

Simple preventive steps

1. **Shut and lock all doors** even if you are only going out for a short time.
2. **Close and lock all windows** too - burglars don't like to smash glass.
3. **Do not 'hide' keys outside** or leave them in an obvious place near doors or windows.
4. **Make sure your valuables** including TVs & stereos - cannot be seen from outside.
5. **Make your home look occupied** when you are away by using timers on radios & lights.
6. **When you buy new items** don't leave empty boxes near bins as an advertisement.
7. **Hide or lock away passports & official documents** - identity fraud is on the rise.
8. **Do not leave car keys near doors or windows** - burglars stick poles through letterboxes to steal keys.
9. **Marking your property** – puts thieves off because it makes it harder to re-sell the stolen goods.

Homes with good security are much less likely to be burgled than those without. The average financial loss from burglary is far greater than the cost of good quality door and window locks.

1. **Deadlocks** make it harder for burglars to get out with your goods if they entered through a window.
2. **Window locks** deter burglars because smashing glass attracts attention & can leave forensic evidence.
3. **Visible burglar alarms** are a great deterrent - be courteous to neighbours, ensure they shut off after 20 minutes.
4. **Security lighting** is also a good deterrent but place it carefully near entry points so as not to disturb neighbours.
5. **Timers** on radios and lights make it look like you are there when you are not.
6. **Spy holes & chains** on doors let you see who is there without opening the door.
7. **Fencing** can both hinder & help burglars - make sure it's not easy to hide behind or climb.

Invest in household insurance but you may not be covered if you don't have or use approved locks.

Who is most at risk?

Everyone should take steps to protect their home but some people are more vulnerable to burglary than others:

1. **Students** - 1 in 3 students will be the victim of a crime & burglary is high in student accommodation.
2. **Young people (16-24)** living on their own.
3. **Families with young children** - children tend to be careless about precautions like closing windows & doors.
Their high-tech games & other belongings are attractive to criminals, especially at Christmas time.
4. **New residents** especially renters, who have been in their home for less than a year.
5. **The unemployed** as well as the economically inactive and those on low incomes.
6. **Previous burglary victims** - thieves commonly return to steal what they missed or to steal items you've replaced - often very soon after the first burglary.

The elderly are NOT a high-risk group, but they are vulnerable to:

1. **Leaving doors unlocked** to allow visitors access, especially if they have mobility problems. Remember to keep all doors and windows locked.
2. **Distraction burglary.** When "bogus callers" trick their way into your home and distract you while stealing money and valuables. If an unexpected caller comes to your door, stop...chain...and check who they are before opening.

When you are most at risk

You are most likely to be burgled when your home is empty. Therefore:

When you are on holiday

1. Use timers on radios and lights
2. Cancel milk and newspaper deliveries
3. Have a neighbour stop by to collect mail and open/close curtains

When you're moving home

1. Check that removers and trades people belong to a professional association.
2. Only give copies of your keys to people you trust; don't label them with your name & address
3. Change the locks to your new home as soon as possible.
4. Be especially careful at Christmas time - burglars love the festive season as there are always lots of presents to steal.

Don't buy stolen goods!

1. It's not just an offence (up to 14 years in prison) but it helps encourage and nurture crime & it can fund drug abuse.
2. It makes it harder for thieves to sell on stolen property thus reducing the incentive to steal in the first place and directly impacting the market for burglary and drugs in your neighbourhood.

What you can do:

1. If you're offered property that you suspect might be stolen: Ask to see the instruction booklet, the original box or any other paperwork that would accompany such a product. If the seller can't produce it the item is more likely to be stolen.
2. If you're offered a price for something that seems too good to be true, it probably is. Thieves are more interested in a quick sale than a good price, especially if they stole the property to pay for drugs.
3. If you know of a person or establishment that is selling stolen goods please call the police or Crimestoppers (free) on 0800 555 111.
4. Mark your property and record the details. This makes it less attractive to thieves and can help police prove that a suspect is in possession of stolen property.

Consider the facts

1. Nearly half of all burglaries happen when a home is empty.
2. Most are opportunist 2 in 10 successful burglaries are through open windows or unlocked doors.
3. In many burglaries it takes the thief just 5 minutes to break in, steal property & leave.

