

Information & Advice

Helping you to help yourself

# Security in Your Home



Help the Aged



The advice in this leaflet is endorsed by Crime Concern. Crime Concern is an independent, not-for-profit crime reduction organisation set up in 1988. Its mission is to work with national and local partners to reduce crime and create safer communities.

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**Sadly, thousands of people every year suffer a burglary or a break-in. Often the crime could have been avoided by simple preventive action. However, you need not be a prisoner in your own home or be afraid to go out because of the fear of crime. The fact is that older people are less likely to be attacked or robbed than people in any other age group. This leaflet explains some simple steps that you can take to make you feel more safe and secure in your home.**

## **Locking up**

Most break-ins are not the work of professional burglars. Many are carried out by opportunist thieves who get into your home through an open or insecure door or window.

**When you go out,** be sure to lock all the outside doors and check that all the windows are closed. A lot of burglaries happen during the afternoon, so even if you are just popping out for a few minutes during the day always lock up fully before you go. Remember to lock garage windows and doors when you leave, particularly if your garage is attached to your house with a door leading to the inside. Keep your ladder and garden tools locked away, as they can be very useful for the opportunist burglar.

**Always keep your keys in a safe place.** The first places that a burglar will look for your door key are under the mat, in a flower pot or on a piece of string through the letter-box. Never leave any keys in the locks or lying around the house.

**If you're out for the evening,** draw the curtains and leave a front room light on (not the hall) and perhaps put on the radio too. The amateur thief will think there is someone in the house.

**If you are going away on holiday** remember to cancel milk, newspapers and other deliveries. To the burglar a dozen milk bottles on the doorstep is an invitation to break in. If you have a garden it is advisable to mow your lawn before you travel. Don't

close curtains or blinds as they are a give-away, especially during the day. You could plug a lamp into a 'time switch' which will automatically turn it on in the evenings when you're away. However don't put the lamp in a room which passers-by can see into when the light is on. If possible ask a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your home for you, even if you are only away for the day. When you travel, remember not to display your home address on the outside of your luggage.



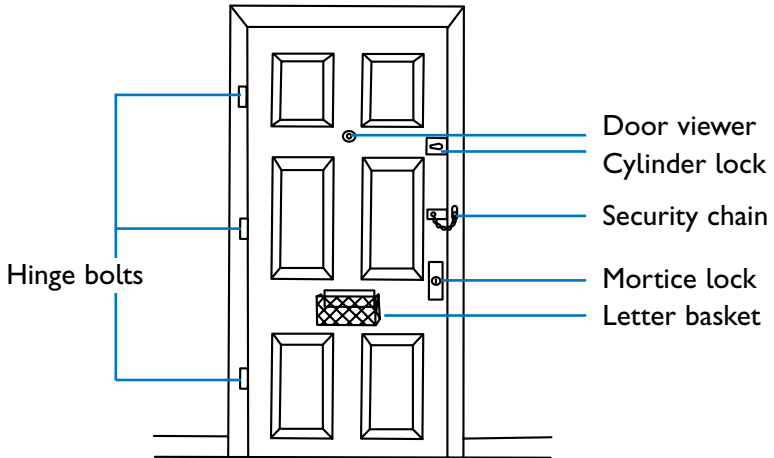
## Making your doors safe

To be secure, a front door made of solid wood, with a strong frame, should have two good locks, a door viewer and a security chain. A letter basket can also be a useful deterrent to tampering with locks through the letter-box.

### Door locks

Ideally, a wooden door should be fitted with:

- one mortice deadlock with at least five levers. It should be labelled with a Kitemark to show that it conforms with British Standard BS 3621 **and**
- one cylinder rim-mounted deadlock (nightlatch)



The gap between the two locks should be one-third of the door's length.

