



South Yorkshire

**POLICE**



**Securing  
your home**



**Securing  
your vehicle**

Advice from South Yorkshire Police

# Securing your home

Contrary to popular belief, most domestic burglaries are committed by opportunist thieves looking for the easiest way of getting into your home without being seen or disturbed. Sometimes they don't even have to use force - they get through an open window or door.

Look at your home through the eyes of a burglar. Are there places where a burglar could break into your home without being seen? How would you get in if you had forgotten your keys? If you could get inside, so could a burglar.

Securing your home is the best way to reduce the chances of you becoming a victim of burglary. Follow this advice to ensure your home is as secure as possible.



## Home security checklist

### Windows and doors

- When you go out, always close and lock external doors and windows, even if you are just going out for a short time.
- Fit a five lever mortice lock (British Standard 3621) to all exterior wooden doors. The lock is only as effective as the frame it is fitted to so make sure this is in good condition. Patio and French doors should have top and bottom bolts fitted. If you are having new windows and doors installed, ensure they are Certified to PAS 24:2012 standards.
- UPVC or composite doors have multi-locking systems, but it is strongly recommended they are fitted with an anti-snap lock cylinder **(TS007) of 3\*** standard.
- Window locks, especially on older windows, will help stop people getting into your house. Remember, a burglar is less likely to break in if it would mean they had to smash a window, as the sound of breaking glass could attract attention. Window locks can be seen from the outside and could deter a burglar from forcing the window.
- Before fitting extra locks to UPVC windows, talk to the fitter to make sure it won't affect the warranty.
- If you have deadlocks, use them. They make it more difficult for a thief to get out again. But don't leave the key near the door or in an obvious place nearby.

### Keys

- Ensure your keys are kept in a safe place out of sight and well away from your letterbox.
- Don't tag keys so they can be easily identified.
- Keep all spare keys in a safe place.
- Don't leave spare keys outside or in a garage or shed.

### Outside your home

- Never leave garages or sheds unlocked, especially if they connect to your property.
- Visible burglar alarms and carefully directed security lighting can deter burglars. Make sure alarms stop sounding after 20 minutes and lights don't disturb your neighbours.

### Protecting the perimeter of your property

- Planning regulations govern many changes you can make to the outside of your home, including erecting walls and fences. However, you don't need to apply for planning permission to make every change you might want to. Check with your local planning authority.
- Unless you live in a listed building, or your local council has removed your 'permitted development rights' (your right to carry out limited development without applying for planning permission), you can build a fence or boundary wall up to one metre high where it will

be next to a road or footpath, or up to two metres high elsewhere.

- Your front garden should not provide cover for a burglar. Hedges or fences at the front of your home should be limited to one metre high.
- At the rear of your property, hedges, fences or walls can be up to two metres high. Gates leading to the rear of your property should be the same height and padlocked.
- For added security, place a trellis along the top of your fence, alternatively Prikastrip, or Tip Top plastic wall spikes offer a cheap and easy way to deter burglars. Consider planting prickly or thorny bushes alongside fencing.
- Fit lighting in your garden. Consider energy efficient security lights that are controlled by dusk to dawn sensors that stay on at night and are relatively cheap to run.
- Lights should be fitted at a minimum height of no less than two metres four centimetres from the floor.





### Intruder alarms

If you are considering buying a new intruder alarm, it's a good idea to obtain at least three quotes from industry approved installers (NSI or SSAIB) or talk to your insurer who may have some recommendations.

You could also use the Trading Standards website [buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://buywithconfidence.gov.uk) to check for vetted suppliers in your area.

*Three types of intruder alarms are available:*

#### Monitored alarm

If the system is breached, a monitoring station informs the key holders and police within minutes.

#### Audio only alarms

If activated, an alarm sound will alert your neighbours. These alarms are less expensive than monitored systems and are a good deterrent. However, you cannot guarantee anyone in the area will react to it and alert you or the police.

