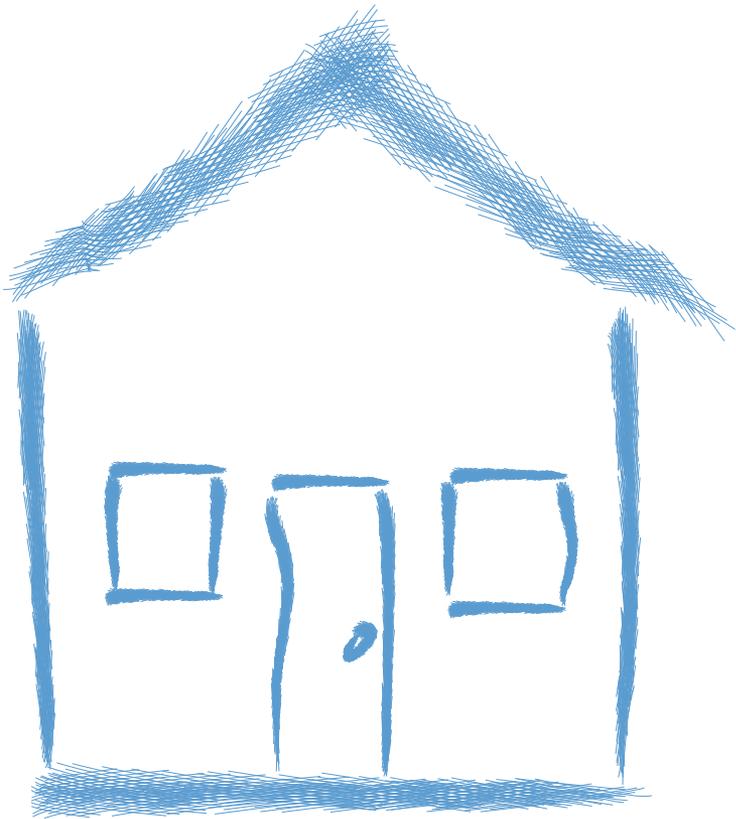


Home Security Guide



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**
Keeping people safe

Make it difficult for the housebreaker

Home security is the best way to reduce your chances of being broken into. Housebreakings are often spur of the moment, carried out by the opportunist thieves who exploit open doors, windows or other easy entry points and take their chance.

It does not take much to improve security and put off housebreakers. Spending money on security measures can seem daunting but it is a good investment, it will last a long time and can add value to your home.

Look at your home:

- ✓ If you think that your security looks poor, chances are so will a thief.
- ✓ 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 housebreaker.

Windows

If you are replacing windows, take the opportunity to install new ones that are certificated to PAS 24 'Windows of Enhanced Security Standard' and consider using impact tested laminated glass, particularly in ground-floor and accessible windows, as this is much harder to break.

Otherwise, window locks that can easily be seen from outside may put some housebreakers off, because they would have to break the glass and risk attracting attention. And even if they do break the window, they still can't open it so risk cutting themselves climbing through the broken glass.

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. A thief can get through any gap that is larger than a human head.

If the property has working shutters, then use them.

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 a fire.

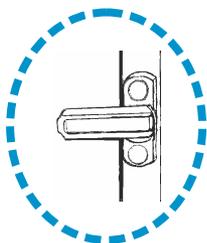
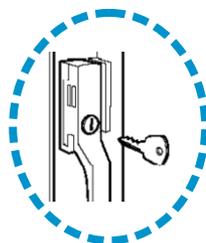
Louvre windows are especially vulnerable because housebreakers can easily take the slats out of the frame. Glue the slats into place, and fit a special louvre lock. Better still, replace them with fixed glass.

Windows with a restrictor should only be left open when people are in the room, it is not a fail safe security measure.

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

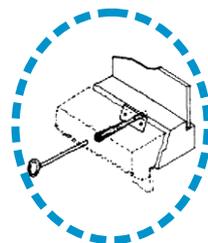
Consider fitting security grilles to vulnerable windows — but only if these windows are not escape routes in case of fire. Many DIY shops now sell decorative wrought-iron grilles.

Casement locks make it harder to open windows without the correct key.

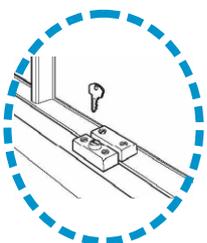


Sash jammers or locking sash jammers are a simple additional layer of security for uPVC windows.

