



# ADVICE ON BURGLARY PREVENTION



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

Working together for a safer London

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## **SECTION 2: ADVICE FOR VICTIMS OF BURGLARY**

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# INTRODUCTION

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) takes burglary very seriously. We understand that it can be both financially costly and emotionally devastating for victims and their families.

Much of our work is aimed at making you feel safer in your community and helping you avoid crime. This booklet offers you straight forward advice on how to improve your home security and dramatically reduce the likelihood of experiencing a burglary.

The second section of this booklet gives you an overview of what to do should you experience a break-in, plus information on how to get the kind of help and advice you need afterwards.

If you would like to discuss any of the information contained in this booklet further, please contact your local police.

If you require this document in another format, please contact us at  
Publicity  
Room 1334  
New Scotland Yard  
The Broadway  
London SW1H 0BG.  
Telephone: 020 7230 3644

# CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE

Burglary can have a long-lasting emotional impact on victims, leaving them feeling isolated and vulnerable. However, by taking just a few simple measures you can reduce the chances of it happening to you. This section gives you a wealth of simple and practical advice on how to deter thieves, so you feel more secure in your home.

Why might your home be targeted? Most burglaries tend to be opportunistic, rather than planned. Burglars usually choose houses that have little or no visible security. So if your home does not look secure, seems unlivd in, or provides unobserved access, it could be at risk. Understanding what burglars look for when choosing their target will help you identify weak spots in your home's security.

## WHAT MAKES YOUR HOME ATTRACTIVE TO BURGLARS

1. **A high front boundary**
2. **Low side and rear boundaries**
3. **Wheelie bins accessible**
4. **No visible intruder alarm**
5. **No security lighting**
6. **Valuables on display**
7. **Open or unsecured windows**
8. **Unsecured garage door**
9. **Unlocked shed**
10. **Paved path or driveway**

## USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

We have compiled a list of information resources and helplines to assist you in safeguarding your home against burglary, and to provide you with support should you experience a break-in.

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### Metropolitan Police Service

[www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention](http://www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention)

0300 123 1212

In an emergency always call 999

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### Neighbourhood Watch

[www.neighbourhoodwatch.net](http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net)  
0116 2710052 (office hours)

### Immobilise

[www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)

### Home Office

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

### Crimestoppers

If you have information about a crime but would prefer not to speak to police, you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. Crimestoppers is an independent charity.  
[www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)

### Victim Support

[www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)  
0845 450 3936 (London region)

### Sold Secured

[www.soldsecured.com](http://www.soldsecured.com)  
0132 726 4687



## NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

You could also consider getting involved with your local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and make not only your own home more secure, but your local community too. For information on how to find your local group, or to set one up yourself, visit: [www.neighbourhoodwatch.net](http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net)

Secured by Design



## SECURED BY DESIGN

The Secured by Design initiative supports the aim of 'designing out crime' from homes and commercial premises. Look for the Secured by Design mark and you can be sure that crime prevention has been taken into account at the design, layout and construction stages on a wide range of applications and products.  
[www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)  
01908 305 101

*When you leave your home it's important to ensure you leave it as secure as possible. Getting into an 'exit routine' can help ensure that you don't forget obvious, but important things, like not leaving your valuables near windows. Here's our quick reminder on what to do when you leave your home.*

#### **WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME**

- Close and lock all your doors and windows, even if you are only going out for a few minutes.
- Set your burglar alarm.
- Make sure the side and/or back gate is locked.
- Lock your shed or garage.
- Make sure that any valuables are not in sight.
- Put keys out of reach of letterboxes.
- In the evening, shut the curtains and leave some lights on.
- Never leave car documents or ID in obvious places such as kitchens or hallways.

If you are going to be away for days or weeks at a time, you will need to take additional action, such as cancelling newspaper and milk deliveries. Consider asking your neighbours to close curtains, or park on your drive. Use a timer device to automatically turn lights and a radio on at night.

