



YOUR HOME SECURITY What have you got to lose?

Many burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves who simply enter homes through open windows or unlocked doors. How easy can you make it for them? If you look at your home through burglars' eyes, can you see where opportunities exist for *your home* to become a target?

To conduct a survey of your home, you will need to think of your property as if you were peeling an onion – starting at the boundary and working inward to the core.

Property Boundary

Keep all fences, walls or shrubbery to a maximum height of 1 metre at the front of your property, to maximise visibility from neighbours and anyone passing by.

Fences or walls at the rear of the property will ideally be 1.8 metres high to prevent intruders from 'garden hopping'. The fence should also divide the front of the property from the rear and include a 1.8m gate with a strong padlock. Fences and walls should always be kept in a good state of repair. Thorny bushes planted alongside fences also make a good deterrent. To increase the height of fences, walls etc, add diamond-weave trellis. This will present a further obstacle to intruders, as it will break if they climb on it and create noise.

Garden

Secure ladders to the wall using a padlock and chain – or better still, store them in the garage out of sight!

Garden tools left lying around present a burglar with all he needs for levering windows or doors. Lock them away in your garage or shed.

Children's toys are expensive and easily stolen if left out. Bikes should be registered with a marking scheme (look out for Northants Police bike marking events). Store bikes out of sight in a garage.

Store your wheely bin or dustbin away from walls or anywhere they might be used as a 'step up' to a flat roof or first floor window.

Burglars dislike gravel drives as it makes too much noise – something they want to avoid!

Garages and Sheds

Never leave a garage door unlocked especially if it has a connecting door through to the house. Your garage is the best place to store tools, sports equipment, lawn mowers and bikes, as it is more substantially built than a shed.

Locks to 'up and over' doors should be reinforced with additional locks at the corners (ask your local Master Locksmith). Side doors should have a 5-lever mortice lock and any windows should be fitted with window locks or an internal grille.

Always lock your car when it is in the garage and secure motorbikes to ground anchor points using an equally priced padlock and chain.

Sheds are not robustly built and as such, are quite vulnerable. This is therefore not the place to store anything of any value. 'White out' the window or hang a net curtain to prevent anyone from viewing the contents. Fit a good quality padlock to the door and use coach bolts when fitting the hinges. A shed alarm is also a good investment.

Lighting

A constant level of lighting provided by a dusk-to-dawn sensor light is ideal at the front of the house. If the rear of your property is not overlooked by neighbours or passers by, then don't light it. By lighting it, you are actually helping the burglar to see what he is doing.

If, however, your garden *is* overlooked and someone would notice if a light came on, then fit a light with a passive infrared (PIR) detector. This type of light will come on automatically if someone walks into its beam and draw attention to any activity.

The House

Wooden front doors should have a 5-lever mortice deadlock and a cylinder rim latch (Yale lock) fitted.

It is essential that you can see who is calling when someone knocks at your door, so take a look out of any window that overlooks the front door area before you open the door! If the door does not have any windows, you will need a spyhole or chain. If you don't know the caller, don't open the door. Chains should only be used if you decide to open the door and not left on all the time. Don't fit any bolts to your front door, as they will slow your escape in the event of a fire.

The back door should be particularly secure as this is a vulnerable area. A 5-lever mortice deadlock should be fitted, together with two key-operated mortice locks fitted at points opposite the hinges. Don't forget to take the keys out of the door and store them out of sight – especially if you have a cat flap. Burglars often reach in and open the door using the keys. Glass panels in or near these doors should be reinforced using laminated glass.

All ground floor windows and any windows that can be reached from a flat roof will need window locks. Locksmiths and DIY shops will have a varied range for you to choose from. Patio doors should have additional locks fitted at the top and bottom, and an anti-lift device installed.

If you have UPVC windows it is advisable to consult with your installer before attempting to fit any locks retrospectively. It is a specialist job and you could invalidate your guarantees.

***KEEP YOUR FRONT AND BACK DOOR LOCKED - EVEN WHEN YOU ARE AT HOME.
REMEMBER – THEY ARE NOT CALLED LOCKS FOR NOTHING!***

A burglar alarm is highly recommended, as it is a proven deterrent. Get three independent quotes before buying a system. Police recommend NSI approved installers (see Yellow Pages). Consider a monitored system if you live in a remote location.

Ask your neighbours to keep an eye on your property and to check your home if your alarm goes off. If they discover any sign of disturbance, it will be up to them to call the Police.

When you go on holiday, ask neighbours to park a car on your drive, open and close curtains and move the mail from the door. Maybe they will even cut the lawn for you! You can offer to do the same for them when they are away. This is how Neighbourhood Watch schemes work. If you would like any information on Neighbourhood Watch, please contact your local liaison officer on 08453 700700 ext 7536.

Your Valuables (the core)

Consider a safe if you have items of particular value. These items should be valued and photographed. Valuable items such as TV's, DVD's, Ipods, laptops etc should be postcoded using an ultraviolet pen, and their serial numbers logged on to **www.immobilise.com**. Always locate computers and other valuables away from windows so they can't be seen from outside.

Keep car keys out of sight and away from the front door so they can't be 'fished' out through the letterbox. Never leave keys in the door. Find somewhere to store them safely overnight as many homes are burgled purely for the car keys.