### Mortice locks

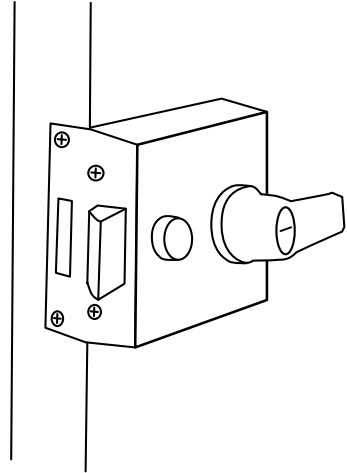
The door must be at least one and three-quarter inches thick for a mortice lock to be fitted. If your door is thinner than this, a mortice lock will weaken it. Instead, fit the door with a ● cylinder rim-mounted deadlock, labelled with BS 3621 and a Kitemark.

### Cylinder rim-mounted locks (nightlatches)

A cylinder rim-mounted lock (also known as a nightlatch or a surface-mounted lock) is fixed onto the inside of the door. A metal cylinder goes through the door and has a keyhole on the outside.

A selection of cylinder rim-mounted locks are available which offer varying levels of security. Ideally, choose a lock with an automatic deadlock and a handle, which can be locked with the key from the inside or outside of the door. The deadlock

will prevent a burglar slipping the latch with a credit card from the outside and locking the handle will stop a thief releasing the deadlock, after breaking glass in the door and reaching in. A cylinder rim-mounted lock that cannot be deadlocked will not provide adequate security on its own, so it should only be used in combination with another lock.



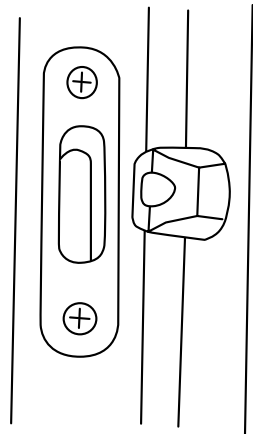
## Bolts

**Mortice security bolts** will

provide extra protection for back or side doors, which are easier targets for a burglar as they are often located out of sight. Mortice security bolts can only be operated by a key from the inside of the door. They offer more protection than the sliding type of bolt which could be opened from the outside, particularly if the door is glass or partly made of glass.

Mortice security bolts should be fitted about nine inches from the top and bottom of the door but if this makes them awkward to use, have them put at a height you can easily reach. It is not advisable to have mortice security bolts on your front door or main exit as they could slow down your escape if there is a fire or other emergency.

On doors that open outwards, it is also a good idea to have **hinge bolts** fitted. Hinge bolts are small cylinders of metal



secured onto the thin edge of the door, where the hinges are fixed. When the door is closed, the cylinders fit into metal rimmed holes in the frame. These bolts provide extra reinforcement which help to protect the door from being forced open at the hinges.

### **Patio doors**

Patio doors should be secured with specially designed patio door locks, fitted at the top and bottom of the door. Some patio doors can easily be lifted off their runners. To prevent the door being removed fit anti-lift locks or other anti-lift devices.

Make sure all your doors are secure - French windows, back and side doors are vulnerable too.

### **Making your windows safe**

Open windows are an invitation to the burglar but closed windows fitted with window locks are an effective deterrent. It is rare for a burglar to break a window in order to climb through the broken glass. It is more likely he will reach through and open it, or a nearby window, by releasing the catch. Remember to remove keys from locked windows. Keep them in a safe place out of sight and reach, not on the windowsill.

### **PVCu and metal framed windows or doors**

If you're thinking of buying PVCu or metal framed windows and doors make sure they come with good built-in locks as it may not be possible to add better locks once they're installed. Ask if the door or windows comply with any British Standards which relate to security and, if you are buying a PVCu door,



think about getting one which is fitted with a 'multi-point locking system'.

## Fitting locks

It is advisable to get locks fitted by a qualified locksmith. Check if they are a member of the Master Locksmiths Association. (See page 17).

## Help with getting and fitting security devices

There are schemes all around the UK offering services such as providing and fitting home security equipment like door locks and chains to older people in need. Help the Aged run a **HandyVan Scheme** in selected areas of the UK. To find out if a scheme is running in your area call 01255 473 999.

To find out if there are any other schemes of this sort in the area where you live, contact:

- your local Crime Prevention Officer **or**
- a local Age Concern group

Your local council may also have information on schemes available in your area. To find the telephone number, look on your Council Tax bill.