## **LEAVING YOUR HOME**

## **CAR KEY THEFT**

Modern immobiliser systems mean that car thieves now aim to steal your keys and your vehicle at the same time. You can help stop them by following these tips:

- Never leave keys in the ignition
- Never leave your house or car keys near a door or window
- Fit a tracker device
- Use your garage if you have one

You may not be insured if your vehicle is stolen having been left unsecured.

## **KEYS**



***Making your home as difficult to get into as possible will help deter criminals, and that starts with your boundaries.***

- Make sure your front wall is no more than 1 metre high, so a burglar could be seen from the street.
- Make your side and driveway gates the same height as the boundaries around them.
- Metal side and driveway gates are good because they allow intruders to be seen. Add extra security with an anti-climb top.
- Gravel driveways and paths make a silent approach difficult.
- Store wheelie bins or other potential climbing aids behind locked gates, so burglars can't climb up on them.
- Wooden gates can be secured with two hasps and staples and two closed shackle padlocks near the top and the bottom, to prevent leverage.
- Rear and side boundaries should be between 1.8 and 2 metres high. Planting dense or spiky climbing plants acts as an additional deterrent.
- Be aware that using barbed wire, carpet gripper or broken glass on top of walls or fences could cause injury which the occupier could be liable for.

## **SECURING YOUR BOUNDARIES**





***Alarms are undoubtedly  
the most effective  
deterrent against  
burglary.***

To maximise the deterrent, place external active burglar alarm bell boxes (with flashing lights and sounders) at the front and back of the property. Police recommend an installer who is affiliated to an inspectorate, either the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) or Security System and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB). Be aware that DIY alarms will not necessarily receive a police response.

For information about smoke alarms and to get a home fire safety visit go to:

**[www.london-fire.gov.uk](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk)**

or call **020 8555 1200**

- Fit smoke alarms that conform to BS5446 on every floor.

# ALARMS



***Doors and windows are the primary route of entry and exit for most burglars, so it's vital that you know what the safest kinds of doors and locking systems are. Remember to take this guide with you if you are considering buying new ones.***

## **WOODEN DOORS**

Front doors should be solid timber, with a British Standard (BS3621) 5-lever mortice lock one third of the way up and an automatic deadlocking rim lock one third of the way down. Back doors should be solid timber, with a BS3621 5-lever mortice sash lock and two mortice rack bolts or surface mounted press bolts.

- Construction: make sure your wooden doors and frames are made of solid wood or a solid core construction. Frames should be reinforced with metal strips, called 'London' and 'Birmingham' bars.
- Sizes: the door must be at least 44mm thick and the frame should have a rebate of at least 18mm.
- Hinges: use three high quality 100mm hinges and two hinge bolts to support the hinge side.
- Door viewer: fit a door viewer at the user height; it may be appropriate to fit more than one at different heights.

# **DOORS & WINDOWS**

## GLAZED DOORS

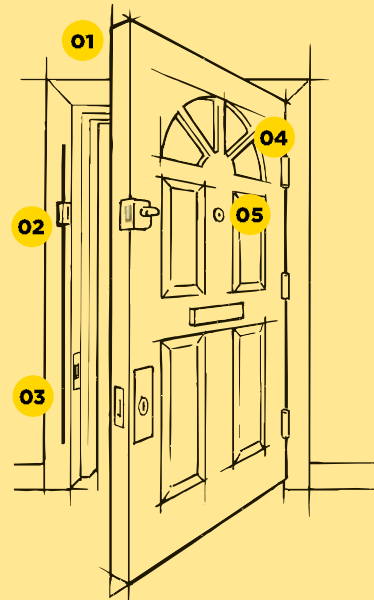
Make sure any glass panels are at least 6.4mm thick and are either laminated, or reinforced with security film. Consider using internal grilles if there is a risk that lock releases could be accessed via a broken pane of glass.

## UPVC

If your house is fitted with uPVC doors make sure that you always lock the door with a key. Simply closing the door and pushing the handle up will not prevent someone entering. Insure that you engage the multi-locking mechanism and that the door is securely locked.

