

SECURE YOUR HOME

KEEP BURGLARS OUT



Home Security Guide

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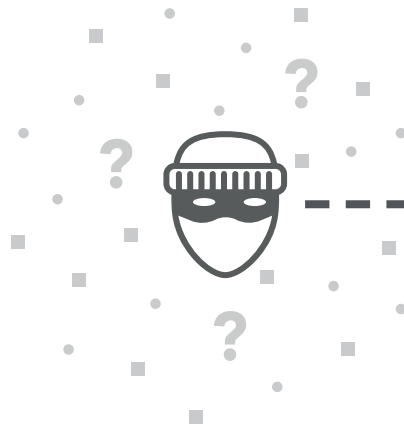
DON'T MAKE IT EASY FOR BURGLARS

Being burgled is a traumatic experience. It's not just the financial cost of replacing stolen items, but also the emotional impact of feeling violated after a burglar has been in your home.

Improving your home security is the best way to reduce the risk of becoming a victim. 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 or window and take their chance.

Spending money on security is a good investment and will help deter burglars from targeting your home. Your insurance policy may also become invalidated if certain measures are not taken, such as locking your doors and windows, when you go out.

As well as physical security, protecting your home by taking digital security measures is just as important.

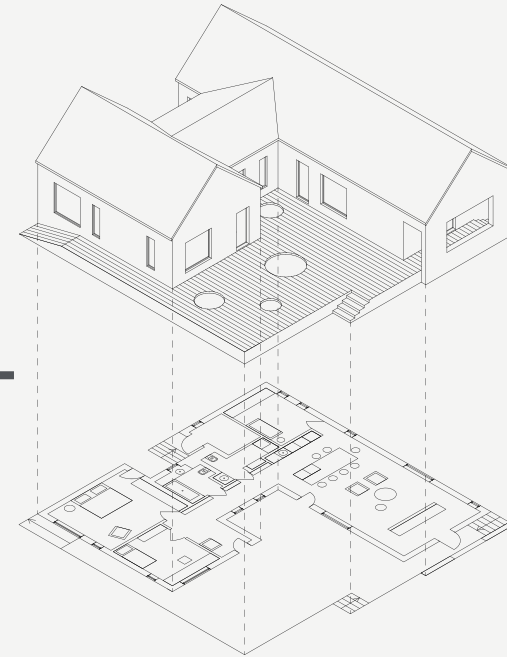


LOOK AT YOUR HOME SECURITY THROUGH THE EYES OF A BURGLAR

Look around your property and think about how you would break in if you locked yourself out. You may be surprised at how easy it would be.

Have you left any windows and doors open? Are there insecure ladders that can be used to reach upper windows? Are there any tools laying around that can be used to force your way in? Can you break in without being seen by a neighbour?

Here are our top tips to help secure your home and deter potential thieves.





INSIDE YOUR HOME

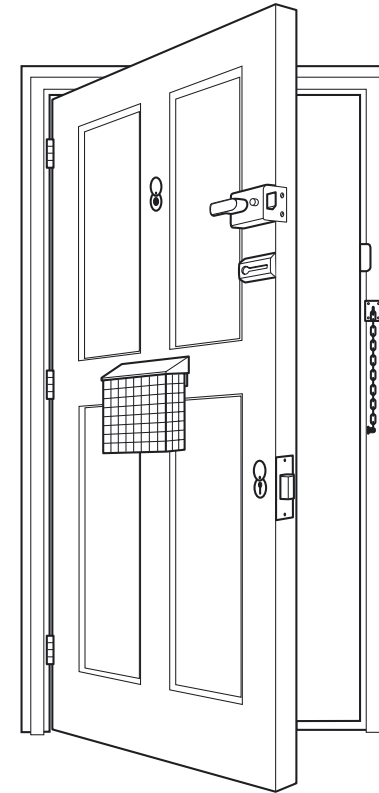
Doors

If your front and back doors are not secure, neither is your property. Keep them locked even when at home. Always make sure that everyone at home knows where the keys are in case of a fire.