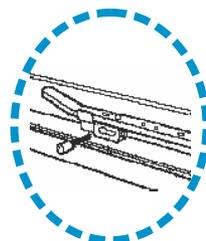
Sash windows can be secured with sash bolts or locking sash bolts, if the window is well used consider making it easier with locking sash bolts.



The lock shown here fastens the two windows together.



Fanlight locks have a metal bolt to secure the metal arm, which is used to open and close the window. Ideally though, you should not rely on these locks — fit a casement lock too.



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'.

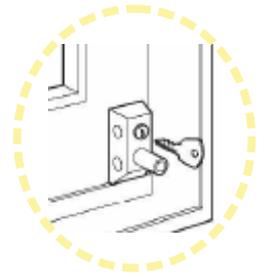
A spy hole fitted lets you see who is at the door without opening it. Consider a door chain or bar, which when used, means a door is not fully open if speaking to someone.

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

Fit five-lever mortise deadlocks (Kitemarked BS3621:2007) to all external doors, including French doors, unless:

a) your door is not wooden - a multi-point lock with at least three points should be used for doors made of uPVC, ensure the lock is anti-bump, anti-drill (BS EN 1303:2005 and Sold Secure SS312) and it sits flush within the handle/escutcheon.

b) it is your only way to escape in an emergency in which case a lock without the need for a key, such as Kitemarked BS8621, should be used.



Fit mortise bolts to the top and bottom of all external wooden doors, including both sides of French doors.

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-in by levering off the tracks, make sure they have anti-lift blocks. Multi-locking systems are recommended and an additional lock secures the side opposite the multipoint lock 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

Fit a spy hole if no window allows you to see who is on the doorstep. Look through it to identify callers before you decide to open the door.

Hinges

Door hinges should be sturdy and secured with strong, long screws. If hinge bolts are fitted these reinforce the hinge side. Hinge bolts are especially important if your door opens outwards.

Letterbox cage

Letterboxes should be at least 400mm away from any locks. A letterbox cage or restrictor prevents housebreakers putting their hands or gadgets through.

For wooden doors

A wooden door should have two locks, preferably one a third from the top and the other a third from the bottom of the door. Use both locks at **all** times.

Mortise deadlock

Fit five-lever mortise deadlocks (British Standard BS3621:2007) to all external doors.

Rim lock

This locks automatically when the door is closed. It can be opened without a key from the inside and should meet British Standard BS3621.

Automatic deadlock

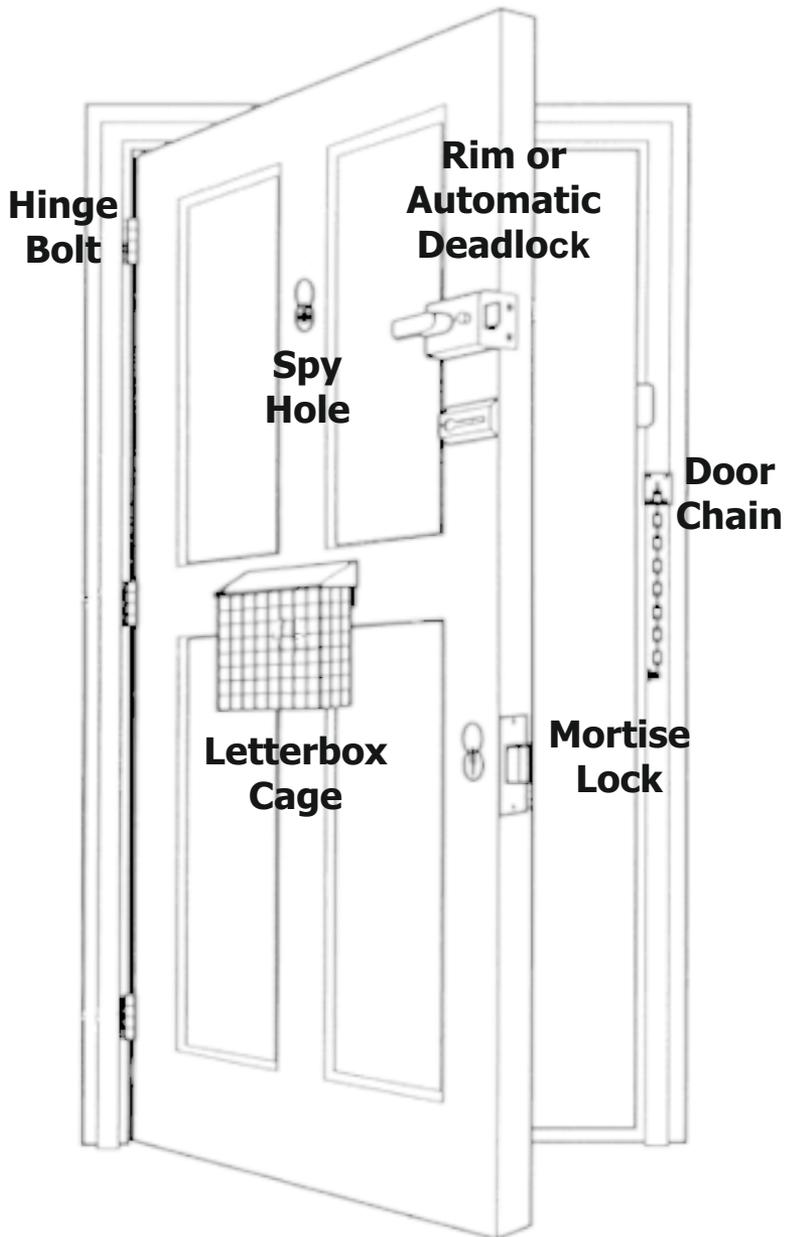
This locks automatically when the door is closed and is more secure than other types of rim lock. It needs a key to open it from both the inside and the outside and should meet British Standard BS3621.