## PATIO AND FRENCH DOORS

Patio doors should have a minimum of three locking points, with an anti-lift device to prevent them from being lifted from their runners.



- 01 Doors and frames should be solid timber.
- 02 Fit a good quality automatic dead-latch cylinder.
- 03 Fit a good quality 5-lever mortice dead lock.
- 04 Use strengthened or laminated glass.
- 05 Fit a door viewer.



## **FLATS**

If your flat is on the second floor or above, you need to balance security with fire safety. That means you shouldn't fit your front door with a lock that needs a key to open it from the inside. Choose one that complies with BS 5588/BS 3621, allowing you to release the lock and leave the flat with a single action. Add a letterbox cowl if required to prevent thieves tampering with the lock from outside.

## **COMMUNAL DOORS**

Care has to be taken when securing communal doors as the ability to escape in case of fire is vital. You should always be able to open the communal door (from inside) using a single keyless action. If you fit an automatic door closer, it should be of a good quality. Poor quality closers can fail to engage the lock. For advice on glass doors, letterbox cowls and door viewers, please refer to advice on doors and windows (page 10). Locking mechanisms vary, depending on access control and door type. Seek advice from your local police. New doors should be Secured by Design standard and have laminated glass (if fitted).

# **DOORS & WINDOWS**

## **CONTINUED**

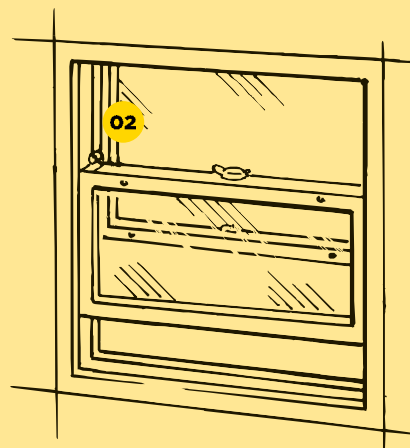
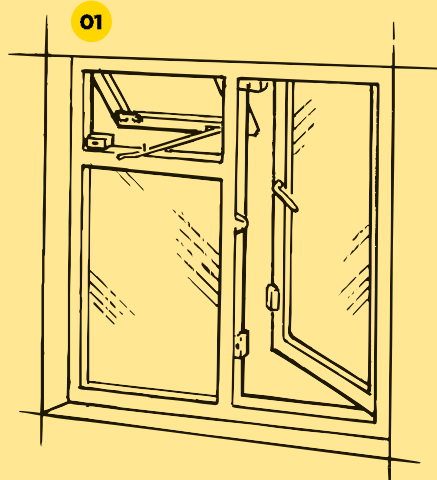
## WINDOWS

On the ground floor and for other windows that are easily accessible, key operated locks are essential. Window handles should be multi-locking, with shoot bolts into the frame. Extra security can be added to externally beaded windows with security clips, security tape or sealant.

Louvre window panes must be secured to prevent them being removed, or consider replacing them with a solid glass panel.



The Secured by Design logo and title 'Police Preferred Specification' logo indicates that an organisation meets the quality standards set by Secured by Design. You can search for products and manufacturers at: **[www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)**  
01908 305 101



- 01** For hinged windows buy locks that secure the frames together rather than those that simply lock the handles.
- 02** Sash windows should be fitted with key operated sash stoppers.

*Lights can be a very successful crime prevention measure at night.*

### **SECURITY LIGHTING**

Lights can be used in a variety of ways to deter burglars at night. Exterior lights will make it more difficult for burglars to stay undetected when they're trying to break in. Make sure they're designed to be tamper-proof or at least positioned where it's difficult for intruders to reach them. As a further deterrent, you can also leave interior lights switched on or use timer switches to make it look as if you're at home – even when you're out.

In most cases, the preferred and cost-effective security lighting option is low wattage bulbs activated by photo-electric cell which will automatically switch on from dusk till dawn. The alternative of passive infra-red lights can be accidentally triggered by pets or wild animals and must be thoughtfully positioned to avoid annoying your neighbours.