When having a new front or back door, always fit security accredited products as these are tested to British Standards and approved by the insurance industry. Talk to your locksmith about Standard PAS 24 2016 and ask for a spy hole and security chain to be fitted.

Glass panels can be reinforced by using special film or installing laminated panels.

Fit five-lever mortise deadlocks Kitemarked BS3621 to all external doors. An additional rim lock can also be fitted to wooden doors that automatically locks when the door is closed. It can be opened without a key from the inside and should meet British Standard BS3621.



For uPVC doors, multi-point locks should be fitted with a minimum of three points. Fitting locks to uPVC or metal doors is a specialist field – seek advice from a locksmith.

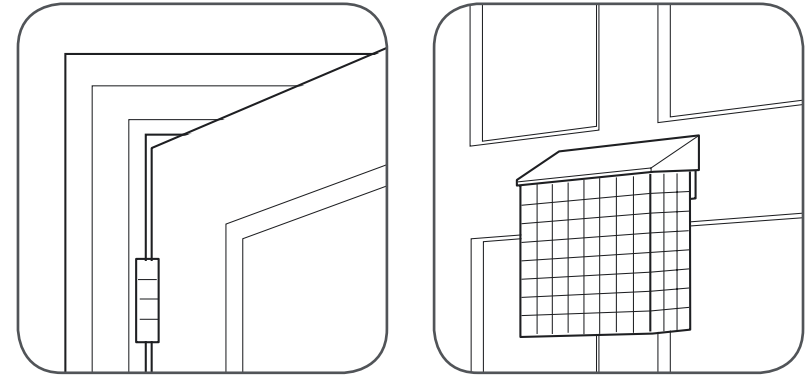
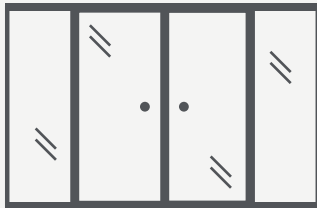


If this is your only way to escape in an emergency such as fire, a lock Kitemarked BS8621 or TS007 should be used.

PATIO, BI-FOLD AND FRENCH DOORS

Patio doors are especially vulnerable as burglars can lever doors off the tracks. When buying, ask for the sliding section to be on the inside and for anti-lift blocks to be fitted. Multi-locking systems are recommended, or you can install mortice 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.

Bi-folding and French doors should be fitted with vertical top and bottom key-operated security bolts that secure the door frame from the inside. Speak to your door manufacturer for more information.



Hinges

Check 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

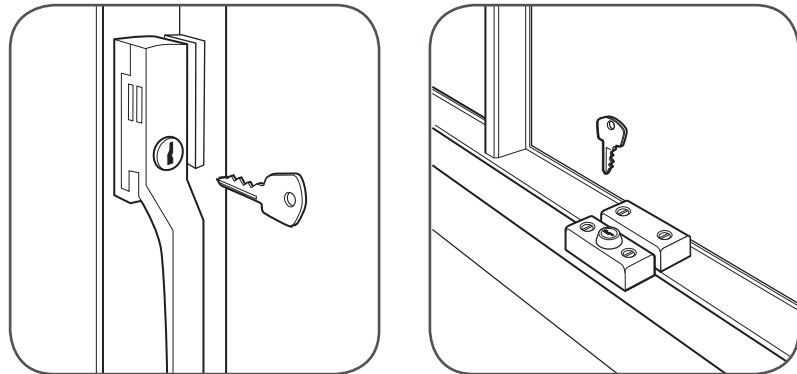
Consider fitting a letterbox defender or restrictor. This prevents burglars from poking tools through the letterbox to open latches from the inside, or reaching nearby car and house keys. A lockable letterbox on the outside of the property is also an option.

WINDOWS

Windows left open are one of the most common causes of burglary. Window opening restrictors allow you to ventilate your home while preventing the window from being opened wide enough for someone to climb through. Similarly sash stops can be fitted to limit the opening of sash windows.

When replacing windows, install new ones that are certificated to British Standard PAS24 2016 and consider using laminated glass, particularly for the ground floor, as these are much harder to break.