London & Birmingham Bars

These can be fitted to the locking and hinge side of the door to reinforce the frame, which must be in good condition, correctly fitted it supplements the locks and hinges.

Door chains or bars

These allow the door to be opened a short distance to allow checking of identification. They can stop callers pushing their way in, but must be securely fixed to avoid screws being pulled out.



Keys

Never leave a spare key in a convenient hiding place such as under the doormat, in a flowerpot or behind a loose brick — housebreakers know all the usual hiding places.

Never leave your house or car keys in or near a door or window. Some housebreakers have been known to use a fishing rod or magnet on a stick to steal them through the letterbox.

Check your insurance, having keys in locks may void your policy.

If you move into a new home, change the external door locks immediately — other people may have copies of the keys. Use a reputable locksmith who is a member of the Master Locksmiths Association.

www.locksmiths.co.uk

Decide on a safe place for your keys and always use it, so you can find them in an emergency.

If you live in a flat or shared housing

Consider having a phone-entry system fitted to the main door to your building. Never 'buzz' open the main entrance for strangers or hold the door open for someone who is arriving as you are leaving or entering the building.

If your front door is your only means of escape in the case of an emergency, the lock should be able to be opened without a key.

If you are a student, take high-value goods home with you during holidays or take advantage of secure storage schemes at your university or college.

In halls of residence, always lock your room door, even if you are just going down the corridor.

Distraction theft

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 on you:

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.

CHAIN — If you decide to open the door, put the chain or door bar on first, if you have one. Keep the bar or chain on while you are talking to the person on the doorstep.

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 having 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.

If you have any doubts, keep them out!

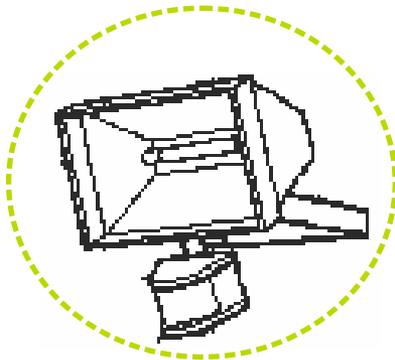
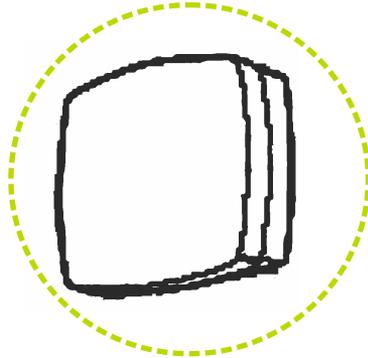
Around the home

Outdoor lighting

Good outdoor lighting can put off or draw attention to a housebreaker.

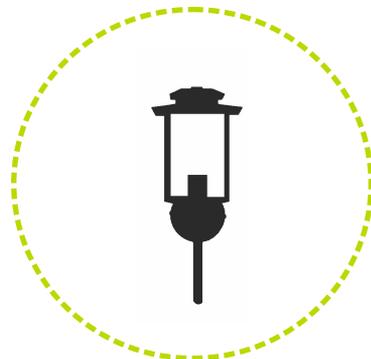
The most appropriate form of lighting to use is high-efficiency low-energy lighting, controlled by a dusk-to-dawn switch so that it comes on only when it's dark. This provides a constant and uniform level of light. It costs very little to run and helps to create a more reassuring environment.