## Extra security

In addition to locks, there are other more sophisticated security devices available such as special exterior lighting and intruder alarms. Ask your local Crime Prevention Officer or Neighbourhood Watch group if you require further information on these. (See pages 15 and 17).

## Insurance

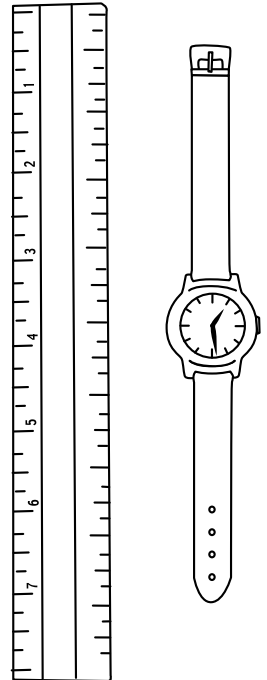
It is sensible to have good insurance cover to at least relieve you of the financial worry of replacing stolen items. Many insurance companies offer reduced premiums for people with good home security and to members of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. Help the Aged operates an insurance scheme especially for older people. For further information, contact **Help the Aged Insurance Services** on 0800 41 31 80.

## Marking your possessions

Your valuables are more likely to be found by the police if you keep a record of serial numbers and mark your property with your postcode. This can be done by etching, die-stamping or writing on them with a security marker which can only be read under an ultra-violet light. Your local Crime Prevention Officer or Neighbourhood Watch group can give you details of suppliers (see pages 15 and 17). They can also tell you where to get a window sticker to warn thieves that your property is marked. In addition, keep a full list of items you value, along with descriptions and colour photographs. This can help the police return stolen property to you if it is recovered.

## What to do if you are burgled

Making your home as secure as possible will cut the risk of burglary. However, if



you do get home and think that you may have been broken into, do not go inside as the intruder may still be there. Instead call the police from a neighbour's phone and wait until they arrive. If you are certain the burglar has gone, you can go inside; but do not touch anything and contact the police straight away. After the police have gone, you will need to contact your insurance company. If they ask for the crime reference number, you should be able to get it from the police the following day.

### **Victim Support Schemes**

Being burgled, or robbed on the street, can be a very upsetting experience. Victim Support Schemes provide practical help and emotional support to people who have been victims of crime. You can call their Victim Supportline on 0845 30 30 900 or get in touch with your local branch. Ask for the address at your local police station or contact:

#### **Victim Support (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)**

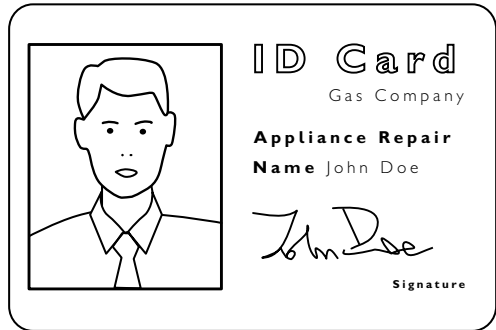
Cranmer House  
39 Brixton Road  
London SW9 6DZ  
Tel: 020 7735 9166  
Web: [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)

#### **Victim Support (Scotland)**

15/23 Hardwell Close  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9RX  
Tel: 0131 668 4486  
Web: [www.victimsupportsco.demon.co.uk](http://www.victimsupportsco.demon.co.uk)

## Doorstep callers

Often, and quite unnecessarily, people feel embarrassed about refusing to let someone in at the door. Most people who are likely to come knocking at your door will be genuine but it is sensible to take precautions.



Fit a security chain and door viewer to your door. This way you can see who is at the door in safety. When there is a knock at the door, use your door viewer to see who it is. If you don't know them, put the door chain on before you open it. Ask to see their identification and look at it carefully. If the caller is genuine, they will not mind this at all. Look at their clothing; most official callers wear a uniform with their organisation's badge on it.

If you are still unsure, telephone the organisation they claim to represent. Look in the telephone directory or at a recent bill received from the organisation rather than ringing the number they give you.

