

## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM THEFT

### Securing Doors

Most intruders go in and out of your house the same way you do--through the doors. So all doors in your home should be protected. But keep in mind that you must protect more than just your front and back doors. There are also the sliding door to the patio, the door to the basement from outside, and the door to the house from the garage. The last one is the one most people forget.

When a burglar wants to break into a house, time is of the essence. Anything you can do to slow him down will deter him from choosing your house. And the best method of deterrence is good locks.

The average burglar does not pick locks. He walks in through open doors, breaks down doors, or simply trips mechanisms on cheap door hardware. The best protection against this casual burglar is to have a deadbolt lock on every door in your house, including sliding glass doors. These are relatively inexpensive and easy to install.

Be aware that certain deadbolts lock from the inside with a key. They make life difficult for the burglar, but can be deadly for the inhabitants of the house if precautions are not taken. With this kind of lock, a key should be immediately accessible. In case you need to get out of the house quickly for any reason, fumbling for a key will simply delay you. Everyone in the house, including children, should know where that key is at all times and should be able to reach the lock to open it.

If you do not want to install a deadbolt on a sliding glass door, the simplest way to protect that door from being opened from the outside is to place a stick in the track of the door when it is closed. The stick should fit as tightly as possible in the length of the track. This way, even if someone jimmies the lock on the sliding glass door (and most of these are pretty flimsy), he will not be able to slide the door open. It is also a good idea to attach a piece of wood to the inside of the top door track. This will fill the space between the top of the door and the door frame and will prevent someone from lifting the door out of the track.

Your bedroom door should also have a lock on it. Again, the lock should be easy to open from inside. Just in case someone does manage to break in, you have put up one more obstacle between you and him.

Most burglars are not interested in a confrontation, but you never can tell. So if you hear someone, lock your bedroom door and call the police. This requires one more security device--a telephone in your bedroom.

Whatever you do, do not confront the burglar. Let him take what he wants. Do not surprise him. Pretend you are asleep and do not take any chances.

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### Additional Deterrents and Safeguards

Good lighting outside your home will also offer you a great deal of protection against the intruder. If there is nowhere for him to hide, he will probably move on. Lighting should cover not only the front of your home but also the sides and the back. Lights should be turned on as soon as it gets dark and should not be turned off until the next morning. You can set the lights on a timer. Then, if you are not home, the lights will go on and spoil potential cover for a burglar.

One more deterrent to intruders is a watchdog. A barking dog will attract attention to the burglar. It will harass him, it may injure him, and for sure, it is not going to let him do what he wants in peace. In an apartment, especially, a dog is invaluable.

Apartments and condominiums offer some special hazards. For instance, you never know who had the key to your apartment before you moved in. Therefore, you should request that the landlord change the locks. If he isn't interested in making the investment, then add a few extra precautions of your own. A sliding bolt applied to the inside of the door will help. Even a chain lock (which is generally ineffective in keeping someone out) will catch an old tenant by surprise. Also, if your door does not have a peephole, talk to the landlord about adding one. You should never open the door to someone until you are sure you know who it is.

Also, when selecting an apartment or buying a condominium with an apartment-type hall plan, avoid the units next to the emergency stairwells. These are excellent hiding places for a burglar to duck into while he is in the process of breaking into the nearest unit.

## Theft-proof your home

As summer heats up so do burglaries. Here's how to protect your home from theft while on vacation.

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By Valerie Morris, CNNfn anchor



**NEW YORK (CNN/Money) - Summer is the hottest time of the year for burglary. And as summer vacation season gets underway more homes are left vacant than at any other time of the year.**

According to the FBI, a burglar enters a home every 11 seconds in the United States. More than half of the crimes occur in broad daylight.

"For most thieves, getting into your house is as easy as one, two, three," said Tom Kraeutler, host of "The Money Pit," a radio show focusing on home improvement. "The first thing they do is look for an access point, say behind some bushes, through a window or a door."

Kraeutler advises homeowners to invest in a good quality door with a multi-point lock, so it's not just the door handle that's locking but also a dead bolt.

"The same thing applies to the windows. Make sure you have a window that has a very, very secure lock on it," he added.

One of the best ways to prevent burglary is to create an illusion of activity inside your house even though you're really a thousand miles away. Here are a few ideas:

**Stop the press:** Halt all mail and newspaper deliveries.

**Set automatic timers:** Automatic timers turn items on at set times. The newest ones turn on lights, radio and the television in hundreds of different cycles that create a pattern of activity.

**Stage a peep show:** Leave some blinds and curtains open in their normal positions.

**Call the police:** Ask the local police if they can keep an eye on your house while you're away.

Kraeutler noted that in many communities, the police department maintains a "vacant house" list of homes that they check periodically to see if there's been any unusual activity.

If you decide to notify the police that you are away, let them know what they *should* see. You should, for example, tell them you have two cars in the driveway, along with the makes and models of those vehicles.

"If they show up and see a strange car in your driveway they may investigate [the matter] a little bit further," Kraeutler added.

For extra security, you may want to install a burglar alarm system.

The National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association says homes without security systems are about 3 times more likely to be broken into than homes with them. Burglar alarms can lower your home owner's insurance too. ■