Your home

Home security is the best way to reduce your chances of being burgled. A lot of burglaries are spur of the moment.

If a burglar sees an open window or other easy point of entry he may take his chance.

Basic tips

1. When you go out, always lock the door and close the windows - even if you are just going out for a short time.

2. Window locks, especially on older windows, will help stop people getting in. Remember, a burglar is less likely to break in if they have to smash a window.
3. If you have deadlocks, use them. They make it harder for a thief to get out again. But don't leave the key near the door or in an obvious place.
4. Don't leave spare keys outside or in a garage or shed, and put car or garage keys out of sight in the house.
5. Use timers for lights and radios if you need to be away from home overnight. They create the impression that someone is in.
6. Visible burglar alarms, good lighting & carefully directed security lighting can put burglars off but make sure that lights don't disturb your neighbours & that alarms turn off after 20 minutes.
7. Fences at the back of the house may make this area more secure but walls & solid fencing may let a thief break in without being seen.
8. A good compromise is chain-link fencing, or trellises with prickly shrubs.
9. Fitting a 'spy hole' allows you to see who is at the door.
10. Having a door chain means that you can open the door a little way to talk to them.

Make sure that any improvements you make don't stop you from getting out of your house as quickly as possible if there is a fire.

Who can help you do this?

Tenants

If you rent your house or flat your landlord has some responsibility towards its security. If your home is not secure ask your landlord if they will make necessary improvements. It will be cheaper for them to fit window locks than to mend a broken window. If you live in social housing or in a block of rented flats, forming a tenants' association might make security easier.

Homeowners

Spending money on security measures can seem daunting but it is a good investment, will last a long time and can add value to your property. Contact your council or local police for help. They may be able to advise you on the best measures to protect your property, and may even have grants to help cover the cost.

Protecting your property

Planning permission

There are planning regulations which govern many of the changes you can make to the outside of your home, including building walls and fences, but you do not need to apply for planning permission for everything.

Unless you live in a listed building or your council has removed your 'permitted development rights' (your rights to carry out limited development without applying for planning permission), you can build a fence or boundary wall up to one metre high where it will be next to a road or footpath, or up to two metres high elsewhere. These height limits would include, as part of the wall or fence, any barbed or razor wire you put up. If you use barbed or razor wire, under the

Occupiers Liability Act 1984 you must take reasonable precautions to prevent injury to other people caused by dangers on your property.

If you are building a wall on the boundary with your neighbour you may need your neighbour's permission (under the Party Wall Act). If you live somewhere, such as an estate, where there are building restrictions in force you may need to get special permission.

For more information

If you are not sure whether you need to apply for planning permission, you should contact Stroud District Council's Planning Department. You can get an explanatory booklet, 'Planning - A guide for householders', from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Free Literature on 0870 122 6236 or at www.planning.odpm.gov.uk/householders/index.htm

You can find more information about the planning system, including the control of small-scale development and permitted development rights from the Planning Inspectorate's 'Planning Portal' at www.planningportal.gov.uk

You can also get the following Home Office leaflets:

1. 'Your guide to keeping your home secure'
2. 'Peace of mind while you're away'
3. 'Peace of mind while you move home'

Personal safety at home

Securing your property will make you safer in your home & make your home & your belongings safer while you are out. Here are some guidelines for dealing with different situations you may find yourself in.

Intruders

If you think you have an intruder, only you can decide how to deal with the situation. Think about what you might do now - you might not be thinking clearly in a real incident.

1. You may respond differently if you are alone in the house or if there are other people there.
2. You could make a noise & hope it puts them off or keep quiet & hope they don't come into your room.
3. You could keep a phone in your bedroom so you can raise the alarm. This may also make you feel safer.
4. It is generally best not to challenge an intruder.

Interrupting burglars

If you come home and find a broken window or lights on and you think there may be a burglar inside, you may think it best not to go into the house. Go to a neighbour's house and call the police or ring the doorbell - someone who should be in the house will come to the door, whereas intruders are likely to run away.

Abusive phone calls

1. If you get an abusive or threatening phone call, do not respond to it. The caller wants your strong reaction.
2. Put the receiver by the phone & move away. Return some minutes later & hang up.
3. You may want to make a record of when you receive the calls to see if there is a pattern.
4. Dialling 1471 may reveal what number the call came from. Some phone companies offer a service which blocks calls from people who have withheld their number.

