



Protect Your Home from Burglars

This article provides practical and effective techniques for securing your home and protecting your family from intruders. The report highlights the safety of doors, windows, alarm systems, and general security.

Doors:

- Choose strong and sturdy solid wood or metal exterior doors.
 - Mount the hinges on the inside, so someone can't remove your doors from the outside.
 - If there's a mail slot in your door, make sure that it's small enough to prevent a person from reaching in and grasping the doorknob or lock. If you have a pet door, investigate ways to secure the door. For example, there are now pet doors that open only when activated by a microchip in your pet's collar.
 - For sliding glass doors, install a pin where the frames overlap to prevent the door from opening.
 - Change or re-key your locks when you move into a new or existing home. The former owners (or tradespeople) may have shared their keys with others.
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Windows:

- Don't use crescent or "butterfly" latches to secure double-hung windows; they can be pried open easily with a knife. Use a do-it-yourself nail or bolt window stop instead. Drill the hole for the stop at a slight downward angle to prevent a burglar from using pressure to jiggle the pin out of the hole.
- Laminated glass windows (which can be cut only from one side) prevent an intruder from cutting glass to gain entry. Laminated security glass products can be customized for virtually any application, regardless of requirements for heat-transfer, visibility, or aesthetics. They are especially effective in front-door windows and sidelights.
- Filming a window to reduce heat from direct sunlight does not make it stronger.
- Lock windows when not in use.

Alarm Systems:

According to the FBI, homes equipped with centrally monitored alarm systems are 15 times less likely to be targets of break-ins. These guidelines will help you choose one that's right for your security needs.

1. Determine how much protection you need.

The goal of a residential security system is to detect an intruder as early as possible, alert the home's occupants to his presence, and scare him away before he does any harm. Progressive layers of protection accomplish this goal. Imagine four concentric circles around your house:

- Center circle: Your family and your most valuable possessions.
- Second circle: The interior of your home.
- Third circle: The exterior shell of your home.
- Fourth circle: The property around your home.

For most people, a system that protects the second and third circles is both effective and cost-efficient. This involves installing sensors on the windows and exterior doors, and interior motion detectors as backup to the point-of-entry protection. The additional cost of protecting the innermost circle adds spot protection for high-value areas, such as a security closet or safe, and may include a 24-hour panic button. At the outermost circle of protection, motion sensors let you know when someone enters your property. Unless you live in a remote or concealed location, this protection may be more than you need when balanced against the equipment and installation costs.

2. Decide how you want the system to respond.

At a minimum, include one interior siren to scare off the burglar and alert you to the situation. You may want to add an exterior siren so your neighbors will hear your activated alarm. Some systems include automatic, silent monitoring, meaning they send a signal to a central station where operators notify the police, fire department, or security company.

3. Choose an alarm system.

A basic alarm system consists of a low-voltage electrical circuit with sensors installed on doors and windows. When someone opens a door or window, it interrupts the flow of electricity through a sensor and activates a siren or flashing light. Many systems also include motion detectors. When something moves within the detector's range, an alarm sounds.

Electronic alarm systems come in two basic types:

1. Wired systems (with concealed wires in the walls and crawl spaces) require running low-voltage electrical wires from a master control panel to doors and windows, motion detectors, keypads, and sirens.
2. Wireless systems use miniature radio transmitters instead of wires, and require very little drilling and no special tools to install. You can take a wireless system with you when you move. A wireless system is a better do-it-yourself choice.

Optional enhancements are available in both wired and wireless systems – from motion detectors that can't be tripped by pets to remote access that allows you to check the system by phone from a distant location.

4. Compare prices.

Get bids from two or three reputable security companies in your area. Compare the installation charges, annual inspection costs, and monthly fees (for monitored systems). Also, check with your insurance agent to see if you'll receive a discount for installing a certain type of system.

5. Use it right.

Alarm systems are only a part of good home security. Make sure that all the people who live in your home understand how to use your electronic system. Check your protective devices periodically to ensure they're in working order.



General Tips:

- Pay attention to equipment that allows easy access to second-floor windows or balconies. If you're remodeling or painting the exterior of your home, put ladders away at the end of each day.
- Make it difficult for an intruder to hide; trim bushes and trees to allow maximum exposure of windows and doorways.
- Motion detection lights on all sides of the house make your home less inviting to burglars.
- Don't hide your house key outside. If a family member habitually loses or forgets his or her key, consider giving a set of keys to a trustworthy neighbor, or hanging the key on a long chain that a child can wear around the neck.
- Don't enter if it appears someone has burglarized your home; call the police from a cell phone or neighbor's house.

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