



## **NOT MY HOME!!**

### **10 Simple Tips to Stop Criminals from Choosing Your Home.**

Hardworking criminals can gain access to almost any home. Fortunately, most criminals aren't hard working at break-in time. Instead they look for easy marks. Read on for home security tips that can lower the odds of home invasion and improve your peace of mind.

#### **1. Keep It Lit**

Lights discourage home break-ins for two obvious reasons. First, lights give the impression that someone is home. Second, lights make it easier for criminals to be seen and identified.

Outside your home, have motion-activated lights or keep lights on throughout the night. (Solar lights might be most cost effective and reliable.) Place the lights up high and where they aren't easily disabled.

Inside your home, keep lights on even when you're away. Security systems with home automation make it easy to program your home's lighting. With mobile app control, you can adjust the lamps no matter where you are. Automated window blinds are an option too.

## **2. Use Radio and TV**

When you leave your home, help create the impression it's occupied by playing a talk radio station or the TV. Criminals might still try to break in if they think they won't be noticed, but the sound of voices can be a deterrent.

## **3. Fortify Your Doors**

A properly fortified door can't be kicked in. You can reinforce a basic wooden door with a few inexpensive metal strike plates. A strike plate is several inches high and covers part of a door's front, side and back. Similar re-enforcers can be installed around door handles so that they're more difficult to remove.

As for locks, strong doors are secured with high quality deadbolt locks. An effective door lock is solid metal (not hollow) with a throw at least 1.5 inches long. Many of the leading home security companies sell powerful door locks with keypads and remote control.

## **4. Guard Your Windows**

To help stop criminals from choosing your home, walk around the premises and examine your windows. Are basement windows easy to open? Protect them with metal grates or bars. Are higher-up windows accessible? Remember that criminals could use a ladder, a patio table, a drainpipe, a car or each other's shoulders as a boost. Use window locks!

If your wooden windows don't have locks, you can easily add bolt locks. You can also install a swedge (window wedge) on any type of window. A swedge will allow ventilation but won't let the window open past a certain point.

Professional home security systems, whether basic or advanced, guard windows with magnetic sensors. A popular add-on for home security is glass break sensors. These devices are programmed to detect the specific sound of breaking glass.

## **5. Lock Away Helpful Objects**

Homeowners sometimes make criminals' job easy by providing the tools! Store your ladders and stackable items (such as heavy boxes) in a locked area. Avoid placing a table or other item near your home where it might be used as a step. Keep your snow shovels and other potential break-and-entry tools out of reach.

## **6. Don't Stash a Key**

The most helpful object for an intruder is a house key. Many people think that they hide their spare keys. However, stashing a key is very risky. It raises the risk of entering your home without seeing any sign of intrusion... and possibly encountering a criminal.

Criminals know that people often "hide" keys beneath doormats, above entryways and in plants or faux rocks. And if you choose a more unusual spot, that can be discovered through snooping or spying.

If you tend to forget house keys, then automated door locks with keypads might be a good solution. You might also rely on a trustworthy neighbor, but make sure that they store your spare key in a smart location. Don't label the spare key with your name or address. Instead attach it to a unique keychain that helps the neighbor remember whose it is.

## **7. Prevent Outdoor Hiding**

Trees and bushes can conceal prowlers. By keeping your property well-maintained, you can make sure that overgrowth doesn't provide hiding areas.

A special landscaping tip for home security: Plant cactus or thorny bushes beneath windows and along walkways. Ouch!

## **8. Maintain Your Property**

As mentioned above, maintaining your yard eliminates hiding spots. It also conveys the impression that you're "on the ball." Maintain your home's exterior in general — the paint, pavement and so forth — to show

that you take pride in the property and aren't the sort of person to leave your home vulnerable. If you own a home security system, display a yard sign prominently and use the provided window stickers.

## **9. Grease the Drainpipe**

It might sound cartoonish, but criminals really do climb up drainpipes! To foil this home invasion strategy homeowners sometimes coat metal drainpipes with slippery substances such as petroleum jelly.

## **10. Organize with Neighbors**

Gain strength in community. Neighborhood watch groups meet in person to know each other's faces, share information and strategize for safety. In many neighborhoods people use mobile apps to communicate too.

Neighbors working together can petition their local governments for streetlights; public lighting can dramatically reduce crime.