5. At night unplug your phone or turn the ring off so you are not disturbed.
6. Do not give your name or number when you answer the phone.
7. If you are receiving many abusive calls contact your phone company or the police for help.

Bogus callers (see more new information below)

1. Most people who come to your door will be genuine callers. But it's best to make sure.
2. Fitting a door chain or spy-hole will help you check who the caller is.
3. If you are not expecting someone to call a genuine caller will not mind waiting outside while you contact their company. Find the phone number in the phone book or look on your last bill. Most companies have a password scheme. If you let someone into your home, even if it is someone you know, and you become uncomfortable, make excuses and leave. Go to a neighbour's house or ask a friend to come back with you.

The Law on Self Defence

Under the law you are entitled to use reasonable force in self-defence or to protect another person or your property.

1. The force that is reasonable to use in any situation will depend on the threat that you are facing, for example, the level of force that you can use to defend your life is greater than the force you can use to defend your property.
2. What “reasonable force” is will depend on the circumstances of each case and is something that only the courts can decide. This does not mean that if you injure a criminal while defending yourself or your property you will necessarily face criminal charges, but if the criminal complains that you have used unreasonable force, the police must investigate. In the heat of the moment and in a panic it may be hard for you to assess the level of danger that you face. However, if charges are brought against you, the courts take account of what was reasonable for you in those circumstances. They will make some allowances for “heat of the moment” panic.
3. The courts believe that if you did only what you honestly and instinctively thought necessary to prevent a crime, which would be strong evidence that you used only reasonable force. Generally the courts use common sense and take account of what it is like to be faced with a violent or possibly criminal.
4. The law does not allow you to retaliate. Punishing criminals is a matter for the courts and you must not take the law into your own hands by trying to punish an offender for a crime committed against you, your friends or your family.

Students

As a student, you will probably live in shared housing, either in halls or in a shared house. Following the advice on personal safety and property will help keep you safer.

These points may also help

1. In halls, be careful about locking your door, even if you are just going down the corridor.
2. Make sure that main entrance doors close behind you, and don't let other people in with you.

3. In a shared house, follow the security advice given earlier about protecting your property. Your landlord should be able to help.
4. Be aware that you are likely to have more electronic goods (stereos, computers etc) than many households. You should think about getting insurance cover in case they are stolen.
5. Over Christmas and summer holidays, when it is likely that the house will be empty for a long time, see if anyone will be around to keep an eye on things & use the security advice earlier in the section. This is particularly important if you live in a student area.

Visit www.good2bsecure.co.uk for more tips for students.

Older people (see more new information below)

Older people may feel more vulnerable to some crimes, but are actually less likely to become victims. A few simple steps can also help reduce your risk of crime.

1. Think about getting a personal alarm to use if you trip or fall at home.
2. Don't keep large amounts of cash at home - use a bank account instead.
3. Look after your pension book carefully.
4. Ask your landlord to fit door chains & spy holes or ask the council to help you if you own your home.

Many councils have security schemes aimed at older or more vulnerable people. You could ask them for advice. See the section on bogus callers.

For more information

Phone the Age Concern information line 0800 00 99 66. Age Concern website: www.ageconcern.org.uk

(You can also get copies of the Home Office leaflet 'How to beat the bogus caller'.

Protecting your property

Computers

Computers are a popular item to steal. Making sure your home is secure will help guard against this, but there are some extra steps you could take.

1. Keep your computer in a locked cabinet or lock the door to the room you keep it in to make it harder to steal.
2. Use security screws and bolts to make it harder for people without the correct tool to open the casing to steal parts but check with the manufacturer that this does not affect any guarantee.
3. Use passwords, make back-up copies on disk and 'watermark' documents. This will help protect your copyright and will mean you have a copy of your work if the computer is stolen.
4. Be very careful with financial information. For example, don't send your bank details in an e-mail. If you are ordering goods over the internet, make sure the company has a secure server.
5. If you need to carry a laptop computer with you, try to be discreet about it. Many laptops have distinctive bags, so try to put it in something else and follow other personal security advice. It may also be useful to carry disks in a different place.