

# HOME SECURITY

TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUR  
PROPERTY AND YOUR FAMILY





SAMPLE

## HOME SAFETY

Everyone wants to feel safe in their own home. Your home is more than just a building—it holds your loved ones, personal memories, and valued possessions. That sense of security is vital to your quality of life, and protecting it should be a top priority.

Unfortunately, crime can happen anywhere. Burglary, theft, and property damage are real risks, but prevention is possible. Law enforcement professionals across the United States agree on one key principle: criminals look for easy targets. That means that homes that appear unoccupied, are poorly lit, or have unlocked doors and windows are far more likely to be targeted. The good news? These vulnerabilities are also the easiest to fix.

We'll help you identify the weaknesses in your home's security and fix them before they're exploited. You don't need to turn your house into a fortress. With simple habits and affordable upgrades, you can greatly reduce your risk.

Crime prevention isn't just about protecting things. It's about giving yourself peace of mind. It's about creating a safe environment for your family to grow and thrive. And it's about being an active part of your community's safety network.

As you read through this guide, remember that home safety is built on three key pillars:

### **1. Awareness**

Know your surroundings, your neighbors, and your habits.

### **2. Prevention**

Take proactive steps to reduce opportunity.

### **3. Preparedness**

Be ready to respond if something goes wrong.

Informed residents are empowered residents. Together, we can make our neighborhoods safer—one household at a time.

# UNDERSTANDING HOME SAFETY

Keeping your home safe takes more than just locking the doors. Smart home safety starts with awareness of your surroundings, habits, and vulnerabilities. This booklet covers areas to consider when evaluating the safety of your home:

## Landscape

Your landscaping plays a surprising role in home security. You can reduce hiding spots for intruders, discourage access, and increase visibility with strategic design.

## Lighting

Poorly lit areas can attract criminals. Installing motion-activated lights or leaving porch and driveway lights on at night increases visibility and makes your home less appealing to potential intruders.

## Doors

Your doors are your first line of defense. Use high-quality deadbolts, reinforce door frames, and make a habit of locking every door, every time.

## Neighborhood

A connected community is more likely to notice suspicious activity. Participating in local watch groups or neighborhood apps can help everyone stay informed and secure.

## Cameras

Modern security cameras and video doorbells not only record what's happening but also deter crime before it starts.

## Windows

Ensure that all windows have working locks and consider using security film, dowel rods, or window sensors to reinforce them. Don't forget to secure windows you rarely open.

## Alarms

An alarm system adds an extra layer of protection by alerting you—and possibly the authorities—when someone tries to break in. It can scare off intruders before any damage is done. To be effective, your system should cover all key access points and be regularly tested and maintained.

## Vehicles

Unlocked vehicles—or even locked ones with valuables visible inside—may be prime targets for theft.





## LOCKS, DOORS, AND ENTRY POINTS: YOUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

When it comes to home security, your doors and entryways are your most critical lines of defense. Most burglars enter a home through an unlocked or poorly secured door. Strengthening these areas is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect your property and your family.

Start with your front door. Every exterior door should be solid core or metal—not hollow. Hollow doors are much easier to break down. Install a deadbolt lock with at least a one-inch throw bolt. Reinforce the door frame and strike plate with three-inch screws that anchor deeply into the wall framing, not just the door jamb.

Don't rely on doorknob locks alone. Add a secondary locking mechanism such as a deadbolt or smart lock. Consider upgrading to a smart-lock system that allows you to monitor and control entry remotely via your phone.

If windows or glass panels are near your door, make sure a burglar can't break the glass and reach the lock. You can add shatter-resistant film to the glass or install a double-cylinder deadbolt that requires a key on both sides.

Install a wide-angle peephole or door viewer so you can see who's at the door without opening it. Avoid opening the door for anyone

you don't recognize. A video doorbell can provide both visibility and recording capabilities.

Side doors, basement entries, and doors leading from the garage to the home are often overlooked. These should all have the same level of protection as your front door. Don't forget to secure the garage door itself. Always close it when not in use, and disable automatic openers when you're away for extended periods.

