

15 Signs Your House Is Vulnerable to Being Robbed

Nearly four million homes will be burglarized this year. Here's how to make sure yours isn't one of them.

Your front door

This may seem too obvious to be true, but nearly half of burglars enter through the front door. Why? It's easy access! One in four homeowners confesses to frequently leaving the front door unlocked and half do it occasionally, according to a Nationwide Insurance survey. And considering that the majority of burglaries happen between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., knocking on your front door allows thieves to pose as salesmen or delivery people while covertly checking your doorknob. So, yes, it's obvious, but we'll say it again: Lock your door.

Your garbage cans

Setting out the box from your new 60-inch HDTV or high-end gaming console on the curb is basically advertising the fact that those items are in your home. As electronics are the second thing burglars go for (cash is number one), this makes your home a very attractive target. So buy a cheap box cutter and invest the 30 seconds it takes to break down large boxes and bundle them together so their labels can't be seen. Plus, your garbage man will thank you!

Your street

Homes in high-visibility places, like on corner lots, are far less likely to be broken into. There are simply too many potential ways to be seen. But townhomes, houses in the middle of the block, or houses in a cul-de-sac are much better targets. This is especially true if your property backs up to a forest, open lot, or other unguarded area. The trick is to make your house as difficult as possible to access. This means installing high fences and lots of lighting.

Your health

Drugs, particularly prescription painkillers, are quickly becoming one of the most stolen items, according to the most current FBI data. And as heartbreaking as it is to say, both professional thieves and junkies know that people who are elderly or chronically ill often have lots of the good stuff lying around. So, if you are in these circumstances, it might be worth taking extra precautions (such as installing a good home security system) to make your house a less attractive target.

Your windows

First-level entry windows are the second-most common entry point for burglars, after the front door. That's because it's relatively easy to jimmy a window open. And even people who are diligent about locking their doors will often leave a window cracked open, especially in warm weather. Fortunately, this is an easy fix using a window jam that will only allow the pane to be pushed open a few inches.

Your social status

Make friends with those who live around you, or at least a passing acquaintance, as nosy neighbors can be your best allies in home defense. You don't want to tell everyone when you're headed out of town (especially not on the internet) but you do want to tell your neighbors and our constable's vacation watch program so they can keep an eye out for strange behavior or people they don't recognize. Even better, ask them to come pick up your mail (which you can put a hold on through the Post Office) and newspapers, and turn lights on and off while you're gone. Maybe even water your plants depending on your length of vacation. I hire a

neighborhood youth to check my yard daily to take advertising flyers off my front doorknob, pick up anything people toss in my yard and to help my American flag untangled. He gets a few bucks and my house doesn't look like nobody is home.

Your vacation pics

Forty percent of people admit posting pics while out of town, according to Nationwide. And while putting your vacation pictures online might get you a lot of likes, it also notifies your friends and acquaintances that you're now far from home, making your house a prime target for anyone with ill intentions or just an opportunistic streak. Instead, make sure your social media profiles aren't public, and wait to post your beautiful beach selfies until you get home.

Your neighborhood's crime history

Certain neighborhoods are more vulnerable to certain types of crimes, and that is especially true for burglaries. Your LIA Security team works closely with the Precinct 5 Constables office in coordination with HPD to keep track of area crime trends. We then work to adjust schedules, patrols and create heightened awareness when needed. Our law enforcement agencies are always sharing crime trends to be proactive to reduce crime. And through our security notes, like this one, we provide tips to keep you and your valuable property safe.

Your neighborhood's age

Criminals tend to target newer neighborhoods and developments, hoping to take advantage of residents who are new to the area and might not be very familiar with it yet. This is especially true if the area is on the wealthier side. Tight-knit neighborhoods with long-standing residents, where everyone knows one another, are less likely targets. Sticking together as a team with your neighbors is still number one.

Your alarm

Simply having an alarm system won't help you if you don't use it, and 20 percent of alarm owners say they don't bother activating it during the daytime, even though that is when the majority of burglaries occur. Forget the old trick of having a security sign in your front yard—thieves are wise to that game and will still try the doors and windows, banking that you're bluffing or forget to turn it on. You have to arm your alarm every time you leave your home.

Your landscaping

Greenery is great at protecting your privacy from prying neighbors, but it's also great at hiding burglars. Thieves specifically target homes with shrubs or trees that grow thickly around the front or sides of the house, so keep yours trimmed away from walls and below window height. Also, having a well-maintained yard indicates that you're vigilant about your home and likely paying close attention to it.

Your lock

Time is the most important factor in a successful burglary—the average thief is in and out in less than ten minutes! Picking a regular door lock is a piece of cake for most experienced burglars, but most won't want to waste previous minutes messing with a deadbolt or other secondary lock, according to Secure Life. If it takes them more than a minute to get in, chances are the next house will be easier and they'll just move on. For maximum effectiveness, make sure you have the extra locks installed on all exterior doors—not just the front.

Your outdoor lights

At night, a burglar's best friend is a dark home. Fortunately, deterring criminals banking on the cover of darkness may be as simple as turning on your outdoor lights at night. Not a fan of wasting all that electricity? Go with motion-activated floodlights, especially in your backyard or dark corners of your home.

Your mailbox

It takes two minutes online or on the phone to put a hold on your mail while you're gone and subvert the number one signal burglars look for: an overflowing porch or mailbox.

Your pet

Dog owners, you're in luck: About 50 percent of burglars say the mere presence of a dog would keep them from robbing a house. And that goes for small, noisy dogs as well as larger, threatening-looking ones. But if it's clear that your home has a cat—say, you have a cat-themed car bumper sticker, scratching posts visible through your windows, or a kitty door—your home could become a target. Burglars might look for windows that you keep open for the cat or assume that if you're a cat person, you're less likely to have a dog. Plus, some really desperate (and thin) crooks have been known to sneak into houses through the kitty door! So, no matter much you love your cat, it might be safest not to broadcast it to your whole neighborhood.