- If you've got a garage, use it. Or cover your motorbike or scooter when you're not using it.

Secure your bicycle

- Buy a good-quality lock that can withstand attack. Hardened steel D-locks or robust chains are best, but a good bicycle shop or DIY store can advise you. You could even use two locks for extra security (and to put thieves off trying to steal your bike). As a rule a lock should cost around 10% of the value of the bike, especially if your bike is expensive.
- When locking your bike, lock it to an immovable object. Try to secure the frame and both wheels, and secure 'quick release' accessories.
- It's important to secure your bike at home. If possible keep it locked in a shed or garage. Make sure it is locked securely, particularly if it is in a communal area.
- When you're out always lock your bike to an immovable object, even if it's only for a few

minutes (making sure it can't be lifted off). Keep the lock off the ground as this makes it harder to break, and try to make the gap between the lock and bike as small as possible.

- Get your bike frame security-marked with your name and postcode. Your local police may be able to help you with this.



More information

Home security

For more information visit www.direct.gov.uk/homesecurity or contact your local neighbourhood policing team: <http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Policing.do?ref=neighbourhood>

Copies of the following leaflets can be ordered or downloaded from the Crime Reduction website at www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/publicity_catalogue:

- *Be safe, be secure: Your practical guide to crime prevention*
- *Peace of mind while you're away*
- *A guide to home security*

Vehicle security

For more information visit www.direct.gov.uk/vehiclesecurity or contact your local neighbourhood policing team: <http://local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Policing.do?ref=neighbourhood>

ParkMark® Safer Parking can tell you which car parks are police approved. Visit www.saferparking.com

Sold Secure provides a list of recognised security products. Visit www.soldsecure.com or call 01327 264687

Thatcham gives information on immobilisers and other security devices. Visit www.thatcham.org or call 01635 868855

Preventing ID theft

For more information visit www.direct.gov.uk/idtheft or www.identitytheft.org.uk

Get Safe Online gives advice on how to stay safe online when shopping, banking or doing business over the internet. Visit www.getsafeonline.org

The Royal Mail provides help and advice if you think your mail has been stolen. Visit www.royalmail.com or call 08457 740 740.

www.cardwatch.org.uk contains a list of emergency numbers if your card is stolen as well as useful advice on avoiding credit card fraud, and what to do should you fall victim to it.

Security for students

For more information contact your local Crime Prevention Officer at your police station. Visit www.nus.org.uk

Mobile phone security

Property database Immobilise can block your phone if it's been lost or stolen. Visit www.immobilise.com

Security for older people

For more information phone the Age Concern helpline free on 0800 00 99 66 or visit www.ageconcern.org.uk

General security

Call Crimestoppers free on 0800 555 111 or visit www.crimestoppers-uk.org