Shut the door whilst telephoning. If you don't have a telephone or if, after telephoning, you are still not sure that the caller is genuine, send them away. You can always ask them to come back when someone will be with you. Do this particularly if there is more than one person on your doorstep - it might be difficult to keep an eye on both of them if you let them in. Burglars come in all shapes and sizes (including children) and often work in pairs - one will keep

you talking while the other one steals from you. When they have gone and you have closed the door, take the door chain off again. This is important for your own safety, should anyone need to open the door to get to you in an emergency.

**If you are still suspicious, dial 999 and ask for the police.**

Many organisations will make an appointment with you before they visit. Ask your gas, electricity and water companies if they run a password scheme. If they do, a password can be arranged between you and the company. When one of their workers calls they will say the password so that you know they are genuine. This is particularly useful if you're partially sighted and can't check identification cards.

In some areas, Help the Aged can provide a door alert button which you can press if an unexpected caller is at your door. When you press the button, you will instantly be connected to an operator in a 24 hour response centre who will be able to support you as you answer the door. For information on which areas are covered or to find out how the service works call **Help the Aged SeniorLink** on 01255 473 999.

Help the Aged also produce a useful information sheet no.19 'Beware of Bogus Callers' which gives tips on how to deal with people trying to sell to you in your own home. For a free copy contact the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page.

## Keeping up appearances

As you get older you might find it becomes more difficult to maintain your garden and general outward appearance of your home. Unfortunately one of the ways that bogus callers target older people is by spotting properties that look a little neglected. For instance an untidy garden, cracked and peeling paint and general poor maintenance could go to show that an older person might be living there.

If you do not have any friends or family who can help you to maintain your property you may be able to get help or advice from local groups such as Age Concern, local Care and Repair schemes or Volunteer Bureaux. They might be able to provide practical help or tell you about schemes being run locally.

## Security checklist

- Keep all windows and doors locked and bolted (where possible) while you are out. When you lock up at night, keep the keys to hand so that you can get out easily if you need to
- Always use a door chain and door viewer when answering the door
- Check the identity of all callers
- Never let a stranger into your home unless you are confident that they are genuine
- Keep your keys in a safe place
- Cancel milk and regular deliveries before going away
- Don't keep large amounts of cash at home
- Leave some lights on when you go out at night
- Speak to your local Crime Prevention Officer about any worries

- Always take wise precautions - and remember, **crimes against older people are rare**

## Further advice

### Age Concern

To find out where your local group is, call Age Concern on 0800 00 99 66, or look in the phone book under 'A'.

### Crime Concern

Crime Concern is an independent, not-for-profit crime reduction organisation set up in 1988. Its mission is to work with national and local partners to reduce crime and create safer communities. For practical advice on crime prevention visit their community website: [www.safer-community.net](http://www.safer-community.net)

### Crime Concern

Beaver House

147-150 Victoria Road

Swindon

Wiltshire SN1 3UY

Tel: 01793 863 500

Web site: [www.crimeconcern.org.uk](http://www.crimeconcern.org.uk)

### Crime Prevention Officer

A Crime Prevention Officer can give you expert advice on making your home more secure. He or she can assess your needs for security devices and tell you how to get hold of them. Contact the Crime Prevention Officer at your local police station for further information.

## Home Improvement Agencies

These are set up to help older homeowners to organise repairs and improvements to their homes.

In England contact:

### Foundations

#### **Bleaklow House**

Howard Town Mill

Glossop

Derbyshire SK13 8HT

Tel: 01457 891 909

[wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com)

In Northern Ireland contact:

### **Fold Housing**

3 Redburn Square

Hollywood

Co. Down BT18 9HZ

Tel: 028 90 428 314

[www.foldgroup.co.uk](http://www.foldgroup.co.uk)

In Scotland contact:

### **Care and Repair Forum Scotland**

236 Clyde Street

Glasgow G1 4JH

Tel: 0141 221 9879

[www.care-repair-scot.org.uk](http://www.care-repair-scot.org.uk)

In Wales contact:

### **Care and Repair Cymru**

Norbury House

Norbury Road

Fairwater

Cardiff CF5 3AS

Tel: 029 2057 6286

[www.careandrepair.org.uk](http://www.careandrepair.org.uk)



## **The Home Office**

The Home Office publishes a useful handbook called 'Your Practical Guide To Crime Prevention' (quote ref: PG1). For a free copy, call 0870 241 4680.

