



# HOME

# SECURITY



THAMES VALLEY  
POLICE

## **Make it Difficult for the burglar**

Home security is the best way to reduce your chances of being burgled. A lot of burglaries are spur of the moment, carried out by opportunist thieves who don't even have to use force – they get in through an open door, window or other easy point of entry and take their chances

The good news is that it doesn't take much to improve security and put off burglars, Spending money on security measures can seem daunting but it's a good investment, it will last a long time and can add value to your home.

## **Look at your home through a burglar's eyes:**

If you think that your home security looks poor, chances are so will a burglar

- Are there places where they could break in without being seen?
- If you have forgotten your keys but can still get in, so can a burglar.

Have a look around your property and think about how you would break in if you lock yourself out. You will maybe surprise yourself how easy it could be.

Please take time to read through this booklet which gives you straightforward advice on alarms, locks and other crime prevention measures you can take.

For further advice on crime prevention please see the TVP website:  
[www.thamesvalley.police.uk/crprev](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/crprev)

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## Burglar alarms

Many burglars will avoid breaking into a property that has an alarm. There are many alarm systems on the market. These range from fairly cheap alarms, which you can fit yourself, to more sophisticated systems, costing hundreds of pounds, which need to be installed by professionals.

Consider whether you need an audible-only alarm (which sets off a siren or bell) or a monitored alarm (connected to a central 'listening' service). Due to the huge number of false alarms, police will only respond to audible alarms if there is confirmation of suspicious activity – such as a neighbour saying they saw someone or heard glass being broken.

For monitored systems, the monitoring company will check whether any alarm was false – for example, set off by the homeowners entering the wrong access code, and call out the police if necessary. Monitored systems are particularly important for isolated properties.



## If you are thinking about installing a burglar alarm, you should do the following:

- Get at least three quotes and specialist advice from companies that supply alarms. Use companies registered with either the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) or security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board (SSAIB)  
[www.nsi.org.uk](http://www.nsi.org.uk) or [www.ssaib.org](http://www.ssaib.org)
- Talk to your insurance company about the alarm companies it recommends before you decide which best suits your needs. The system should meet **European Standard EN50131-1**
- Get professional help to install the alarm and to explain how to operate it correctly to make sure that it will work properly.

Remember, an alarm that is not- fitted properly can create problems in itself. Don't fit an alarm yourself unless you have the electrical knowledge and practical skills to do so, it could end up costing you more.



## Distraction burglary

Most people who call at your home will be genuine but sometimes someone may turn up unannounced, with the intention of tricking their way into your home.

If someone calls at your door:

- **LOCK** – Keep your front and back doors locked, even when you are at home.
- **STOP** – Before you answer, stop and think if you are expecting anyone. Check that you have locked the back door and taken the key out. Look through a spy hole or window to see who it is.
- **CHECK** – Even if they have a pre-arranged appointment, check their identity card carefully. Close the door while you do this. If you are still unsure, look up a phone number in the phone book and ring to verify their identity. Do not use a phone number on the identity card, as this may be fake!

Bogus callers may be smartly dressed and claim to be from the council, police or utility companies. They can also turn up as builders or gardeners and try to trick you into paying for unnecessary work. You should never agree to have work done by someone who is just passing by. If you think work needs to be done, get at least two quotes from trusted companies. If you think a bogus caller has called on you report it to the police immediately via 101.

*If you have any doubts, keep them out!*

## Doors

If your front and back doors are not secure, neither is your home. Keep them locked even when you're at home.

If you are replacing or fitting a new door set, make sure it is certified to British Standard PAS24 'Doors of Enhanced Security'. Ask for a 'spy hole' to be fitted to the door, this will allow you to see who is at the doorstep.

Make sure the doors and frames are strong and in good condition. Wooden doors should be solid and at least 44mm (1 3/4 ins) thick.

Fit five-lever mortise deadlocks (Kitemarked BS3621) to all external doors, including French doors unless your door is not wooden, UPVC doors should have a multi-point lock with at least three points. If this is your only way to escape in an emergency a lock Kitemarked BS8621 or TS007 should be used.

Fitting locks to UPVC or metal doors is a specialist field – seek advice from a locksmith.