Dusk to dawn lights can also incorporate a movement sensor, which brightens the light if activated.



Lights that are automatically turned on when a person passes by a motion sensor can be annoying to neighbours and dangerous to passing traffic. They may also cause unnecessary worry if they are activated by animals rather than intruders. If you have these, make sure that they are directed downwards.

Coach lights can be fitted with dusk to dawn bulbs, providing the sensor on the bulb is able to determine the light conditions



Fit outdoor lights out of easy reach at a height of at least 2.5 metres (8 feet) and away from the properties downpipes.

Make your home look occupied when you are out

Most housebreakings happen when a house is empty.

Don't leave your curtains closed during the daytime as this shows the house is empty, but by using Venetian blinds you can limit visibility into a room.

Consider using automatic timer switches to turn lights on when it goes dark all the year round, as this looks 'normal'. They can also turn on radios when you're out to create an impression that people are at home.

If you're going away:

- ask a trusted neighbour or a friend to look after your house (collecting mail, turning lights on, closing/opening curtains etc.);
- ensure you do not have an outstanding online delivery that may just be left around your home;
- cancel any regular deliveries such as newspaper or milk;
- you may want to have mail re-directed or held until you return from holiday by the post office.
- cut the lawn and trim back any plants that housebreakers could hide behind;
- do not put your home address on luggage labels when travelling to your destination;
- keep all valuable items out of sight;
- consider leaving important documents and valuable items with other family members or a bank, or lock them in a safe; and
- don't forget to lock all external doors and windows. If you have an alarm, make sure it is set.

Gardens, gates and fence

Prevent intruders getting to the back and sides of your home by installing strong fencing or gates.

Check for weak spots where a housbreaker 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 housebreakers off. But make sure that passers-by can still see the front of your home so that a housebreaker can't work without being seen.

Housebreakers 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 housebreaker to climb over. Fixing trellising to the top can make it more difficult.

Do not use barbed or razor wire, or broken glass 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

Garages are often full of expensive tools, which are ideal for breaking into the rest of the house. Many garages also store expensive sporting equipment.

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

A connecting door from the garage into the house should comply to the security recommendations made for the front door.

Additional bolts can be used to secure a garage door. If placed inside you do not need to fit a padlock, but it would be recommended. Bolts fitted on the outside of the door should be secured with coach bolts and a solid secure padlock.

If the garage has windows that open, consider securing these so they don't open and reinforce them if they cannot be seen from the house.

Consideration can be given to using a garage defender.

Sheds

Use a good quality closed shackle solid secure padlock on your shed door and fit coach bolts to hinge and hasp plates on your shed or burr the existing screw heads to prevent them being removed.

Secure your shed window internally with a metal grill.

Padlock and chain valuable items in your shed.

If possible make sure that the doors are solid enough not to be kicked in.

Lock ladders inside your garage or shed to stop a housebreaker 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.

You may want to include the garage on an intruder alarm if valuables are stored in there or a simple shed alarm may offer some cover.

Intruder alarms

Many homes are alarmed and may act as a deterrent, but your homes physical security is still paramount.

Many alarm systems are on the market, from self installed, to more sophisticated professionally installed systems. Low-cost alarms can be less reliable and can, through false alarms, be a nuisance to both you and your neighbours.

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) to which police response can be attached.

Police only respond to an audible alarm if there is confirmation of suspicious activity — such as a neighbour saying they saw someone or heard glass being broken.

For monitored/confirmed systems, the monitoring company will call police if more than one sensor activates (confirmation). If police receive a number of false activations the police response will be withdrawn. Monitored systems are particularly important for isolated properties.

If you are thinking about installing an intruder alarm, you should do the following.

Ask the police crime prevention officer for advice before you buy an alarm.

Get at least three quotes and specialist advice from companies that supply alarms. Use companies registered with either the National Security Inspectorate or Security Systems and Alarm Inspection Board.

- 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.

Property marking

It is good practice to mark property, and ideally keep photographic, detailed records of valuables (i.e. the make, model and serial number) and keep these in a safe place.

Items should be visibly and permanently marked showing your postcode plus the number of your house or flat or the first two letters of its name.

