

## **How Burglars Choose Which Homes to Rob, According to a Criminologist**



Sometimes we make our homes easy targets for burglars. Here's what you need to know to prevent a burglary.

### **Homes that are safe from prying eyes**

If you're a burglar, the less activity that neighbours or passersby can see from the street, the better. That's why burglars look for the following:

- Homes with overgrown bushes or high fences
- Homes without nearby neighbours
- Houses difficult to see from the street
- Houses in the middle of the street.
- Houses without security cameras

If a burglar doesn't have to worry as much about being seen, they are more likely to attempt a break-in.

**Best move:** Keep your landscaping trimmed, and consider installing security cameras, video doorbells and/or alarm systems.

### **Unlocked potential**

Burglars want to get in and out of your home as quickly as possible. Sometimes, homeowners make it easy for them by unintentionally giving them access in the following ways:

- **Unlocked doors and windows.** You might be surprised that 34% of burglars get in through the front door.
- **Fire escapes.** They are often on a less noticeable side of the building, and windows are often left open or unlocked.

**Best move:** Keep *all* doors and windows locked at all times.

### **Flimsy locks and door frames**

Some burglars reported kicking doors in. Doors with flimsy locks, or those made with a hollow core, thin wood or glass can make a door vulnerable to this method of entry.

One of the key components in a safe door that is difficult to kick in isn't the door itself but the frame. In almost every burglary where the door was kicked in, it was the door frame that easily gave way on the inside—with nothing but thin wood that splits when the deadlock is pressed against it with enough force.

**Best move:** Install a quality deadbolt lock on every door that leads into the house. Then strengthen your door frames using door-jamb reinforcement plates and kits.

### **Spare keys hidden in obvious spots**

You're not fooling anyone by stashing a key under the doormat, above the door frame, or in a planter next to the front door

**Best moves:** Install an electronic door lock in place of one that requires a key. You can assign digital codes to people you want to have access, and they enter their code to unlock the door. Many of these locking systems also have an app that allows you to lock and unlock the door with your phone. If you still feel more comfortable with a physical key, at least use a Keysafe lockbox with a PIN to secure the key but place the box out of sight.

### **Signs you're away from home**

An unoccupied home is an appealing target to a burglar, particularly if they sense that you won't be home for hours or even days. Some of the things they may look for include:

- No sound from a TV or radio
- Lights that don't get turned on and off
- Mail that can be view through a glass front door or packages piled up
- Rubbish bins left on the street but not on bin collection day
- Snow not cleared from the driveway in the winter

**Best moves:** Have a trusted neighbour take care of some of these exterior signs of absence. You might even ask a neighbour to park their car in your driveway from time to time, particularly if you'll be away for a while. Also, consider adding some "smart" lighting that you can control with an app. This can help randomly change the lighting scheme and make the house appear occupied.

### **Signs that you've got valuables inside**

If your home suggests you're wealthy, burglars might think they can get a good haul. "The overall picture tells the tale—if it has an expensive car in the driveway, it's in a higher-end neighbourhood, it's a nice house, etc. Other giveaways:

- **Expensive items visible in the windows.**
- **Bumper stickers that disclose the owner's interests**

**Best moves:** Minimize the visibility of any valuables you may have. Keep as little cash as possible in your home and use a safe for any large amounts of cash that you do keep on hand. Be sure to bolt the safe to a floor or wall though as they can just walk away with the safe if it's not secured.

### **The bottom line**

Learning how to outsmart burglars and prevent a break-in often comes down to making your property less attractive to burglars than the properties nearby.