## **LIGHTS**

For a good overview of all your options, the Institute of Lighting Engineers (ILE) publishes a guide to security lighting which covers both PIR halogen lighting and photo-electric systems.



**01**

**All external lighting units should be placed where it is difficult for intruders to reach or designed so that they are suitably protected.**



*Thieves are attracted to garden sheds because they contain many everyday, unmarked items that are easy to sell, and they're often left unlocked or unsecured.*

**TO REDUCE THE RISK OF THEFT FROM YOUR GARDEN OR SHED:**

- Ensure your insurance covers theft from sheds and gardens.
- Don't leave tools and implements outside.
- If you don't have a shed, wrap a heavy padlock around tools and secure to an anchor device.
- Always keep sheds and outbuildings locked and maybe put thorny plants nearby.
- Property mark and register tools for free at **[www.immobilise.com](http://www.immobilise.com)**
- Secure windows with internal diamond mesh grilles.
- Use two large hasps and staples on your shed doors plus two closed shackle padlocks on the outside.

## **GARDENS & GARAGES**

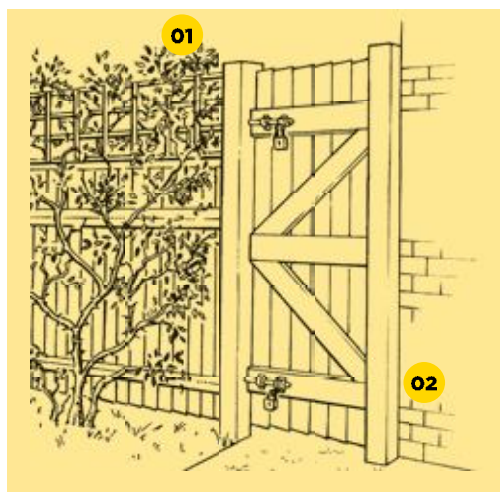


## BE SURE THAT YOUR GARAGE IS AS SECURE AS POSSIBLE.

- For garages with metal 'up and over' doors, purpose made locks can be fitted to either side, about 300mm up from the floor, to reduce leverage.
- Wooden garage double doors can be secured with two substantial hasps and staples and closed shackle padlocks.
- An external floor mounted, solid steel locking 'T' bar with a closed shackle padlock, will offer a good visual deterrent and make it more difficult to open the door.
- Garage side and rear doors can be secured with BS3621 5-lever mortice locks and two internal mortice rack bolts, one near the top and one near the bottom.

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on how to prevent car crime, download our leaflet 'Preventing Car Crime' available from [www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention](http://www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention)



**01** Fit trellis on top of back garden fences.

**02** Fit two good quality locks on the inside of gates.



***Marking or etching your postcode and house number on items that are particularly valuable is a good deterrent to thieves because they know these items are more easily traced by the police, and it reduces their ability to sell these items on.***

## **PROPERTY MARKING**

Marking your property can make it difficult for thieves to sell it on – and help you recover anything that does get stolen.

The Police can talk you through the best way to mark specific items – whether that's indelible pen or with one of the proprietary chemically-coded systems now available. The Secured by Design scheme recommends property marking products at **[www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com)**

There are numerous ways of property marking your possessions, some more permanent than others. You can use UV or indelible pens, postcode etching or chemically coded systems. By visibly marking your property with your postcode and house number (or flat letter) or the first three letters of a house name, and illustrating this fact to thieves (using window stickers), you reduce the risk of burglary by removing the benefit.

# **PROPERTY MARKING**

Additionally, if marked your property can be traced, identified and returned to you.

Items with a unique serial number can be registered for free at **www.immobilise.com** – the UK National Property Register. Registration increases the chance of having your property returned. In fact, over 900 people every month are contacted about recovered items.

