



GOING AWAY ON HOLIDAY

Everyone needs a holiday some time but we all want to come home and find everything as we left it. Almost half of all burglaries happen when a flat or house is empty.

By following the tips set out here, you can help to make your home more secure while you are away. Read the tips here and plan ahead. Tick off the items before you go.

Before you go

- Make sure your home looks lived in. Don't close your curtains in the daytime as this shows the house is empty. Use automatic timer-switches to turn your lights on when it gets dark;
- Cancel any home deliveries;
- Avoid discussing holiday plans where strangers may hear details of your absence from home;
- Cut the lawn before you go and trim back any plants that burglars could hide behind;
- Uncollected mail is a sign that you are away;
- Consider leaving important documents and valuable items with other family members, a bank or lock them in a safe;
- Do not put your home address on your luggage when you are travelling to your holiday destination;
- If you normally leave valuable pedal cycles or similar items in your shed, consider putting them in the house;
- Finally, make sure that you've locked all outside doors and windows and, if you have a burglar alarm, make sure it is set;
- 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 you need with you. Don't forget your passport and tickets when travelling overseas!

General tips on home security

- Fit locks or bolts to all outside doors, and locks to all downstairs or easily accessible windows;
- Have an approved alarm system installed - ask your local police and insurance company for advice;
- Try not to leave valuable items, like your TV, hi-fi, video or DVD, where burglars can see them;

- Mark belongings visibly and permanently with your postcode and house number. Keep a list of the make, model and serial number of these items and take photos of any valuable items that can't be marked, like jewellery;
- Give copies of the list and photos to a trusted friend or relative;
- Make sure that you have up-to-date contents and buildings insurance;
- Most burglars get in through a back door or window. Make it difficult for them by locking all side or back gates and adding trellis to the top of walls and fences. Fit lights that come on at night to cover the sides and back of your house;
- Put all your tools away so they cannot be used to break into your house and lock your garage and shed with proper security locks;
- 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.

Help from your neighbours

- It's a good idea to get help from your neighbours. You could ask them to collect post, sweep up leaves, mow the lawn, open and close curtains, and so on. They could even occasionally park their car on your driveway. Anything to make the place look lived in.
- You can repay the favour by doing the same for them. Warn your neighbour not to put your surname, address or even your house number on your keys in case they fall into the wrong hands.
- Let your neighbour know when you will be away and, if you can, give them details so that they can contact you, or someone who can act on your behalf, in an emergency.

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