Sliding glass doors deserve special attention. Many of them come with simple latch locks that are easy to pry open. Reinforce them with a security bar or a wooden dowel placed in the track to prevent movement. You can also install anti-lift devices to stop the door from being removed from the track entirely.

Foot-operated locks or auxiliary locking mechanisms can provide additional protection. Modern sliding-door locks with alarms or smartphone connectivity are also available.

Make sure the track and rollers are in good condition so the door can't be jostled off its track easily. Keep the tracks clean and free of debris. Periodically check for gaps between the door and frame where a tool could be inserted.

When possible, install good exterior lighting and camera coverage outside sliding doors. Consider using window coverings such as vertical blinds or curtains to block the view from outside.

Every entry point is a potential vulnerability. That includes pet doors, attic access panels, and any entrance not in regular use. Walk around your home and inspect every possible entry. Ask yourself: Could someone get in here without much effort? If so, take steps to reinforce that point.

Finally, keep doors locked—even when you're home. Many break-ins happen in broad daylight, and unlocked doors are an open invitation. Establish the habit of locking up as soon as you enter, and encourage all family members to do the same.

Securing your home starts with strong barriers and consistent habits. By focusing on your doors and entryways, you send a clear message: this home is protected.

## WINDOWS

Windows and sliding glass doors are some of the most commonly targeted entry points during a burglary. These areas can be easy to overlook, but investing time in securing them is critical to keeping your home safe.

Start by inspecting all your windows, especially those on the ground floor or near flat rooftops, decks, or other accessible surfaces. Standard window latches are often not strong enough to withstand a break-in attempt. Add secondary locks, such as pin locks, keyed sash locks, or sliding bolts. These inexpensive upgrades can make a big difference.

Consider installing window sensors that alert you when a window is opened unexpectedly. They can be part of a broader alarm system or stand-alone wireless units. Glass-break detectors, which trigger an alarm if a window is shattered, add an extra layer of defense.

For extra protection, apply shatter-resistant security film to windows. This transparent film makes it more difficult to break the glass, slowing down intruders and buying precious time for law enforcement response. Decorative security bars are another option—especially for basement or alley-facing windows—provided they include an interior release for fire safety.

Finally, don't forget about upstairs windows. Though harder to reach, they're still accessible to determined intruders. Always lock them when not in use, especially if they're near trees, balconies, or lower rooflines that can be climbed.

By taking these steps, you'll significantly reduce the chance of an intruder targeting your home through a window or sliding door. Strong locks, visibility, and layered deterrents are the keys to better security.



## ALARMS, CAMERAS, AND SMART HOME SECURITY

A reliable alarm system is one of the most effective tools to protect your home. It acts as both a deterrent and a defense—scaring off intruders, alerting you to a break-in, and, in many cases, contacting authorities. But not all systems are alike, and choosing the right one means understanding your needs.

### MONITORED VS. UNMONITORED SYSTEMS:

Monitored systems are connected to a security company that contacts emergency services when triggered. They usually require a monthly fee but offer peace of mind with 24/7 protection. Unmonitored systems activate a loud siren or flashing light but rely on you or your neighbors to respond.

Today's alarm systems often include a control panel, door and window sensors, motion detectors, and optional glass-break sensors. Many systems offer smartphone apps for remote access and instant alerts so you can stay informed wherever you are.

#### When selecting a system, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I prefer professional installation or DIY?
- Will it integrate with smart home devices?
- Is there cellular backup for outages?
- How many doors and windows need coverage?
- Does it include cameras?

### CONSISTENCY MATTERS:

An alarm helps only if it's armed. Many break-ins occur when systems are off, so make it a habit to turn yours on when you leave home or go to bed. Also, post signs or stickers that your home is protected—these visible cues can discourage break-ins before they happen.



### SECURITY CAMERAS:

Cameras are excellent for monitoring your home and collecting evidence. Just seeing a camera can deter crime. If you're on a budget, even a dummy camera might help, but real ones offer much better protection.

Place cameras at key locations:

- Front and back doors
- Driveways and garages
- Side entrances and windows

Mount them high enough to prevent tampering and angled for a clear view of faces. Look for models with high-definition video, night vision, motion detection, and storage options like cloud or local memory. Cameras that send real-time alerts to your phone add another layer of security.