You should also think about photographing highly valuable items such as jewellery, paintings or antiques. For the best results:

- Use a non-reflective background
- Put a ruler next to the item to provide a sense of scale
- Make sure there is enough light
- Make sure the object is in focus
- Keep the pictures in a safe place
- Think about giving a second copy of the pictures to a trusted friend or relative

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on property marking visit:

**[www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention](http://www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention)**



*Although most people who come to your door will be genuine, not all are. If a burglar can get into your home without having to go to the effort of breaking in, they may try. Taking these extra safety precautions will help you avoid being duped by a potential burglar.*

#### **WHAT IS A BOGUS CALLER?**

Bogus callers are people who pretend to be someone they are not, like a workman, or a member of staff from a utility company. Such callers could be looking to commit a distraction burglary: they want to trick their way into your home in order to steal. Always be cautious about any unknown man, woman, or child who comes to your door, without arranging it with you first.

- Use your door viewer, or look through your front window to see who is there.
- When anyone claiming to be from a service company comes to the door, always ask for their ID and call the customer services department to confirm it. Any genuine caller will not mind waiting.

## **BOGUS CALLERS & DISTRACTION BURGLARY**

- Most utility companies operate password schemes, so call yours and set one up. Any of their representatives will know this when they come to your house.
- Genuine trades people should carry photo ID. Keep the door closed while you check it thoroughly, and call their head office if you feel unsure.
- Be wary of anyone who claims they are in a hurry and needs to get into your home quickly.
- Never let anyone take you to the bank to withdraw money.
- If you feel at all unsure, schedule a time for the caller to come back again when a friend or relative can be with you.

## **ADDITIONAL ADVICE FOR THE ELDERLY**

While the elderly often feel more concerned about crime, they are actually less likely than other people to be victims. Measures like these will make you feel even more secure:

- Always check who's at the door and don't open it if you feel anxious.
- Never keep large amounts of cash in your home.
- Don't keep your pension book somewhere obvious – like the hallway or a kitchen drawer.
- Ask your council if they operate any security schemes and, if so, ask to join them.



# THE FORENSIC INVESTIGATION

## BEFORE FORENSICS ARRIVE

It is very important that you do not touch or move anything in your home before the forensic team arrives as this could contaminate or destroy vital physical evidence.

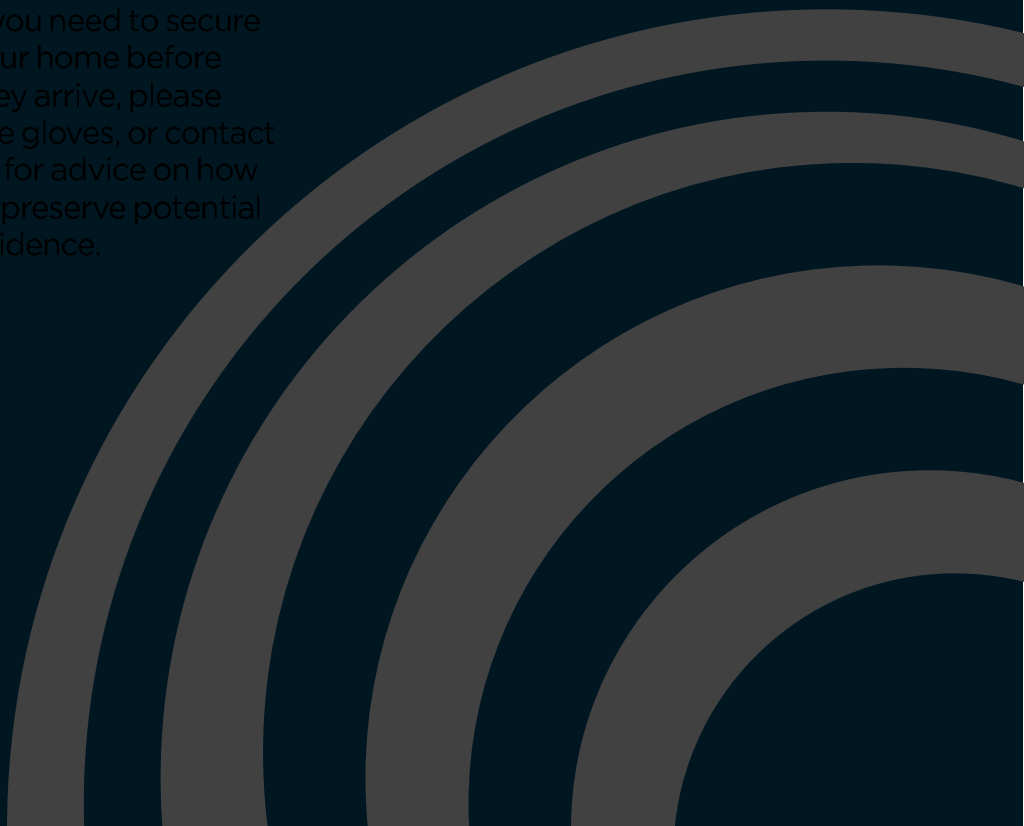
If you need to secure your home before they arrive, please use gloves, or contact us for advice on how to preserve potential evidence.

