

## **Security Tips**

**Source:** <http://www.houselogic.com>

While it's difficult to protect your home from professional thieves, most home burglaries are done by amateurs. These thieves are more easily thwarted if you employ some of these simple security precautions:

- Plan to "burglarize" yourself. You'll discover any weaknesses in your security system that may have previously escaped your notice.
- Lock up your home, even if you go out only for a short time. Many burglars just walk in through an unlocked door or window.
- Change all the locks and tumblers when you move into a new house.
- For the most effective alarm system, conceal all wiring. A professional burglar looks for places where he or she can disconnect the security system.
- Your house should appear occupied at all times. Use timers to switch lights and radios on and off when you're not at home.
- If you have a faulty alarm that frequently goes off, get it fixed immediately and tell your neighbors that it's been repaired. Many people ignore an alarm that goes off periodically.
- A spring-latch lock is easy prey for burglars who are "loiding" experts. Loiding is the method of slipping a plastic credit card against the latch tongue to depress it and unlock the door. A deadbolt defies any such attack. It is only vulnerable when there is enough space between the door and its frame to allow an intruder to use power tools or a hacksaw.
- If you lose your keys, change the locks immediately.
- Before turning your house key over to a professional house cleaner for several hours, make sure the person is honest and reputable as well as hardworking. Check all references thoroughly. If the house cleaner is from a firm, call your local Better Business Bureau to check on the firm's reputation.
- Instead of keeping a spare key in a mailbox, under the doormat, or on a nail behind the garage, wrap the key in foil -- or put it in a 35mm film can -- and bury it where you can easily find it if you need it.
- Don't leave notes for service people or family members on the door. These act as a welcome mat for a burglar.

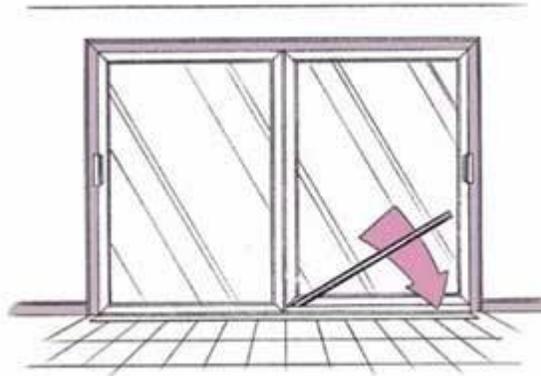
- If the entrances to your home are dark, consider installing lighting with an infrared detector. Most thieves don't want to be observed trying to get in a door.
- Talk to your neighbors about any suspicious people or strange cars you notice lurking about.
- To keep your tools from being stolen, paint the handles. Thieves avoid items that are easy to identify.
- Trees located near windows or shrubbery that might shield a burglar from view can be major flaws in your home-protection plan. Consider your landscaping plan in light of your protection needs.
- Ask for credentials from any sales-person who requests entry to your home. Ask that their ID be pushed under the door. Many professional burglars use this cover to check out homes. If you're doubtful, check with the person's office before letting him or her in.
- Do not list your full name on your mailbox or your entry in the telephone book. Use only your initial and your last name.
- If someone comes to your door asking to use the phone to call a mechanic or the police, keep the door locked and make the call yourself.
- Dogs are good deterrents to burglars. Even a small, noisy dog can be effective -- burglars do not like to have attention drawn to their presence. Be aware, however, that trained guard dogs do not make good pets. Obedience training and attack training are entirely different, and only the former is appropriate for a house pet.



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**Dogs are a good deterrent to burglars.**

## Securing Doors

- To help burglar-proof your home, install 1-inch throw deadbolt locks on all exterior doors.
- A door with too much space between the door and the frame is an invitation for the burglar to use a jimmy. Reinforce the door with a panel of 3/4-inch plywood or a piece of sheet metal.
- If there are door hinges on the outside of your house, take down the door and reset the hinges inside. Otherwise all a thief has to do to gain entry to your home is knock out the hinge pin.
- You can burglar-proof your glass patio doors by setting a pipe or metal bar in the middle bottom track of the door slide. The pipe should be the same length as the track.



