

Burglary Prevention Tips

Burglaries in Austin neighborhoods cost residents over 1.3 million per year in loss of property alone. Often burglaries are committed by individuals who take advantage of easy targets. Don't make it easy for them.

1. Install a deadbolt lock.

Deadbolts are usually locked with a key from the outside and a thumb turn on the inside. The cylinder should be pick resistant. Lock your doors every time you leave the house, even if you're leaving for just a few minutes during the day. The most popular times for residential burglaries are weekday daylight hours. In over 1/3 of burglaries, there is no forcible entry--someone forgot to lock the doors.

2. Install solid doors.

Outside doors should be metal or solid hardwood and at least 1 3/4 inches thick. Frames must be made of equally strong material and each door must fit its frame securely. It is also recommended that residents replace the smaller (usually 1") screws on the lock's strike plate with longer screws that attach to the more solid interior door frame in the wall (versus simply screwing into the trim around the door.)

3. Keep garage doors closed and locked.

Open doors and windows are commonly checked by burglars looking for an opportunity.

4. Secure sliding doors and windows.

Cut a broom-handle to the length of the bottom track so that the window or door will not slide open when forced. Also, drill one hole through both casings and sliding window and insert a nail or pin.

5. Secure sash windows.

To prevent wooden sash windows from being pried open, drill a downward sloping hole into the top of the bottom window through and into the bottom of the top window and insert a pin or nail. To prevent aluminum sash windows from being broken into, purchase a track lock that blocks the window track.

6. Mark your property.

Mark your valuables with an engraver. Marking your property serves as a deterrent to would-be burglars and it helps police in identifying and returning stolen property. Make a property identification list. Put warning stickers on doors and windows.

7. Purchase a burglar alarm.

A home alarm system can be a very effective burglary deterrent and fit into many people's needs. Remember to test your system monthly.

8. Leave a light on.

When leaving on trips, leave a light on in the bathroom. In the bedroom, attach a lamp and radio to a 24-hour electric timer set to go on at dusk and off at your bedtime. Close bedroom drapes or blinds.

9. Use proper exterior lighting.

Place a light over every door. Double cones lights on each corner of the house will also light up windows.

10. Work together with your neighbors.

When you are going to be away, tell trusted neighbors and ask them to watch your property. Have neighbors maintain your yard. When on vacation, have someone cut grass. Shrubbery should not hide neighbors' view of windows or doors. Have someone pick up newspapers and mail. Tell neighbors to call police if they notice anything suspicious.

11. Maintain a current list of the serial numbers from your property.

Write down the serial numbers from valuables throughout your house. Keep copies of the list in multiple areas so at least one will be accessible. **DON'T keep the only list on items such as computers or laptops as those items are frequently stolen by thieves.** Doing this simple thing dramatically increases the chances that your property is recovered if it is ever stolen.