Fit window locks with keys to all downstairs windows and those easy to reach, for example windows above a flat roof or near a drainpipe. Window locks can be easily seen from the outside and may put burglars off, as breaking glass risks attracting attention.

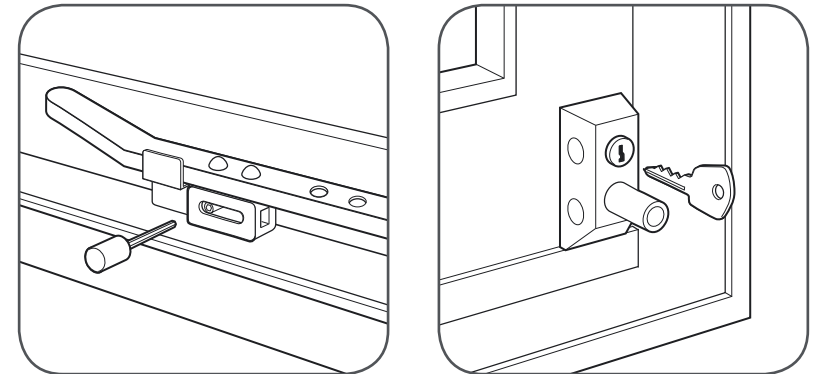


Remove the keys from the locks and keep them with your house and car keys out of sight. Everyone in the property should know where the keys are kept, so they can escape in a fire.

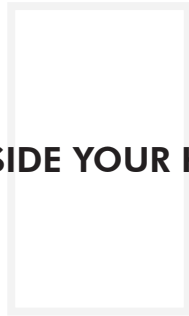
Louvre windows are especially vulnerable because burglars can easily remove the slats from the frame. Make sure you glue the slats into place and fit a special louvre lock. Better still, replace them with fixed glass.

Also consider fitting security grilles to vulnerable windows, but only if these windows are not fire escape routes. Many DIY shops sell decorative wrought-iron grilles.

Adding locks to uPVC windows is a specialist job, so advice should be taken from a locksmith. Before fitting locks, speak to the manufacturer to make sure this will not affect your warranty.



OUTSIDE YOUR HOME



Burglar alarms

Many burglars will avoid breaking into a property that has an alarm. There are many alarm systems on the market ranging in price.

Audible-only alarms set off a siren or bell and are usually a cheaper option. Due to the number of false alarms, police will only respond if there is confirmation of suspicious activity such as a neighbour reporting they saw someone or heard glass being broken.

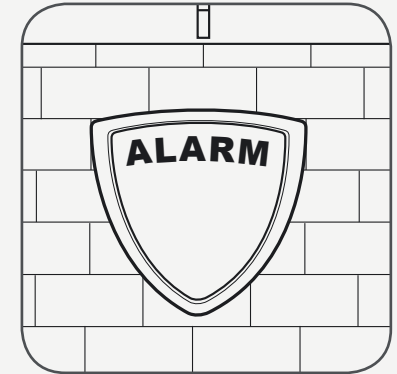
Monitored alarms are connected to a central 'listening' service. The monitoring company will check for false alarms and call the police if necessary. Monitored systems are particularly important for isolated properties.



Talk to your insurance company about the alarm companies it recommends.

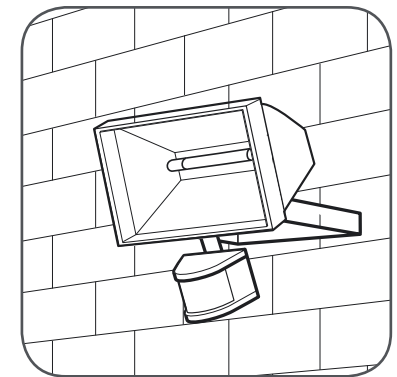
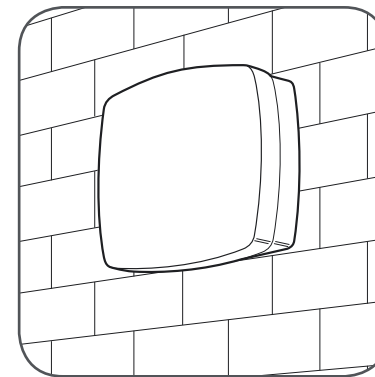
You can also get a quote and specialist advice from companies registered with either the National Security Inspectorate (NSI) or Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board (SSAIB).

