

Help from your neighbours

It's a good idea to get help from your neighbours. You could ask them to collect post, sweep up leaves, mow the lawn, open and close curtains, and so on. They could even occasionally park their car on your driveway. Anything to make the place look lived in.

You can repay the favour by doing the same for them. Warn your neighbour not to put your surname, address or even your house number on your keys in case they fall into the wrong hands.

Let your neighbour know when you will be away and, if you can, give them details so that they can contact you, or someone who can act on your behalf, in an emergency.

Is there a Neighbourhood Watch scheme where you live? Your local police will tell you if there is a scheme in your area or help you set one up. Or you can look on the internet at www.neighbourhoodwatch.uk.com. It could help you make your home more secure while you're away, and has many other crime-prevention and community benefits.



Want to know more about home security?

You can find this leaflet and a range of others on preventing burglary and other crimes at www.crimereduction.gov.uk and www.homeoffice.gov.uk

These include:

- A guide to home security
- Peace of mind while you move home
- How to beat the bogus caller
- Be safe, be secure – Your practical guide to crime prevention

You can also contact your local police station for advice. Some police forces will check your home or business premises and recommend ways of improving the security. This is a popular service and, if there is a waiting list, they may send you an information pack so you can check your property yourself. The police website www.securedbydesign.com also contains useful advice.

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Peace of mind while you're away

Advice on making your home and belongings more secure




Home Office



Everyone needs a holiday some time. And however much we like our homes, there is nothing like a change of scenery.

But we all want to come home and find everything as we left it. Almost half of all burglaries happen when a flat or house is empty. By following the tips set out in this leaflet, you can help to make your home more secure while you are away. Read the tips here and plan ahead. Tick off the items before you go.



Before you go

- Make sure your home looks occupied. Ideally, ask a trusted neighbour or a friend to look after it (collecting mail, watering plants, feeding your pets etc). Let them have the spare keys but don't put your name or address on the keys.
- Don't leave your curtains closed in the daytime as this shows the house is empty.
- Use automatic timer-switches to turn your lights on when it goes dark.
- Cancel any regular deliveries such as newspapers or milk.
- Avoid discussing holiday plans where strangers may hear details of your absence from home.
- Cut the lawn before you go and trim back any plants that burglars could hide behind.
- Uncollected mail is a sign that you are away. The Royal Mail's 'Keepsafe' service will keep your mail for up to two months while you are away.
- Consider leaving important documents and valuable items with other family members or a bank. Or lock them in a safe.
- Do not put your home address on your luggage when you are travelling to your holiday destination.
- If you normally leave valuable pedal cycles or similar items in your shed, consider putting them in the house.
- Finally, don't forget to lock all external doors and windows. If you have a burglar alarm, make sure it is set.

And just before you set off, it's worth spending a couple of minutes checking that you've done all you had to do and taken everything you need with you. Don't forget your passport and tickets!

General tips on home security

- Fit mortise locks (Kitemarked BS 3621) or bolts to all outside doors, and locks to all downstairs or easily accessible windows.
- Have an approved alarm system installed – ask your local police and insurance company for advice.
- Don't leave valuables, like your TV, laptop or DVD player, where people can see them through windows.
- Ideally keep photographic records of all your valuable items and keep it in a safe place.
- Make sure that you have up-to-date household insurance.
- Consider fitting a letterbox cage or outer restrictor, which prevents thieves from putting their hands through and trying the latches from the inside.
- Most burglars get in through a back door or window. Make it difficult for them by locking all side or back gates and adding trellis to the top of walls and fences. Fit lights that come on at night to cover the sides and back of your house.
- Put all your tools away so they cannot be used to break into your house and lock your garage and shed with proper security locks. If you have to leave a ladder out, put it on its side and lock it to a secure fixture with a 'close shackle' padlock or heavy-duty chain.