### Auto-dialling alarm

If the alarm is activated, the sound will alert your neighbours and the system will dial a series of telephone numbers. This allows the receiver to respond to the alarm.

### Garages and sheds

- Garages and sheds are often used to store expensive tools and equipment. A burglar could steal these or use them to break into your home.
- To reduce the chance of this happening, fit a strong hasp and padlock to your shed and garage doors. These should be certificated to a minimum of BS EN 12320: 2001. Make sure the doors are strong enough to resist being kicked or pushed in.
- Consider fitting an intruder alarm, either linked to the house alarm or a separate stand alone system.
- Move ladders, tables, chairs and wheelie bins so that they cannot be used to climb on. If possible, chain and padlock them to a strong anchor point.
- Visibly mark the property you keep in your shed and garage and use anchor points to secure larger tools and equipment.
- Register your valuables at the national online property database Immobilise so that police can reunite you with them if they are ever stolen and later recovered

Visit [immobilise.com](http://immobilise.com)

### Be a good neighbour

If you see anyone acting suspiciously in your neighbourhood, call the police on **101** or, **in an emergency, 999**.

### Living in a flat or shared housing

- Consider having a phone entry system fitted to the main door of your building, if there isn't one already. Never buzz open the door for strangers or hold open the door for someone you don't know.
- Get home contents insurance.
- If you are a student, take all of your high value belongings with you when you go home for the holidays, or use secure storage schemes run by your college or university if available.
- If you live in halls of residence, always lock your room even if you are just going down the corridor.

### Going on holiday

- Suspend any deliveries, such as milk or newspapers.
- Ask a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your property.
- Try to make your home look occupied while you are not there. Use timer switches on lamps or your radio.



### Fire safety

- When fitting security devices, consider how you would escape if there was a fire.
- Fit at least one smoke detector on every floor of your home. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and check they are working at least once a month.
- Agree a plan with your family for getting out of your home in an emergency.
- Know where your keys are at all times.

### Join a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

There are more than 15,000 schemes in the UK. Anyone can start a Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Ask for details at your local police station or visit [ourwatch.org.uk](http://ourwatch.org.uk)



## Marking your property



There are many ways of marking your valuables. Some would be easy to replace if they were stolen, but others hold immense sentimental value and would be impossible to replace.

Consider buying a safe for personal papers, passports and small items of jewellery. This must be secured to the floor or a wall.

Many stolen items are recovered by the police every year but cannot be returned to their rightful owner because they cannot be identified. Below are some examples of how you can mark or register your property to ensure it is returned to you if it is ever stolen.

### Ultraviolet & Permanent marking

*How to use your property marker*

#### White tip

- The white tip uses invisible Ultra Violet (UV) ink that can only be seen with UV light
- Use this tip to mark electrical items and keep out of direct sunlight
- Do NOT use on TV, computer or tablet screens - only mark the case
- Mark with your postcode and house number/name - e.g. if you live at 7 Main Road, S1 2PC mark with S1 2PC 7
- Clearly display your 'property marked' window stickers

## Black tip

Mark as above instructions

- The black tip is a visible permanent marker
- Use this tip to clearly mark property where the look is not an issue -e.g. lawnmowers
- To help police trace any stolen property, log your valuables on **immobilise.com**

Report stolen property by calling **101**

### Tracking for laptops and phones

These can now be traced if stolen by using online tracking software, which is usually free. Search online and register your laptop or phone.

### Know your IMEI number

If your mobile phone is lost or stolen, your network provider will want to know your IMEI number. This can be found by typing \*#06# into your phone. Make a note of the number that appears and keep it safe.

### Personal safety at home

While securing your property can keep you and your belongings safe, there are steps you can take to ensure you are safe in different situations you may find yourself in.

If you think an intruder is in your home, only you can decide how to deal with the situation. Think now about what you might do - you might not be thinking clearly if it ever happens to you.

