

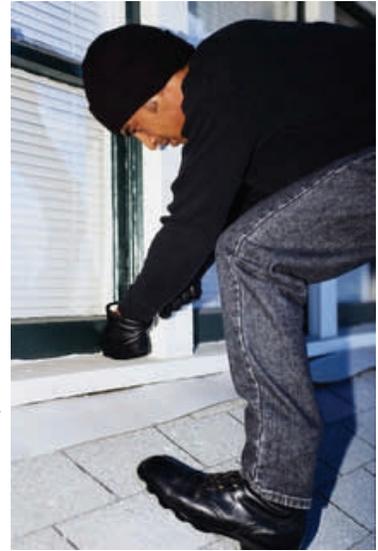


When the Family's Away, Make Sure Burglars Don't Play

It's a fact that almost all types of personal and household crime are highest in the warm months when people spend more time away from home on vacations or are involved in outdoor activities. But you can help avoid becoming part of this statistic by taking action to protect your home, property, and family while you're relaxing and having fun in the sun!

The National Crime Prevention Council states that although crime is still a very serious concern, our homes and communities are safer than they've been in decades, and this is quite likely due, at least in part, to prevention and community policing.

A few proactive measures and common sense can prevent your vacation from being wrecked by a break-in. Follow these tips and enjoy a safer and happier summer season.



- **First and foremost, lock up!** Whether it's a short trip to the grocery store or a longer haul to your favorite vacation spot, make sure your doors and windows are securely locked. "Even small measures like getting good quality door locks or driving a long nail into a window frame at the midpoint can help give a home an added level of security," said Deputy Pam Suter of the Arlington County, Va., Sheriff's Office.
- **Remember that nothing is more effective at deterring a burglar than the impression that the home is occupied.** Install timers on your lights to make it look like someone is home. If you are planning to be away for a lengthy period of time, entertain the idea of a house sitter.
- **Store valuables in a secure place.** A home safe can be a great option for storing various valuables including jewelry and important home and family-related documents.
- **Garage doors are a favorite point of entry for burglars.** Keep your garage door closed at all times, and lock the door from your garage into your home. Be certain that tools, ladders and other objects that could be used to break into your home are securely locked up inside the garage or house.
- **Be sure that your trees and shrubs don't cover windows and doors.** Hidden entrances can make it easier for burglars to get into your home unnoticed by neighbors and bystanders.
- **Leave spare keys only with trusted family members or neighbors you are close to.** Do not hide them outside. Burglars are smart enough to look around and know the common places people hide keys.
- **You may also want to consider a home security system.** Check online or look in your phone book to find companies specializing in home security.

Most experts agree that your neighbors are one of your best defenses. Get to know them and chances are they will be more likely to watch for suspicious activity around your home while you're away. "It's important to notify neighbors that you trust about your plans to be out of town," Suter said.