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**A pipe or metal bar can be used to burglar-proof a patio door.**

- It's easy for a burglar to pry through rot. Replace rotted door frames with new, solid wood.
- It's simple for a thief to break glass panels and then reach in and open a doorknob from the inside. A door with glass panels should be either fortified, replaced, or secured with deadbolts that can only be opened with a key.

### **Securing Windows**

- Protect your windows with one or more good locks, an alarm system, burglar-resistant glass, or many small panes instead of one large area of glass.
- When installing a window lock, drip some solder on the screw heads. It will stop a burglar from unscrewing the lock after cutting a small hole in the windowpane.

In the next section, we'll focus on the special steps to take to keep your home secure while you're away.

### Garage Security

Garages present special challenges for security. Here are some tips for keeping your garage secure.

- If you frost or cover your garage windows, burglars won't be able to tell if your car is gone.
- Keep your garage door closed and locked even when your car is not in the garage.
- Install a peephole in the door separating the house from the garage. If you hear suspicious sounds, you can check without opening the door.
- Are you worried about someone entering your house through your attached garage? If the garage door lifts on a track, a C-clamp can provide extra security since the door cannot be opened if you tighten the C-clamp on the track next to the roller.



Motion sensor lights, which can be installed indoors or out, add safety and security to a home. Image: OSRAM SYLVANIA

Motion sensor lights are eager helpers and good little guardians. They illuminate the way to your front door when you pull into your driveway, light hallways when you get up in the middle of the night, and turn on lamps when you enter a room.

They also provide [safety and home security](#), powering up exterior floodlights should someone attempt to trespass when it's dark outside.

In addition, they watch over your budget, dutifully turning themselves off after you've

entered your home or left a room—saving you money on energy bills. Light-sensing diodes prevent them from switching on during daylight hours.

### **Plug-and-play lighting solutions**

Many motion sensor lights don't require elaborate setups or wiring; they simply plug into any wall outlet. Battery-operated types can be mounted onto your walls using adhesives, magnets, or screws.

Sylvania's LED Motion Sensor Light runs off batteries, is easy to install in any room, and is especially handy for small spaces, such as closets. Cost: \$13.

### **Put a sensor on anything**

Have a lamp in your living room you want to turn on automatically when you walk in? The [SensorPlug Motion Sensor Outlet Plug](#) from Andev plugs into any standard wall outlet. In addition to lamps, you can use it with equipment that doesn't exceed 500 watts, such as fans and radios.

The SensorPlug Motion Sensor Outlet Plug costs between \$10 and \$20.

### **Sun power**

If your home gets ample sunlight during the day, install a solar-powered light and avoid the need to do any wiring. Designed for the outdoors, the [Solar Security with Motion Detector](#) from Concept helps you save money by not tapping into your home's electricity.

It uses 32 long-lasting LED lamps, providing bright illumination for places like your driveway and front door. Since only sunlight is needed to recharge the battery, you can attach it anywhere on your property, such as the far end of your yard.

The Concept Solar Security with Motion Detector is available through Amazon at \$49. The [Solar-Powered 80 LED Security Floodlight](#), an even brighter light with 80 LED lamps, costs \$105 from Smart Home Systems.

### **Overhead detection**

You can easily add a motion sensor to an existing overhead light fixture by adding adaptive devices, such as the [Motion Sensing Light Socket](#) from First Alert.

Simply screw the motion-sensing light socket into an existing wall or ceiling fixture and add a 25- to 100-watt light bulb. Some motion-detection light sockets won't support energy-saving compact [fluorescent bulbs](#), but for rooms that are infrequently used, such

as an unfinished basement, it's a quick solution. The First Alert Motion Sensing Light Socket sells for \$25.

### **Home automation sensors**

Home automation systems, such as those based on [X10](#) and [Z-Wave](#) technology, are great for controlling your thermostat and home entertainment center, but they also are useful for home security purposes. Linked to motion sensor lights, your home automation system can send a signal to have lights turned on when triggered by a timer or by your smartphone.

