

Top Ten Burglary prevention tips.

1. Lock all doors and windows when you leave home, even for a short time. Burglars are opportunists and leaving a door or window open makes it easy for them. Always buy the best locks you can afford and ideally every external door should have a lock to British Standard 3621, especially if you have buildings or contents insurance.

Even when you are at home, and particularly at night, ensure that easily reached windows are not left open. Never leave keys or valuables on view near a door or window, even your front door, as thieves will hook keys through the letter box and use them to enter your home or steal your car or sometimes both!

If you live in a flat in a building with a communal entrance door seek advice to make sure it is secure against burglary and safe in the event of a fire. And secure your flat as if it were an individual house especially your flat door.

2. Keep bushes and trees well trimmed away from the front of your home especially near doors and windows and along pathways. Hedges provide a hiding place for burglars to work behind.

3. At night, keep the perimeter of your home well lit. Low energy lighting switched on and off by photoelectric sensors (low light switches) is a cost-effective way to discourage intruders.

4. Keep garden tools and ladders securely locked away – a burglar can use them to break into your home. A bicycle 'D' lock through the handles of garden tools is an inexpensive way to do this, even inside a weak shed.

5. Mark your valuables with your postcode followed by your door number using permanent (visible) or ultra violet (invisible) marker pen. Police look for these marks whenever they recover property. Log on to www.immobilise.com and register all your valuables like mobiles, laptops, jewellery etc. Photograph valuable or unique items to provide to Police in the event of a theft.

6. Always check the identity of visitors before admitting them to your home. If you are in any doubt call the police on 999.

7. If you go on holiday never leave clues that you are away. Cancel milk and papers and be careful who's listening when you speak to the milkman or paper shop. And never leave a message on your answering machine telling people you aren't home.

8. Ask a neighbour to park in your driveway or in front of your home and ask them to ensure that all post is pushed through the letterbox and removed from sight.

9. If you aren't in one already, join your local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme or start a new one if necessary. Contact the Community Safety Division for further details on 020 8871 7696

10. Possibly the most effective and affordable upgrade you can make to the security of your front door is to reinforce the door frame on the lock side by fitting a London bar. These are widely available, especially from locksmiths and should cost less than £20. Highly recommended.'