### VIDEO DOORBELLS:

Video doorbells are especially helpful at main entrances. They alert you when someone is at the door and let you talk to them remotely. This is useful for deterring package thieves and spotting visitors when you're away. Some models include continuous video recording and smart notifications.

### SMART HOME INTEGRATION:

Modern security devices often integrate with smart-home platforms. This lets you control alarms, locks, lights, and cameras from one app.

Smart locks offer keyless entry and the ability to assign temporary codes to guests or service providers. You'll also get alerts if someone tries to access your home without permission.

### LIGHTING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSORS:

Smart lighting is a simple but effective security measure. You can schedule lights to turn on at night or control them remotely to create the impression that someone's home. Motion-activated lights near entrances also help deter unwanted visitors.

Smart security systems can also include sensors for fire, gas leaks, carbon monoxide, and flooding. These tools add protection that gives you time to respond to household dangers beyond burglary.

### DIGITAL SAFETY TIPS:

To protect your smart system from hacking, use strong, unique passwords and enable two-factor authentication. Regularly update device firmware and your security app. And most importantly, make sure everyone in the household knows how to operate the system and respond to alerts.

A layered security approach—alarms, cameras, lighting, smart devices, and safe habits—creates a strong defense against break-ins and other threats. Choose the tools that best fit your lifestyle and use them consistently for peace of mind.

# LANDSCAPING FOR SAFETY

Smart landscaping choices support visibility, remove hiding places, and even deter trespassing altogether. A key principle used by law enforcement and city planners is crime prevention through environmental design, or CPTED. It encourages homeowners to design their outdoor space with security in mind. The goal is to increase natural surveillance, reinforce boundaries, and control access.

Start by evaluating visibility. Shrubs, trees, and fences that block sight lines from the street or neighbors can provide burglars with concealment. Trim or remove overgrown hedges near windows and doors, and keep trees pruned so branches don't obscure entry points. Maintain a clear line of sight from your home to the street and vice versa.

Choose low, thorny plants such as holly, barberry, or roses under windows. They serve as a natural barrier while discouraging unwanted access. Near entrances, avoid having dense, tall hedges that could shield someone attempting to break in.

Lighting is another essential component. Install motion-activated lights around your yard, especially near pathways, gates, and secluded areas. Well-lit spaces make it harder for criminals to approach unnoticed. Solar-powered lights can be a cost-effective and eco-friendly option.

Pathways and driveways should be well-defined and free from obstructions. A tidy, well-maintained property signals that the homeowners are present and paying attention. Criminals often look for signs of neglect as indicators that a home may be unoccupied.

Use fencing to clearly define your property, but avoid solid panels that block views entirely. Decorative metal or open-slat fences preserve visibility while setting a clear boundary. Lock side gates with secure latches and consider adding signage like "Private Property" or "Security Cameras in Use."

Gravel walkways can add both aesthetic value and security. The sound of footsteps can alert residents or neighbors to someone's presence. You can also use landscaping strategically to guide foot traffic and discourage people from cutting across your yard.

Finally, don't forget about seasonal maintenance. Rake leaves, shovel snow, and clean up debris that might otherwise signal you're away or inattentive. A cared-for yard gives the impression of a lived-in and watched property—both strong deterrents to crime.

# KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Getting to know your neighbors has many benefits. A friendly wave on the way to work or borrowing an ingredient you forgot at the grocery store are simple ways to connect with neighbors. A connected community is one of the most powerful tools in crime prevention. The better you know your neighborhood and your neighbors, the more likely you are to spot something unusual and act before a crime occurs. You don't have to be best friends with your neighbors, but knowing names, faces, and phone numbers builds a foundation for mutual protection.

Start by getting to know the people who live around you. A simple wave, conversation, or introduction can go a long way in building trust. When you're familiar with your neighbors' routines, vehicles, and even pets, it's easier to identify suspicious activity. A stranger walking up to a neighbor's door, peering into windows, or driving slowly down the street may stand out—and give you reason to take action.

Neighbors who communicate with each other form a natural watch network. Even if you're not part of a formal Neighborhood Watch program, you can still agree to look out for one another. Share phone numbers. Text when you see something odd. Notify each other when you'll be out of town.