## **Master Locksmiths Association**

This is the professional body of locksmiths. You can obtain a free list of members by contacting:

### **Master Locksmiths Association**

5d Great Central Way

Woodford Halse

Daventry

Northamptonshire NN11 3PZ

Tel: 0800 783 1498

Web site: [www.locksmiths.co.uk](http://www.locksmiths.co.uk)

## **Neighbourhood Watch**

Neighbourhood Watch schemes are self-help groups that work in partnership with the police, local authorities and other agencies involved in community safety to prevent crime. They can offer valuable neighbourly help and advice. Ask your local Crime Prevention Officer if there is a scheme in your area and if not, why not help to set one up?

The National Neighbourhood Watch Association is the national charity that supports, promotes and represents the Neighbourhood Watch movement. It can offer advice and information on many different aspects of Neighbourhood Watch and community safety.

### **National Neighbourhood Watch Association**

Schomberg House

80-82 Pall Mall

London SW1Y 5HF

Tel: 020 7772 3348

Web site: [www.neighbourhoodwatch.net](http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net)

Volunteer Bureaux can often offer help with gardening.

### **Volunteer Development England**

New Oxford House

16 Waterloo Street

Birmingham B2 5UG

Tel: 0121 633 4555. Web: [www.navb.org.uk](http://www.navb.org.uk)

### **Wales Council for Voluntary Action**

Baltic House, Mount Stuart Square

Cardiff CF10 5FH

Tel: 029 2043 1700. Web: [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)

### **Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action**

61 Duncairn Gardens

Belfast BT15 2GB

Tel: 028 9087 7777. Web: [www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org)

### **Volunteer Development Scotland**

Stirling Enterprise Park

Stirling FK7 7RP

Tel: 01786 479 593.

Web: [www.vds.org.uk](http://www.vds.org.uk)

**The following page can act as a useful reminder if cut out and pinned or stuck next to the front door.**

## When answering the door

- **Check** to see who it is by using your door viewer or window
- **Think** before you open the door. Put the chain on if you don't recognise your visitor
- **Ask** who they are and what they want, if you don't know them
- **Look** at their identity card and keep the chain on
- **Note** their name, company and telephone number
- **Check** them by phoning their company
- **If you are still unsure**, ask the caller to return later. Arrange for a friend or relative to be present when they return

### **IF IN DOUBT KEEP THEM OUT**

Most callers are genuine and won't mind your sensible precautions.

**Note here the telephone numbers of your local services:**

Electricity:

Gas:

Water:

Telephone:

Local social services department:

Local council:

Local police station:

**IF IN DOUBT DON'T HESITATE:  
DIAL 999 AND ASK FOR THE POLICE.**

# Help the Aged produces a range of free advice leaflets for older people

## Financial Leaflets

- Can You Claim It?
- Check Your Tax
- Claiming Disability Benefits
- Managing Your Savings
- Questions on Pensions
- Thinking About Money

## Housing and Home Safety Leaflets

- Fire
- Help in Your Home
- Housing Matters
- Keep Out the Cold
- Living Alone Safely
- Residential Care
- Safety in Your Home
- Security in Your Home

## Health Leaflets

- Bereavement
- Better Hearing
- Better Sight
- Bladder and Bowel Weakness
- Fight the Flu
- Fitter Feet
- Healthy Bones
- Healthy Eating
- Keeping Mobile
- Managing Your Medicines
- Shingles

Leaflets are free of charge and available in single copies for individuals or in large quantities for organisations. You can get leaflets in the following ways:

- by writing to the Information Resources Team
- by email on [adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk)
- by faxing on 020 7239 1839

Help the Aged  
207-221 Pentonville Road  
London N1 9UZ  
Tel: 020 7278 1114  
Web: [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)

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