Visit www.nsi.org.uk or www.ssaib.org



Lighting

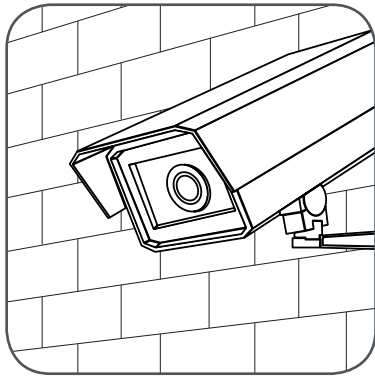
The most appropriate form of lighting to use is high-efficiency, low-energy lighting controlled by a dusk-to-dawn switch, so the light only comes on when it's dark. Lights with movement sensors can also be beneficial.



Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)

Home CCTV is becoming more affordable and you can buy indoor and outdoor cameras that connect to an app on your smartphone. CCTV will not prevent your home being burgled on its own and should be used in addition to other deterrents including good quality locks, a burglar alarm and security lighting.

Cameras should be positioned for easy maintenance but high enough so they can't be tampered with. If your camera is outside, you must comply with data protection and privacy laws and make sure it isn't pointing at public spaces or other people's houses or gardens.



More advice is available from the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.org.uk and the Surveillance Camera Commissioner at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-cctv-using-cctv-systems-on-your-property/domestic-cctv-using-cctv-systems-on-your-property>

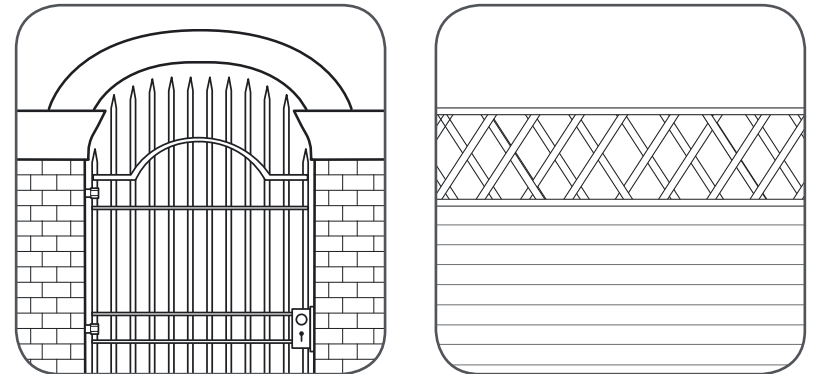
Gardens, Gates and Fences

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 or no 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 burglars can be seen.

Burglars don't like gravel as it's noisy to walk on, so this is good to lay on paths and underneath ground floor windows. Avoid building pergolas or gazebos too near your home as they can help thieves reach upper windows.

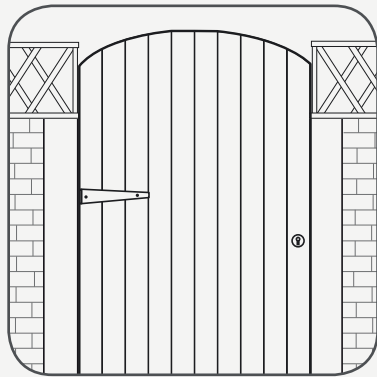
Using anti-climb paint or fixing trellising to the top of solid fences and walls can make it more difficult for a burglar to climb over. Do not use barbed or razor wire as you could be held legally responsible for any injuries caused.



Passageways

Fit a strong, lockable, high gate across the passageway to stop a burglar getting to the back of your home where they can work without being disturbed.

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 number of houses, you will need special permission to fit a gate from your local authority or the courts.