Being observant and involved doesn't cost anything. It simply requires attention and effort. When you know your surroundings and engage with those around you, you send a clear message: "We're watching, we care, and we take safety seriously."

One of the most effective ways to build this kind of community is through a neighborhood watch program. National Neighborhood Watch is an initiative that encourages neighbors to work together to prevent crime. Participants agree to keep an eye on each other's properties, report suspicious activity, and communicate regularly. Many local police departments provide training, signage, and support to help residents organize a watch group.

## DON'T INVITE TROUBLE: KEEP VALUABLES OUT OF SIGHT

One of the simplest ways to reduce your risk of burglary is keeping valuables hidden from view. Burglars often “window shop,” looking for homes and vehicles that offer easy access to tempting items. If they’re visible from the street, they could make you a target.

Use curtains, blinds, or frosted window film to limit people's ability to see into your home. Sheer curtains let in daylight while obscuring the view from outside. Make a habit of closing window coverings at night or when you leave the house—even if it’s just for a quick errand.

Don’t leave valuables in plain sight near windows. Tablets, laptops, wallets, and phones are easy for thieves to spot—and steal quickly. Even empty boxes from expensive purchases should be broken down and concealed at the curb.

Garage security matters too. Keep garage doors closed and use curtains or opaque coverings for garage windows. An open garage can reveal not only expensive equipment but also entry points into your house.

Vehicles are frequent targets. Never leave bags, electronics, tools, or purchases visible inside your car. Even loose change or a phone charger can make a thief think there’s something more valuable inside. Lock your car, roll up windows, and use the trunk or glove compartment for storage. If your car is parked in a driveway or on the street, motion-activated lighting or a visible camera nearby can help deter theft.

Secure anything stored outside. Lock up bikes, ladders, grills, and lawn tools—even inside fenced yards or garages. If possible, store these items in a locked shed or storage box.

In outdoor living areas, consider using privacy screens around patios or decks, especially if you have electronics or high-end furniture outside. These screens help limit visibility without sacrificing aesthetics.

Your goal is to reduce temptation and eliminate easy access. The less a thief can see—and the harder it is to grab—the safer your home and belongings will be.

## MAKE IT LOOK LIKE YOU’RE HOME

An empty house is an easy target. Burglars look for signs of vacancy: no lights, no vehicles, no activity. Fortunately, it’s easy to simulate occupancy.

Use timers or smart plugs to turn lights on and off in different rooms throughout the evening. Vary the timing and placement to mimic a normal routine. Consider adding a radio or TV on a timer to create background noise.

When you’re out of town, stop mail and newspaper delivery—or have a neighbor collect them. A stuffed mailbox or stack of papers is a clear sign that no one is home. Ask a neighbor to park in your driveway or move trash bins if you’re gone during pickup days.

Maintain your yard. Overgrown grass, leaf piles, or snow-covered sidewalks can give away your absence. Arrange for someone to mow, rake, or shovel while you’re away.

Avoid announcing travel plans on social media. Posting that you’re “off on vacation” or “gone all weekend” lets others know your home is empty. Wait to share photos until after you return.

Outdoor cameras and smart doorbells let you monitor your home remotely and receive alerts about activity. Even better, they help you respond as if you’re there, deterring intruders by giving the impression someone’s home and watching.



# THE 9PM ROUTINE: DAILY HABITS THAT DETER CRIME

Crime prevention doesn't always require expensive equipment or complicated technology. Forming a consistent routine can be just as powerful. That's the thinking behind the 9PM Routine, a simple, nightly checklist promoted by police departments to help homeowners secure their property before going to bed.

The concept is straightforward: at 9:00 every night, take a few minutes to check and secure your home. Criminals often look for easy opportunities, and many crimes happen because of unlocked doors, accessible valuables, or dark, unattended areas. A daily security habit reduces these risks and helps you catch things you might otherwise overlook.

## Your routine could include these kinds of things:

- Locking all exterior doors and windows
- Ensuring that garage doors are closed and secured
- Removing valuables from your vehicle and locking it
- Turning on porch and exterior lighting
- Activating your home alarm system
- Making sure cameras are operational

Consistency is key. By turning this into a habit, you're far less likely to forget important steps, especially when you're tired or distracted. Many homeowners are surprised to learn how often they've left doors unlocked or left items visible in a car until they adopt a routine like this.