## WHAT THEY DO

When the forensic team arrive they will probably take photos, dust for fingerprints and collect samples. You may be asked to provide your own fingerprints or DNA. This eliminates you and helps us identify the intruder.

## AFTER THEY LEAVE

You are now free to tidy up. Make a note of any items that have been stolen. If you discover additional evidence, please contact us immediately.



# ADVICE FOR VICTIMS OF BURGLARY



**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

Working together for a safer London

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN BURGLED

## 1

### ASSESS THE SITUATION

If you think your home has been broken into, assess the situation carefully before taking action. If burglars are still there and you interrupt them, you could be at risk.

## 2

### IF IT IS AN EMERGENCY

If you think the burglar is still in the property, or close by, this is an emergency. **Call 999** and wait outside in a safe place for the police.

# WHAT WE DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN BURGLED

## 5

### INITIAL POLICE INVESTIGATION

When we arrive we will interview you and inspect the scene. Neighbours and other witnesses will be interviewed later. You will receive a Crime Reference Number which you need to give to your insurance company.

## 6

### COLLECTING FORENSIC EVIDENCE

A forensic team will visit your home within four hours of you reporting the break-in.



**If you return to your home and discover you have been burgled, it is important that you know what to do next. This will help keep you safe and it will help the police to be as successful as possible in arresting and prosecuting thieves.**

**3**

**IF IT IS  
NOT AN  
EMERGENCY**

If you are sure the burglar has gone, this is not an emergency. Call your local police station, or the Metropolitan Police on **0300 123 1212**.

**4**

**DO NOT  
TOUCH  
ANYTHING**

Do not touch or move anything, especially where the burglars got in, or out, unless the police tell you to.

**7**

**DURING THE  
INVESTIGATION**

We will keep you informed about how the investigation is going. If a suspect is charged with your burglary you will be contacted by our Witness Care Unit.

**8**

**CASE  
CLOSED**

The Witness Care Unit will keep you updated about how the case is progressing through the Criminal Justice System until the case is closed. They will also give you information about attending court, should you need to.

## WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOLLOWING A BURGLARY?

A burglary can be a very upsetting experience, one that can often leave the victim feeling anxious about security and confused about what will happen next. In addition to the support you will receive from the Metropolitan Police, the national charity, Victim Support, provides free and confidential support to victims and witnesses of crime and their families.

**Find out more at:**

**[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)**

or contact the victim supportline on: 0845 30 30 900.

All volunteers are fully trained counsellors; many have been victims of crime themselves. The organisation has helped more than 1.5 people over 35 years by providing these services.

Emotional support: helping victims come to terms with the crime.

Practical advice: e.g. helping victims ensure their home is properly secure.

Witness Service: providing support teams in every court in England.

### **VICTIM SUPPORT - THE FACTS**

- It's free to use
- It's confidential
- It's not part of the police service
- You can use Victim Support services, even if you have not, or do not want to contact the police about a crime.