The [HomeSeer HSM100 sensor](#) is available for Z-Wave systems for \$74, and the Eagle Eye Indoor/Outdoor Motion Sensor costs between \$18 and \$30

Read more: <http://www.houselogic.com/home-advice/lighting/motion-sensor-lighting-safety-and-security-indoors-and-out/#ixzz2R2PL08nM>

A professionally installed and monitored [home security system](#) is a nice addition to your home's defenses, but it shouldn't be step one. First, conduct your own home security check. After you've inspected your home's [doors](#) and [windows](#), make sure these essential steps are covered:

#### **1. Keep your home well-maintained on the outside.**

Burglars want an easy target. Stand on the street outside your house and ask yourself: Does my property look neglected, hidden, or uninhabited? A front door or walkway that's obscured by shrubbery offers crooks the perfect cover they need while they break a door or window. To improve security, trim shrubs away from windows and widen front walks.

#### **2. Install motion detector lights.**

All sides of your house should be well-lit with motion-activated lighting, not just the front. Simple motion-activated floodlights cost less than \$50 each, and installing them is an easy DIY job if the wiring is already in place.

#### **3. Store your valuables.**

Thieves want easy-to-grab electronics, cash, jewelry, and other valuables, though some are not above running down the street with your flat-screen TV. Most make a beeline for

the master bedroom, because that's where you're likely to hide spare cash, jewelry, even guns. Tour each room and ask yourself: is there anything here that I can move to a safe deposit box? Installing a home safe (\$150 to \$500) that's bolted to your basement slab is a good repository for items you don't use on a daily basis.

#### **4. Secure your data.**

While you probably won't be putting your home computer in a safe anytime soon, take steps to [back up the personal information](#) stored on it. Password protect your login screen, and always [shut off your computer](#) when not in use (you'll save energy, too!) Don't overlook irreplaceable items whose value may hard to quantify, like digital photos.

#### **5. Prepare ahead of time in case the worst happens.**

- Take a [photo or video inventory](#) of items of value in your home, and store the file online or in your home safe.
- Check that you're properly [insured for theft](#). Note that high-ticket items in your home office, such as computers, professional camera equipment, or other business essentials, may require an additional rider or a separate policy.

Are your [neighborhood watch](#) meetings a little too same-old, same-old? Spice them up by inviting the police to visit, adding some party to the meeting mix, and luring powerful speakers.

#### **Call the cops**

Nothing beats a first-hand account of the [crimes happening in your neighborhood](#). Get it by inviting the local police department to send its community outreach officer to your neighborhood watch meeting. The officer can share crime updates for your area and train everyone to use the weapons of choice—eyes, ears, and a phone—for the competent neighbor watcher. “Nothing is more hazardous to a criminal than a witness,” says Ted Cimino, a watch captain in Surprise, Ariz.

Why stop there? Tap the state police, sheriff, constables, district attorneys, and the local bar association for speakers, too.

#### **Put the neighbor in neighborhood watch**

You don't want your neighbors to groan at the thought of going to some boring meeting after working all day. Keep your neighborhood watch meetings short (no longer than an hour), offer refreshments, and keep the discussion lively by getting people to honestly share opinions.

Controversy is interesting. So use meetings to air concerns. A Manassas, Va., watch group confronted police about a facility in their neighborhood that housed paroled sex

offenders. “The police brought in their parole officer to show us how closely these people were being monitored, which put our minds at ease,” says Cindy Brookshire, a neighborhood watch captain in the area.

If your neighbors have a mix of different schedules, vary the times and days of your neighborhood watch meetings so that everyone gets a chance to attend.

### **Keep it spicy**

It sounds simple, but the same old agenda will lead to dropouts. Pepper meetings with a variety of topics, speakers, and presentation tactics, like videos.

All watching and no fun makes for a tiresome neighborhood watch. Alternate formal meetings with casual block parties, potluck dinners, yard sales, or community clean-ups. Ask any local businesses that benefit from the neighborhood watch to donate food or door prizes.

Don't get together too often. Some neighborhood watch advice suggests meeting only twice a year. But if your 'hood is a big one, or you've got recurring problems, meet as often as it takes to keep everyone informed and get issues under control.