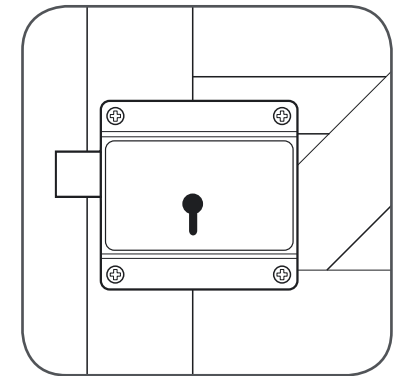
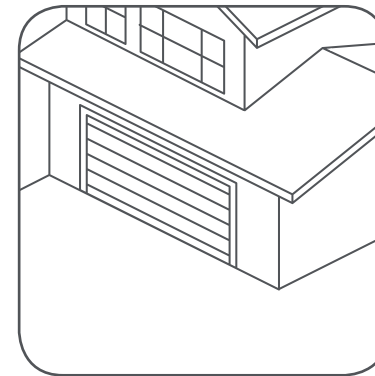
Garages and Sheds

Garages and sheds are often full of tools which are ideal for breaking into your property.

Never leave your garage or garden shed unlocked, especially if it has a connecting door to your home. 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.

Store tools in lockable steel boxes fitted to the floor and use anchor posts fixed to the floor to secure larger tools and equipment. If space is limited, chain or padlock ladders horizontally to a sturdy bracket on an outside wall.





PROTECT YOUR POSSESSIONS



Install a Safe

Position the safe, avoiding bedrooms, so it won't be easily discovered. It should be bolted into a solid wall or floor. Home safes are also fire and insurance rated according to the type and value of items to be placed inside.



Property Marking

Use a forensic marking solution to mark your property such as a special marker, ink or paint that is only visible under Ultraviolet (UV) light. Simply etch your property with your postcode and house or flat number – this will make it harder for thieves to sell your property.



Valuables

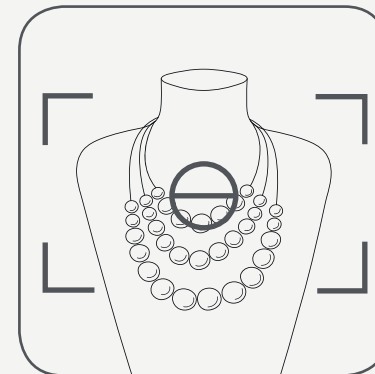
Register valuables on the UK national property register at www.immobilise.com. This will help to reunite you with your property if it is recovered after being stolen. If you have a bicycle, make sure you register it at www.bikeregister.com.

Insurance

Check that you have adequate insurance in place to cover your valuables and take photos of any high value items. You should also take photos of you wearing expensive watches, handbags, or jewellery to prove ownership – never post these on social media though as this will alert burglars of valuables in your home.

Bin-It

Cut up packaging for any expensive items and place it out of sight in your bin. Never leave it next to the bin which could alert burglars to valuable property inside your home. Also shred any documents that contain personal details before you throw them away.



DISTRACTION BURGLARY

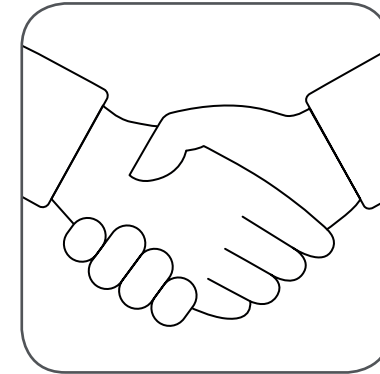
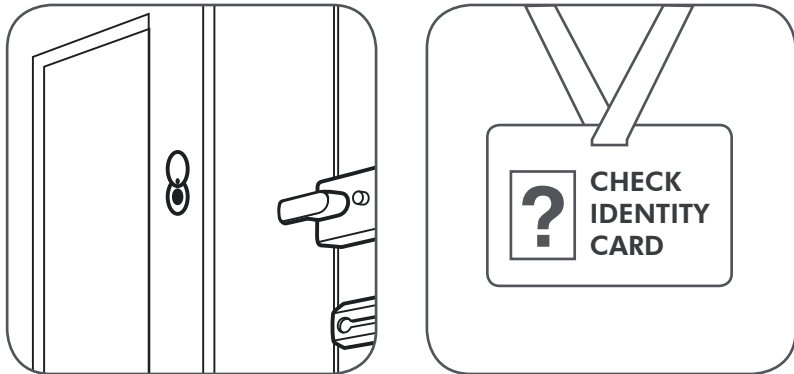
Most people who call at your home will be genuine but some may turn up unannounced, with the intention of tricking their way into your home. If someone calls at your door:

1 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. You can choose not to open the door.

