

Crime Prevention

Burglary is always a crime of opportunity. Reduce the opportunity and lower your odds of being affected by crime. Some interesting statistics:

- Studies show that most burglars attack during the daytime when dense bushes and trees protect them from view, and the building appears unoccupied
- One-third of burglars enter from the basement
- One-third of burglars force entry through a window or door
- One-third of burglars gain access from an unlocked/open door or window

To best protect your home, look at it from a burglar's perspective. What are the vulnerable parts?

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Crime proofing inside your home

The goal of indoor crime proofing is to secure your premises and make them appear occupied at all times. Here are a few simple tips to deter burglars from entering your home:

1. **Secure your premises.**
 - Close blinds and curtains at night so that a burglar can't scope your belongings.
 - Lock all doors and windows before leaving your house.
 - Lock windows so that they can't be opened from the outside. If they can't be locked, you can pin them by drilling a hole through both window frames and inserting a bolt or metal pin. The pin must be easily removable for emergency situations.
 - Home burglar alarm systems are a great deterrent. Even if you have an alarm system, don't neglect the other security measures available to you. An alarm provides an extra layer of security, but is no replacement for good common sense. Alarm owners should still do what they can to make sure their home is not an attractive target for thieves.
2. **Make your home look occupied at all times.**
 - Use timers to maintain normal lighting patterns.
 - Leave a radio on when you are away from your home for short periods of time.
3. **Protect your valuables.**
 - Consider marking your valuables indelibly (engraved) with a unique identifier known only to you.
 - Take an inventory of your home on a videotape and/or in photographs.
 - Keep jewellery and negotiables in a safety deposit box or an unlikely place (i.e. not your bedroom).

Crime proofing outside your home

There are many things that you can do to the exterior of your house or in the yard to deter burglars and make it more difficult to force entry.

- Keep your shrubbery cut back so that it doesn't block windows and doors.
- Secure window air conditioners from the inside.
- Illuminate as much of your property as possible.
- Exterior doors should be solid, not hollow. Metal doors provide the best protection against forced entry.
- Use a fencing style that would not conceal a burglar's activities. Remember if you can't see out, others can't see in.
- Secure any glass that is less than 40 inches from a door lock. Either coat exterior glass with an acrylic or polycarbonate to strengthen, or replace with laminated or tempered glass.
- Door hinges that are on the outside should have a non-removable center pin that can't be tampered with.
- Install deadbolt locks.
- Barking dogs are great deterrents to burglars. Even a strategically placed "Beware of Dog" sticker can make a burglar think twice. Of course, vicious dogs are never a good idea. If your dog bites someone, you might find yourself in court.
- Place hinged security bars over basement windows. Remember to keep the key nearby for emergency exits.
- Pin sliding patio doors together when closed. Another easy security step is to drill a hole in the upper track and insert a screw that extends out into the runner to prevent the door from being lifted up and out of its track.
- Ensure that a burglar cannot access the roof from high trees or a ladder left outside.

What NOT to do:

- Don't put up a nameplate outside of your house with your full name. A burglar can use this information to look up your number in the phone book and call to see if you are home.
- Don't leave a note on the door or in the mailbox telling a friend or family member that you aren't home.
- Don't leave spare keys in an obvious place such as the mailbox or under the front door mat.
- Don't leave cash and handbags in view in your home.
- Don't leave any doors unlocked when you are at the other end of the house or in the yard.

Keeping your home safe while you are away on vacation

If you are going on vacation, it's especially important to make your home appear inhabited. Enlist the help of trusted neighbours, family and friends. Here are some things that you can do to keep your home safer:

- Stop all mail delivery.
- Arrange for a neighbour to cut the grass or shovel snow.
- Cancel all deliveries during the time you will be away.
- Maintain normal lighting patterns by using electronic timers.
- Ask a neighbour to put one of their garbage bags in front of your house on collection day.
- Leave a radio on, with a timer if necessary to simulate normal use.
- Ask a neighbour to park in your driveway.
- Arrange for neighbours to pick up flyers.
- Don't talk about your vacation plans with strangers or service people.
- Use your work address on your luggage tags so a potential burglar won't know where your empty house is.
- If practical, remove valuables from your home. Small valuables should be stored in a safety deposit box.
- Lock the garage door.

Note: Before you leave, you should tell someone you trust:

- That you will be away
- How long you will be absent
- Whether or not you will have a house sitter
- The number where you can be reached

What to do if your home is burglarized

Despite your best efforts, a burglar may still penetrate your home. If you return to find that your house has been robbed:

- Don't stay - always think of your safety first
- Never confront a burglar or block the exit route
- Go immediately to a neighbour's home or nearby location and phone the police
- Upon the occurrence of a break-in to your home and after the incident has been reported to the police, you should
 - Give notice to your insurer in writing.
 - Take all necessary steps to prevent further damage to property so damaged.
 - Create a complete inventory of the stolen, destroyed and damaged property.
 - If necessary, give a complete inventory of undamaged property.