In the unlikely event that you are at home and an intruder enters your home, call the police immediately. Make sure you have a phone within reaching distance at all times so you can easily raise the alarm.

It is best not to challenge an intruder but to alert the police straight away.

### Older people

At times, you may feel more vulnerable at home, but a few simple steps can help reduce the risk of you becoming a victim of crime.

- Don't keep large sums of cash at home - use a bank account instead.
- Many areas run schemes specifically aimed at assisting older people with home security and general maintenance. You should ask advice from your local police officers, local authority or community groups.
- If your area has a community alarm system, consider joining the scheme so you can alert someone if you trip or fall or are feeling unsafe at home.

### Bogus callers

Most people who call at your home will be genuine, but sometimes criminals do try to trick their way into people's homes.

This advice will help to keep you safe at home.

**LOCK** - keep your front and back doors locked even when you are at home.

**STOP** - Before you answer, stop and think whether you are expecting somebody.

**CHECK** - Even if the caller has a pre-arranged appointment with you, check their identity card carefully. Close the door while you do this. If you are still unsure, call the company concerned to verify their representative's identity. Don't use a phone number on the card, as it could be fake. Look up the company in the phone book if you can.

Most utility companies operate a password scheme for older or vulnerable customers. You can register with the scheme and their representative will have to confirm your password when they visit to prove they are a genuine employee of the company.

Bogus callers may be smartly dressed and often claim to be from the police, the council or the 'water board'. They sometimes claim to be builders or gardeners and try to trick people into paying for unnecessary work. You should never agree to having work done by someone who is just passing by. If you need work doing, get at least two quotes from reputable companies.

**If you think a bogus caller has been to your home, call the police immediately on 999.**

**If you have any doubts KEEP THEM OUT!**

# Securing your vehicle

Crimes against vehicles, including the theft of and theft of items from them, is reducing locally and nationally. But it is important your vehicle is not an easy target for criminals.

Most vehicle crime can be prevented. Follow these recommendations and you can be confident you have done all you can to protect your vehicle.



## Parking your vehicle

Think before you park, particularly when it is dark or if you are leaving your vehicle for a long time. If possible, park in a busy well-lit area.

Avoid parking in secluded spots which could put both you and your car at risk. This includes parking near your home. Use a lockable garage if you have access to one.

If you are parking in a public car park, use one that has achieved the Park Mark Safer Parking Award.

The award is granted to parking areas that have achieved the requirements of a risk assessment as conducted by the police.

These requirements mean the parking operator has put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and antisocial behaviour, thereby doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking area.

Look out for this sign when using public car parks.

Visit [parkmark.co.uk](http://parkmark.co.uk) for more information.



## Security tips when parking

- Always lock all doors.
- Close the windows and sunroof.
- Activate any security devices, such as alarms and immobilisers, when leaving your car unattended.
- Never leave your keys in your vehicle, even for a second. Treat them as you would your cash and credit cards.
- Never leave the vehicle with the engine running or the keys in the ignition. If your car is stolen in this situation you may not be covered by your insurance.
- Don't leave anything on display – even an old jacket or loose change can be an appealing target for a thief.
- Do you really need all those things in the glove box? Never store your vehicle's documents, such as its logbook and insurance certificate, inside it.
- When leaving your vehicle, take out the removable radio cover or remove the stereo if you can.
- Don't forget to remove your satnav device, wipe away the sucker mark from your windscreen and remove the bracket.
- To prevent damage and discourage vandalism, tuck in wing mirrors and remove or put aerials down.

- Number plate theft is becoming increasingly common. Make sure your number plates are secured to your vehicle correctly. Use of security screws or stronger adhesive is recommended, but check with your vehicle manufacturer so as not to invalidate the warranty.

