

While You're Away

According to a 2014 U.S. Department of Justice Report, property crimes escalate by 11 percent during the summer months. This spike is due in large part to the increase in vacations homeowners take during the warmer months, leaving their homes vacant and more vulnerable. But regardless of whether you take a cruise in July or spend a week in Europe during October, there are measures you can take to actively protect your house while you're away.

Don't post about your vacation on social media:

Tempting as it may be to let the cyber world know you're relaxing at a five-star resort, tagging yourself at an airport while you wait to board a flight or posting photos mid-vacation may attract the unwanted attention of robbers who now know your home will be unoccupied for the next few days. Wait until you've returned to share photos and post tidbits about your out-of-town adventures.

Set timers in the home:

Instead of leaving a light on at all times, use timers to create the illusion that someone is home turning the lights on and off.

Pretend you're watching TV:

There are devices available – such as FakeTV – which you can place in your home to mimic the glow and flashes of lights a television would make at night. Like light timers, you can program the device to turn on and off at predetermined times so that, to the outside observer, it looks like you're watching TV even though you may not be home at all.

Have a plan for mail collection:

Ask a neighbor or friend nearby to stop by to collect your newspapers, mail, and any flyers that might accumulate while you are away.

Create footsteps:

If you have plans to be away during the winter you may want to ask a neighbor to walk on your sidewalk or driveway after a fresh snowfall. Untouched snow indicates to burglars that no one is home, while footprints let them think you just haven't shoveled yet.

Tips To Prevent Burglaries

If you have been or know someone who has been the victim of a home invasion you understand just how intrusive, heartbreaking, and downright terrifying it can be.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that about 28 of every 1,000 homes get burglarized each year, with burglaries of residential properties accounting for 74 percent of all burglary offenses. On average, a completed burglary costs its victim \$2,322.

Startling as they may be, these figures aren't meant to induce a panic that every time you leave for work an intruder is lurking around the corner. But, you shouldn't adopt a false sense of security, either. There are advantages to educating yourself on some of the creative ways burglars select their next target, and then take the necessary steps to further protect your home and neighborhood.

Tips for Every Day – Call on the professionals.

Many local police departments offer survey of homes and businesses to assess possible points of entry, and provide their expert suggestions for improvements that can be made both inside and outside the property.

Become acquainted with your neighbors.

Having neighbors you are friendly with and whom you can trust provides a second set of eyes on your home. They can look out for unusual activity and alert the authorities if something suspicious occurs while you are not home.

Beware of dog.

Your dog may be an extremely docile, gentile four-legged companion, but a bark from inside the home can deter intruders from continuing with a break-in because they don't know what awaits them on the other side of the door. And, even if you don't have or want a dog, a "Beware of Dog" sign might help fool would-be-thieves into thinking one is present.

Take note of your trash.

Refrain from putting boxes from recent large, expensive purchases out on the curb for trash collection. This is a clear indicator to burglars that you now have an expensive flat screen TV or computer worth stealing. Instead, break down the packaging and put it inside a recycling can or nondescript box.

Maintain your landscaping.

Overgrown shrubbery, especially near first floor windows, become potential hideaways for thieves. By pruning back bushes you leave less opportunity for a possible intruder to hide while they wait for you to leave for the day.

Mount light sensors to the home's exterior.

Many experts agree that motion-activated lights on the exterior of a home, particularly at possible points of entry, are an excellent preventive measure, because any unwanted visitors will be cast in a bright light if they get too close to your home. This unwanted attention might convince them to flee rather than proceed with their original plans to break in to your home.

Invest in an alarm system.

A home alarm system remains one of the best ways to prevent and stop residential burglaries – and they've come a long way in recent years. From wireless keypads to apps that allow you to control sensors right from your phone, there are a wide variety of options that can help safeguard your home.

If an alarm system doesn't seem plausible for you right now, having a decoy sign might be the trick, too. Burglars aren't likely to know whether an alarm sign really means one is installed or not, and they probably won't want to take the risk of finding out.

Another suggestion is to ask your alarm company for a generic sign that simply warns that your home is equipped with a security system, but doesn't advertise the specific company you use. Experienced burglars may be privy to which alarm systems are easier to disarm and may feel less threatened by homes with lawn signs for those specific companies.

Decorate your home with window treatments.

Blinds and curtains are excellent ways to protect your home, especially at night. If a burglar has an unobstructed view into your house they are better able to watch where you put your wallet, what room you watch TV in, and what time you retire to bed each night. Block them from having the insight by making a habit of closing your blinds when the sun goes down.

Lock your doors.

This seems obvious, but many homeowners become so comfortable in their neighborhoods that they don't think twice about leaving their doors unlocked. An unlocked door, however, provides burglars with easy entry to your home without causing even the slightest commotion or drawing attention to themselves.

To take it one step further, install double locks on all of your doors and put locks for screens, sliding doors, and windows in place, too.

Don't keep your valuables in plain sight.

If a robber does make their way into your home you can protect your valuables by storing them in areas of the home that seem less obvious. Chances are, your bedroom is the first place a thief will look. Come up with clever hideaways for extra cash, jewelry, and heirlooms that thieves are more likely to ignore.

Secure your shed and tools.

When it comes to proper home security, your garage or shed should be taken into consideration. If you have a habit of leaving your shed unlocked, not only is a burglar able to make off with tools, but they might also be able to use ladders, rakes, or hammers to break windows, pry open doors, and access upper levels of the home.