

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR HOME SECURE

- Make sure your home looks like someone is living in it. Don't close your curtains - in daytime this shows the house is empty. Think about getting automatic time-switches to turn your lights on when it goes dark.
- Fit mortise locks or bolts to all outside doors, and locks to all downstairs or easily accessible windows.
- Cancel any milk or newspaper deliveries.
- Cut the lawn before you go and trim back any plants that burglars could hide behind.
- Get a friend or neighbor to look after your home. They can collect your mail, mow your lawn and so on. This gives the impression that someone is living in your home. If you leave keys with a neighbor, don't label them with your address.
- Don't leave valuables, like your TV, hi-fi or video, where people can see them through windows.
- Mark any valuable items with your postcode and house number using an 'invisible' pen that you can get from DIY shops. If your property is stolen, this will help the police to identify it if it is found, which might not only allow them to return it to you but could also provide them with better evidence to convict the people responsible.
- Make sure that you have up-to-date contents insurance.
- Do not put your home address on your luggage when you are traveling to your holiday destination.
- Lock the garage and shed with proper security locks, after putting all your tools safely away so they cannot be used to break into your house. If you have to leave a ladder out, put it on its side and lock it to a secure fixture with a 'close shackle' padlock or heavy-duty chain.
- Finally, lock all outside doors and windows. If you have a burglar alarm, make sure it is set and that you have told the police who has the key.
- And just before you set off, it's worth spending a couple of minutes checking that you've done all you had to do and taken everything that you need with you.

Help from your neighbors

- It's also a good idea to get help from your neighbors. It asks them to keep an eye on your home while you're away.
- You could also ask them to collect post left in the letter box, sweep up leaves, even mow the lawn and generally make the place look lived in.
- You can repay the favor by doing the same for them. Warn the neighbor who has your key not to put your surname, address or even your house number on your keys in case they fall into the wrong hands.
- Is there a Neighborhood Watch scheme where you live? Your local police will tell you if there is a scheme in your area or help you set up one of your own. It could help you keep your home secure while you're away, and has many other crime prevention and community benefits.