



Home security

Improving the security of your home not only protects your material possessions but those you love. It's also not just a case of spending money – there's a lot you can easily do by taking simple steps to create a good safety routine.

Many burglaries are opportunistic, happening when offenders see an easy way to commit crime. There's no one product or way to prevent burglary, but combining a range of security measures will put burglars off in the first place, or slow them down significantly to the point where they see the risks outweigh the benefits.

The following tips will help you protect your home:

- Look at your home as a burglar would – if you were locked out, how would you get in? This will help you identify any weak spots where you need to improve your home security
- Ensure your external front and back doors are in good condition, and keep them locked even when you're at home
- If you open a window, always close and lock it when you leave the room or go out
- If you're replacing locks or whole doors make sure the products you choose meet current security standards – search for tested and approved products at www.securedbydesign.com and www.soldsecure.com
- Keep all keys out of sight and reach of letterboxes, pet flaps and downstairs doors and windows
- Never keep a spare key hidden outside
- Avoid leaving high-value items where they can be seen from outside your home. If a would-be criminal can see it, they may be tempted to steal it
- Make your home look occupied once darkness falls by using energy-saving lights with timers
- Dusk to dawn security lighting to cover overlooked areas outside the front of your home will help deter offenders by removing the cover of darkness
- If you have an alarm system, use it. If you don't, consider getting one. Having pets doesn't mean you can't fit an alarm. Find accredited installers at www.nsi.org.uk and www.ssaib.org
- Mark your property so it can be identified as yours and returned if stolen and recovered. Options include traceable liquids such as SmartWater® or a UV permanent pen. Find tested and approved security products at www.securedbydesign.com or www.soldsecure.com
- Register your property for free at www.immobilise.com
- Keep front boundaries such as hedges, walls and fences below 1m high so your home, and anyone trying to break in, can be easily seen
- Maintain your side and rear perimeters – these can usually be up to 1.8m high without requiring planning permission, and trellis can be added on top. The use of prickly plants provides an additional natural barrier. Check gates are in good condition too and keep them locked
- French and patio doors can offer an opportunity to criminals, so make sure all garden tools are locked securely away to ensure would-be burglars can't use them to get into your home

- If you have a conservatory, keep the external doors locked, and consider adding a lock to internal doors leading into your home
- If you live in a flat, be alert for anyone trying to follow you in through communal controlled access doors, and report any faults with security to the building management
- Where possible, keep wheelie bins out of sight and away from your home, ideally secured using a ground/wall anchor. They can often be used as climbing aids or to transfer stolen goods to and from locations
- Ensure you have adequate insurance cover for your home and possessions. This won't help prevent a burglary from occurring, but will help you in dealing with the aftermath

Home security check list

Use our home security checklist to judge the current security levels of your home. It's a good idea to go through this checklist twice, once during the day and again at night. For questions where the answer is 'no', follow our suggestions to see if you can turn your answer into a 'yes'.

Yes/No Are your house and grounds visible from the street and from your neighbours' homes?

If all accesses are visible to neighbours or from the street, burglars are less likely to break in.

Yes/No Does your property have a fence or other deterrent to discourage trespassing?

Fences, although not impassable, act as a deterrent to burglars. Fences and hedges, however, can also conceal burglars. Therefore, a fence that you can see through is best.

Yes/No Do all of your doors have outside lights?

Well-lit entrances discourage burglary. Motion sensor lights are particularly effective. But your light bulbs should be protected to prevent breakage or tampering.

Yes/No Are the lights turned on at night?

Yes/No Are the light bulbs protected? Are the lights mounted where they cannot be reached from the ground?

Yes/No Are all of your doors and windows visible from all angles?

Shrubbery, although pleasing to the eye, can provide a hiding place for a burglar. Pruning and exterior lighting to remove shadows may solve the problem. Also, keep in mind that such things as cars and sheds can block the view of entrances and windows.

Yes/No Are your exterior doors and frames sturdy?

Secure doors mean more than good locks! The door, frame and hardware (hinges, locks and fasteners) form a mini-security system that is only as good as its weakest point.

Yes/No Are windows in or near your doors protected from breakage?

Windows in or near doors should be made of treated (safety laminated or tempered) glass, wired glass, break-resistant acrylic or polycarbonate plastic. If they are not, you should replace them.

Yes/No Have you taken precautions to ensure that your sliding patio doors cannot be lifted out of their tracks or pried open?

Yes/No Are all fasteners (screws and so on) for stationary parts (tracks and frame) on the patio doors inaccessible from the outside?

Sliding patio doors are common points of entry for burglars. Most sliding patio doors have locks that hook into the frame. They can be pried open, cut or unhooked. To compensate for this lack of effectiveness, manufacturers have produced add-on security devices, such as jimmy plates, safety bars and auxiliary locks, which along with the lock, can provide a deterrent.

Yes/No Is your door hardware (locks, latches, handles, hinges, strike plate) durable and securely installed?

Good-quality and properly installed door hardware is essential to securing entrances.

Yes/No Does your front door have a viewer?

The viewer should be of good quality to minimize distortion, allowing you to recognize visitors without opening the door. Also, ensure that the entrance is well lit. Door chains are an alternative, but most can be easily forced.

Yes/No Do you have good quality cellar windows with adequate locks and solid frames?

Yes/No Do the cellar windows have treated or wired glass, break-resistant acrylic or polycarbonate plastic?

Yes/No Are they protected with security bars or decorative security grills?

Cellar windows are also common points of entry for burglars. Because they are so close to the ground, they are easily accessible and burglars can often break in undetected by hiding where windows are shielded by shadows, cars or shrubbery.

To speak to our crime prevention team about improving your home security email crimeprevention@northants.pnn.police.uk