

Do-It-Yourself Home Security Survey

The following guide will help you to check your own home and its security. It should take about 30 minutes. Firstly check any requirements you may have to meet within your home insurance; make sure these are covered. Most burglars are opportunists – if they spot a weakness or vulnerability that will allow them to gain entry - they will take it.

PLEASE NOTE:

**Crime Prevention advice is given free without the intention of creating a contract.
The Metropolitan Police take any legal responsibility for the advice given.**

Start with the perimeter of your property. This is the boundary line where it joins either the street or your neighbour's property.

Stand in the street and take a good look at your house, then walk around the whole boundary as far as you can, checking for climbing places, gaps in the perimeter and the number of entrances.

- Boundary lines at the front of the house should be wide and low, preferably no higher than 1m high. This will help passers-by and neighbours to keep an eye on the front of the house. You should be able to see your front door and front windows from the street; if overgrown plants are obscuring them, then this provides cover for burglars trying to gain entry.
- Boundary lines at the sides and rear of the house should be taller. Normally side and rear perimeters can be 1.8 metres high before you need planning permission but contact the local planning department to confirm this. In some situations the planning department may permit a higher boundary – consider adding 30cm of lightweight soft wood trellis to the top.

If the boundary looks easy to climb over consider the following:

- For walls, try growing prickly bushes or thorny climbing plants up the wall to deter intruders.
- For fences, trellis on top makes it difficult to climb - consider prickly plants trained through the trellis work. Alternatively fix a bed of raised plastic cones to the top of the fence to deter climbing; these come with a warning sign. Resist the temptation to add barbed wire or broken glass – this is in contravention of the Occupiers Liability Act 1984.
- Gates at the side of any property should be at the front building line and should be kept locked. They should be the same height as any side fencing or wall to prevent climbing. Make sure wheelie bins are kept behind these gates; if left outside they are a climbing aid.

If it is a shared boundary with a neighbour or your neighbour's responsibility, speak to them. It is in both your best interests to improve security and may well reduce any financial outlay.

Now look at the house itself and ask yourself how you would get in if you had forgotten your keys.

Think about how easy or difficult it would be to get into the house via a window that is insecure or regularly left open, a door that is poorly locked or a flat roof that provides access to upper floors. If you would find it relatively easy – so would any potential burglar.

Cast iron drainpipes can be covered with anti-climb paint to prevent climbing. Where there is easy access to upper floor windows, added security will be needed for those windows.

- Good lighting to your home is an excellent deterrent. Lights fitted to a photo-electric cell which come on as it gets dark and stay on until it gets light, sometimes called "Dusk to Dawn" lights are very good. Using low energy or energy efficient light bulbs will help to reduce the running costs. Motion sensor lights are not ideal; they are triggered by pets and wild animals.
- Sheds should be fitted either with a shed bar or with a closed hasp and staple fitting, in both cases secured by a closed shackle padlock preferably to Sold Secure Silver. Installing a shed alarm is also a good deterrent. Any window can be fitted with an internal metal grille.
- Garages with up and over doors can be secured with Sold Secure garage door locking devices. Any doors connecting the garage to the main part of the home should be solid timber, at least 44mm thick and fitted with a five lever mortice deadlock to BS 3621.

If any shed or garage is in poor condition and cannot be adequately secured, try not to store anything of value within or any items that could be used to break into the main home. Likewise objects lying around the back garden or rear yard could also be used to gain entry – especially ladders. Remove or secure them if possible.

Consider the door and entrances to your home.

- Wooden doors should be of a minimum thickness of 44mm. Glass panels should be fitted with anti-shatter (laminated) glass. Weak wooden panels can be reinforced with plywood or other strong wood.
- Wooden front doors should have 2 locks: a 5 lever mortice deadlock fitted a third of the way from the bottom of the door to either BS 3621 (key exit) or BS 8621 (thumb turn exit) and a rim lock night latch fitted a third of the way from the top of the door to either BS 3621 or BS 8621. The door frame should be reinforced with hinge bolts, plus London and Birmingham bars.
- Rear timber doors should be fitted with a five lever mortice sash lock to BS 3621, plus rack bolts (or surface mounted locking bolts) in the top and bottom corners of the door. Hinge bolts should be fitted plus two Birmingham bars.
- For all uPVC doors, the multi-point locking system should operate on a three star rated cylinder to DHF TS 007 or to Sold Secure Diamond. These doors need to be correctly locked by lifting the internal handle, locking the door and removing the key - otherwise they are not properly locked.

For more advice about fitting further security to either timber or UPVC doors, consult a locksmith who is a member of the Master Locksmith Association.

- Letterbox cowls fitted to the inside of the door will prevent objects nearby – especially car keys - from being hooked out by thieves and prevent arms or hands reaching internal locks. Make sure any keys are not visible through the front door window or letterbox and are not kept near the front door.

- Sliding patio doors should have an anti-lift device, either a plastic block in the top channel or surface mounted locks positioned so that the door cannot be lifted from its runners.
- French doors can be secured by a Sold Secure locking device that covers both handles when the doors are closed. If the French doors open outwards, then hinges will be on the outside so hinge bolts need to be fitted (see above).

Windows should be in good condition, with no cracked glazing, loose putty or gaps between frame and masonry.

- All ground floor windows and those capable of being reached by climbing must have locks that use a key. When leaving the house all windows should be locked - even those that you think a burglar cannot reach.
- Glazing can be strengthened via an internal anti-shatter film that provides an additional laminated layer. This is important for any glazing located near door locks.
- Seek advice from a member of the Master Locksmiths Association about which locks to use.

Fire Precautions

As a result of improving security, you may have to revise your fire security plan.

Remember

Make sure you know how to get out of your home in a fire. Leave keys in a place where you will easily find them if you need them to get out - but not in a location where they can be reached by potential burglars.

Alarms should be fitted by a member company of either the National Security Inspectorate (SSAIB) or Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB); any member company of these professional bodies will install a product to the British Standard.

Recent burglaries have been committed by gangs using ladders to access rear upper floor windows, therefore by-passing alarm sensors and window locks on the ground floor. Make sure your alarm sensors cover upstairs and add window locks.

The alarm should be extended to cover any extensions or garages.

Video doorbells are a useful way to monitor visitors to your home via a smartphone and additional cameras linked to these doorbell systems can cover the rear of your home. Cameras should not face into your neighbour's property.

For high value items such as jewellery, consider storing these at a safety deposit vault run by a member company of the British Pawnbrokers Association. This means the risk of storing these items is removed from you and your own home.

For advice on replacing existing doors and windows with security rated products, visit the Secured by Design website.

<https://www.soldsecure.com/>

<https://www.locksmiths.co.uk/>

<https://www.securedbydesign.com/>