Only use an ultraviolet marker pen when other methods would reduce the value of the object. The mark isn't visible and so this might not put housebreakers off. The marks can fade in months. It should therefore be used as part of a specialist product, such as chemical trace liquids or microdots painted on internal or hidden components.

Works of art, antiques and silverware should be photographed, for smaller items pick a contrasting background and have a measure in the picture. You may consider keeping jewellery or watches in a safe.

Technology

Back up your technology; computer, notebook, phone and camera, if you don't you may lose all this information if it is stolen. Remember, the backup should be stored in a separate place.

New belongings

Don't leave empty boxes (of high-value goods such as a plasma TV or laptop) outside your home. They may attract housebreakers.

Never buy stolen goods, no matter how tempting the bargain.

Don't keep large sums of money at home, and don't keep a cheque book and cheque card together.

Keep documents containing personal details such as bank statements, passport, utility bills out of sight. These items enable criminals to steal your identity. **If** no longer needed, carefully dispose of or shred these documents.

Home Security

CCTV

Some homes now have CCTV coverage, do your homework and write out what you want the system to record, how good the images need to be to either recognise or identify people and check what images are like during the hours of darkness. The same advice is given for CCTV as alarms they can either be professionally or self installed, get quotes and if required an explanation on the scope of any proposed system.

It is lawful to monitor your property for security or safety purposes; however inappropriate use of cameras may have legal consequences. Cameras deliberately trained on someone else's property could give rise to prosecution against YOU. **Everyone has a right to privacy.**

Remember to consult with the Information Commissioner to ensure you comply with current guidance, domestic use of CCTV is generally exempt.

www.ico.org.uk

Insurance

Insurance will take away the financial worry of replacing stolen goods.

Many insurance companies offer reduced premiums for people with good home security. But make sure you lock your home up properly and switch on any alarm — if you don't you may not be covered.

Ask your insurance company which security products it recommends.

Fire safety

When you are fitting security devices, you must consider the risk of fire and how you would escape.

Fit at least one smoke detector on every floor of your home. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and check them every month.

Agree a plan with your whole family for getting out in an emergency and make sure you know where your keys are at all times.

Be a good neighbour

If you see anyone acting suspiciously in your neighbourhood, call the police.

Join the Neighbourhood Watch Scotland.

Anyone can start up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme — the information is on the website below and there will be more advice on preventing crime

www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk

Police may be able to give you helpful advice on preventing crime and recommend ways of improving the security. You can get useful advice at

www.securedbydesign.com

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

www.xnecs.com

If your property is broken into

Good security will reduce the chance of your home being broken into. But, in case the worst happens, think about how you would deal with the situation.

If you get home and notice the signs of a break-in:

- **don't go in and shout as the housebreaker could still be inside;**
- **go to a neighbour's to call the police — if you think the thief is still inside, let the police know; and**
- **don't touch anything, you could destroy valuable evidence.**

If you are in the house and you hear a housebreaker, how you react will be a personal choice and might depend on the situation.

Security checklist

Here's a quick reminder of some of the things you can do to improve the security around your home.

- If you are replacing new doors or windows, get ones that are certified to British Standard PAS24 (doors and windows).
- Fit five-lever mortise deadlocks (British Standard BS3621) to all external wooden doors, or multi-point locks (minimum 3 points) to uPVC doors, and locks to all downstairs windows or windows which are easy to reach.
- When buying a new patio door, ask for the sliding section to be on the inside and for anti-lift blocks. Existing patio doors can be fitted with additional security bolts to stop lifting or forced entry.
- Fit an intruder alarm, but make sure it is installed properly and works.
- Prevent easy access to the back and sides of your home by installing locked gates, fencing or walls at a minimum height of 2 metres. Trellis topping also makes climbing difficult.
- Security lighting should make offenders feel vulnerable and observed, should illuminate high-risk areas and allow occupiers to see persons approaching.
- Fit strong padlocks and hardware to shed and garage doors, making sure that the doors are solid enough not to be kicked in; fit locks or bars to windows, and keep tools and ladders secure and out of sight.
- Trim back any hedges or plants that could hide a person behind.
- Make sure you have up-to-date insurance.

When you are away:

don't leave your curtains or blinds closed during the daytime;
use timer switches to turn on some lights when it gets dark;
cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries; and
ask a neighbour to look after your home.

Want to know more about crime prevention?

www.securedbydesign.com

www.scotland.police.uk

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

www.xnecs.com

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