You don't have to do this at 9:00, of course. The idea is to choose a time each evening that works for you and use it as a cue to walk through your safety checklist. Some people set an alarm on their phone, while others incorporate it into their evening wind-down routine.

Families can turn the 9PM Routine into a shared responsibility. One person checks locks, another turns on lights, someone arms the security system. Teaching children to take part helps build awareness and reinforces good safety habits for the future.

Many police departments share nightly reminders on social media using hashtags like #9PMRoutine or #LockItUp. If you follow your local department online, you may receive helpful prompts—and stay informed about nearby incidents.

Over time, this simple act becomes second nature—and its impact can be profound. A few minutes each night can mean the difference between being a target and being protected.

Criminals look for the easiest path. The 9PM Routine makes your home more secure—and look more secure. It sends a signal that your household is alert, aware, and off-limits. And when your neighbors do it too, the whole community becomes a less inviting place for crime.

## WHEN STRANGERS KNOCK (IN PERSON OR ONLINE)

Some threats come right to your door or your screen. Be cautious when strangers approach or contact you. Always identify visitors before opening the door. Use a peephole, window, or video doorbell. If someone claims to be a service worker, ask for ID and confirm by calling their company. Don't feel obligated to engage; speak through a locked door if necessary.

Scammers may pose as utility workers, delivery drivers, or even charity fundraisers to gain access or information. If someone asks to use your phone or bathroom, politely decline and offer to call for help.

Be wary of phone calls or messages claiming to be from your bank or tech support. Never give out personal info or click links from unknown sources. If something seems off, it probably is.

Teach children to follow the same rules. Practice scenarios with them so they know how to respond to strangers at the door or online.

Use signage like “No Soliciting” and reinforce boundaries. Security cameras and video doorbells can help document activity and discourage suspicious visitors.

Being cautious isn't rude—it's responsible. Trust your instincts and put safety first.



## WHAT TO DO IF A CRIME OCCURS

Experiencing a crime—whether it’s a break-in, theft, or vandalism—is stressful and unsettling. While prevention is always the goal, it’s just as important to know how to respond effectively if something does happen. Your actions in the hours and days after a crime can make a big difference to both your safety and the investigation.

**1. Put safety first.** If you believe someone is still on your property or feel unsafe, leave the area immediately and call 911. Don't confront the intruder. Wait in a safe place until police arrive.

**2. Report the incident.** Even if the crime seems minor or no property was taken, always report it to the police. A police report documents the event, helps reveal patterns, and increases the chance of recovering stolen property. Be prepared to provide details like these:

- Time and date of the incident
- What was stolen or damaged
- Any suspicious people or vehicles seen nearby
- Security camera footage, if available

**3. Avoid disturbing evidence.** Try not to touch or move anything at the crime scene before officers arrive. Fingerprints, footprints, or other physical evidence could help solve the case.

**4. Document the damage.** Take photos of the scene and make a list of missing or damaged items. Include serial numbers or identifying marks if they're available. This information is useful to police and may be required when you're filing insurance claims.

**5. Contact your insurance provider.** Notify your homeowners or renters insurance company as soon as possible. Provide them with the police report number, photos, and your itemized list. They can guide you through the claims process and let you know what repairs or replacements are covered.

**6. Secure your home.** After a break-in, check for weak points and make immediate repairs. Replace broken locks, reinforce damaged doors or windows, and consider additional security measures such as cameras or alarms. Sometimes your sense of vulnerability after a crime is as damaging as the loss itself. Taking action to resecure your home can help restore peace of mind.

**7. Share information with neighbors.** If you're comfortable doing so, let trusted neighbors know what happened. They may have seen or heard something helpful, and your experience can alert them to take precautions themselves.

**8. Consider follow-up with police.** If you obtain new information (such as finding a missing item listed for sale online or receiving video footage from a neighbor), contact the investigating officer. Even minor tips can be useful.

Above all, don't blame yourself. Criminals are responsible for their actions. What matters is how you respond—and how you prepare going forward. Use the experience to strengthen your security plan and to stay connected with your community and police.

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