## Vehicle security measures

- Have an alarm and immobiliser fitted if your vehicle doesn't already have one. This is an effective way of deterring criminals. A Thatcham-compliant immobiliser or steering lock can help secure older vehicles.
- Make sure your vehicle's windows are etched with its registration number or the last seven digits of the vehicle identification number (VIN), or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognised database.
- Locking wheel nuts are cheap and easy to fit to ensure that no one can steal your alloy wheels.
- Catalytic converters can be marked using a specialist metal security marking chemical and secure labels to warn potential thieves that the catalytic converter carries an identification mark.

*To reduce the risk of your vehicle's catalytic converter being stolen:*

- Garage your car whenever possible.
- Park in well-lit busy areas or Park Mark accredited car parks.

### **Key security**

- Keep your car keys safe and out of sight at home.
- Ensure keys are not left near unlocked doors or open windows in your home, to ensure they are not on show or easily available to opportunist thieves.

### **Security tips when driving**

- Keep your doors and windows locked, especially when travelling through built up areas.
- Keep valuables out of sight to prevent them being snatched.
- Never pick up hitch hikers.
- Ensure someone knows where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- Plan ahead and find out where the Park Mark accredited car parks are if you are travelling to an unfamiliar place. There are several mobile phone applications you can download that help to locate these car parks throughout the country.



## **Buying and selling used cars**

### **Buying a used car - be prepared**

*You can protect yourself by following this advice:*

- Consider checking with one of several private companies that hold information on vehicles whether the car has been reported stolen, seriously damaged or is still subject to finance.
- Always arrange to meet the person selling the car at their house, not at your house or another meeting place. Ask to see proof of the seller's identity and address - an official letter or driving licence, for example.

- Always check the registration documents and service history. Never buy a car without the registration document (V5C) - make sure it has a DVLA watermark and has not been altered in any way.
- Check any security etchings to make sure they match and have not been removed.
- Make sure the car's VIN matches that on the registration document (V5C) - The VIN, formerly known as the chassis number, is a unique 17 character number issued to every vehicle by the manufacturer and can be found:
  - Stamped on the body or chassis or frame.
  - On a manufacturer's VIN plate under the bonnet or fixed to the post between the front and rear doors.
  - On an additional plate fixed securely to the top corner of the dashboard, where it can easily be seen through the windscreen. This is called a visible VIN.

### **Selling a used car**

There are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself from becoming a victim of crime when selling a car:

- Never let the buyer go on a test drive alone. They may not come back.

- Don't leave the buyer alone with the keys in the ignition.
- Be careful when accepting cheques or banker's drafts. If they are fraudulent or counterfeit, you will lose the money. Like cheques, banker's drafts take time to be cleared, so don't part with your car until you are sure the payment is genuine.
- Ask the buyer for some form of identification such as a passport or driving licence. If in doubt, check with the police.

Visit **[direct.gov.uk](https://www.direct.gov.uk)** for more detailed information and advice about buying or selling a used car.

# Useful telephone numbers

**South Yorkshire Police non -  
emergency 101**

.....  
**Always call 999 in an emergency**

.....  
To help find a trusted trader. TrustMark  
**www.trustmark.org.uk**  
**0333 555 1234**

.....  
**Stay Put Home Improvement  
Agency**

Providing independent advice, repairs,  
security improvements, and adaptations  
**0114 2564 270**

.....  
**Victim Support**  
**0808 1689 111**

.....  
**Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) -**  
Consumer help line -  
**0345 4040 506**

**Age UK**  
**0800 1692 081**

.....  
**Mail Pref Service**  
**0207 2913 310**

.....  
**Tel Pref Service**  
**0345 0700 707**

.....  
**NHS Direct**  
**111**

.....  
**Yorkshire Water**

To set up your password or check  
the identity of a caller, please ring  
the following number:  
**0800 1387 878**

.....  
**Crimestoppers**

Call anonymously with information  
about crime.  
**0800 555 111**

My Electric supplier is

Tel

My Gas supplier is

Tel

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