2 CHECK

Even if they have a pre-arranged appointment, take time to check their identity card carefully. Close the door while you do this. If you are still unsure, look up the phone number and ring to verify their identity. Never call the number on the identity card, or a number that has been given to you, as these may be fake and you may be speaking to another fraudster.



Bogus callers may claim to be from the council, police or utility companies. They may also pose as builders or gardeners and try to trick you into paying for unnecessary work. You should never agree to have work completed by someone who is just passing by.

If you think work needs to be done, you can always ask the caller to write to you and get at least two quotes from trusted companies. If you suspect a caller is bogus, you should report it on the Thames Valley Police website or by dialling 101. If they persist or become threatening you should call 999 immediately.

Remember:

**IF IN DOUBT
KEEP THEM OUT!**



Social Media

Never advertise you are away from home on social media. Avoid tagging yourself at the airport and save posting your holiday photos until you get back. Some home insurance policies become invalidated if you do.

Avoid sharing photos of you wearing expensive jewellery, or with valuable items that could attract thieves.



Electronic Devices

Ensure you have PIN or password protection on all devices, including your internet router at home. Use a strong password for each device and use a different password for your personal accounts including email, social media and online banking. Always use Two Factor Authentication where available.

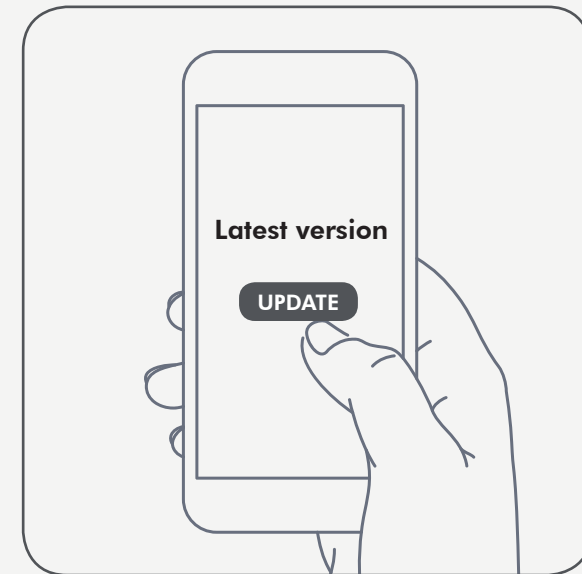


Always update all of your devices along with any apps when prompted to do so and remember to regularly back up your most important data.

Find out more about digital security:

www.cyberaware.gov.uk

www.thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk
and search 'Cyber'.



GOING AWAY CHECKLIST

Here’s a quick checklist of things to do before you go away:

- Lock all windows and doors.

- Check that side gates, sheds and garages are locked and tools or ladders are not accessible.

- Store all house, car and window keys out of sight and away from doors or windows.

- Make your home look occupied by using a timer switch to turn on lights, a radio or TV at night.

- Ask a trusted friend to look after your home.

- Invite a neighbour to park their vehicle on your drive while you are away.

- For more crime prevention advice please visit www.thamesvalley.police.uk and search ‘burglary’.



NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

To find your nearest Neighbourhood Watch visit www.ourwatch.org.uk

Thames Valley
ALERT 

The word 'ALERT' is in a large, bold, sans-serif font. A thick black arrow starts from the bottom left of the letter 'A' and points to the right, ending under the letter 'T'.

Sign up to neighbourhood alerts at
www.thamesvalleyalert.co.uk



www.thamesvalley.police.uk