## Patio doors

Patio doors are especially vulnerable to break-ins as burglars can lever off the tracks. When buying ask for the sliding section to be on the inside and for anti-lift blocks. Multi-locking systems are recommended or install mortise security bolts with removable keys at the top and bottom of both doors. Existing patio doors can be fitted with additional security bolts to stop lifting or forced entry.

## Spy hole or door viewer

If there is no window near the door which allows you to see who is at the doorstep, fit a spy hole. Look through it to identify callers before you decide to open the door.

## Hinges

Check that the door hinges are sturdy and secured with strong, long screws. For added security, fit hinge bolts. These are cheap and help to reinforce the hinge side of a door against force. Hinge bolts or security hinges are especially important if your door opens outwards.

## Letterbox

Letterboxes should be at least 400mm (16 inches) away from any locks. Consider fitting a letterbox defender or restrictor which prevents burglars from putting their hands or gadgets through the letterbox and trying the latches from the inside.

In some cases it may be appropriate to seal an existing letterbox and fit an external lockable letter box to the outside of the property.

## For wooden doors

Rim lock, these lock automatically when the door is closed. It can be opened without a key from the inside and should meet British Standard BS3621.





## Gardens, gates and fences

Check for weak spots where a burglar could get into your garden, for example a low or sagging fence, or a back gate with a weak lock.

A thorny hedge along the boundary of your property can put burglars off but make sure that passers-by can still see the front of your home so that a burglar can't work without being seen.

Burglars don't like gravel; it's noisy to walk on. Don't build pergolas, gazebos and so on too near to the house they can help thieves reach upper windows.

Solid fences or walls, particularly those with a flat or rounded top are relatively easy for a burglar to climb over; fixing trellising to the top can make it more difficult.

Do not use barbed or razor wire you could be held legally responsible for any injuries caused. You can get safer alternatives that are designed not to cut or injure.



## Passageways at the side and back of your home

Fit a strong, lockable, high gate across the passageway to stop a thief getting to the back of your home where they can work without being disturbed. If you share a passageway with a neighbour, ask their permission and for help with the costs.

However if the passage is a right of way, for example, where it connects two streets rather than just allowing access to the back of a limited number of houses you would need special permission to fit a gate from your local authority or the courts.

## Garages and sheds

Garages and sheds are often full of expensive tools which are ideal for breaking into the rest of the house.

Never leave a garage or garden shed unlocked, especially if it has a connecting door to the house. A burglar could get in and work on the door inside without being seen.

Fit strong padlocks to shed and garage doors, and make sure that the doors are solid enough not to be kicked in.

Lock ladders inside your garage or shed to stop a burglar using them to reach upstairs windows. If there is no room in your garage or shed, chain or padlock them horizontally to a sturdy bracket on an outside wall.

Consider having lockable steel boxes fitted to the floor to store your tools in, or anchor posts fitted to the floor to secure larger tools and equipment.

## Windows

If you are replacing your windows, take the opportunity to install new ones that are certificated to British Standard PAS24:2012 'windows of enhanced security' and consider using laminated glass, particularly for the ground-floor and other accessible windows as these are much harder to break.

Window locks can easily be seen from the outside and may put some burglars off as breaking glass will risk attracting attention to them.

Home security and DIY shops sell inexpensive, key-operated locks to fit most kinds of windows. You may need more than one window lock depending on the size of the opening you need to secure. Adding locks to UPVC windows is a specialist job so advice should be sought from a locksmith.



Fit window locks with keys to all downstairs windows and windows that are easy to reach, for example, those above a flat roof or near a drainpipe. Even small windows such as skylights or bathroom fanlights need locks.

Remember to keep windows locked. Remove the keys and keep them out of sight in a safe place. However everyone should know where the keys are kept, so they can escape in an emergency, such as fire.

Louvre windows are especially vulnerable because burglars can easily take the slats out of the frame. Make sure you glue the slats into place and fit a special louvre lock. Better still, replace them with fixed glass.

Before fitting locks to UPVC or metal windows, talk to the installer to make sure this will not affect your warranty.

Consider fitting security grilles to vulnerable windows but only if these windows are not escape routes in case of fire. Many DIY shops now sell decorative wrought-iron grilles.







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