

Staying safe at home

- Make sure your house or flat is secure. Always secure outside doors. Fit barrel locks top and bottom. If you have to use a key, keep it in a safe place away from the door where you can find it quickly in an emergency – you may need to use the door in the event of fire.
- If other people such as previous tenants could still have keys that fit, change the locks. Don't give keys to workmen or tradesmen, as they can easily make copies.
- If you wake to hear the sound of an intruder, only you can decide how best to handle the situation. You may want to lie quietly to avoid attracting attention to yourself, in the hope that they will leave. Or you may feel more confident if you switch on the lights and make a lot of noise by moving about. Even if you're on your own, call out loudly to an imaginary companion – most burglars will flee empty-handed rather than risking a confrontation. Ring the police as soon as it's safe for you to do so. A telephone extension in your bedroom will make you feel more secure as it allows you to call the police immediately, without alerting the intruder.
- Draw your curtains after dark and if you think there is a prowler outside – dial 999
- Use only your surname and initials in the telephone directory and on the doorplate. That way a stranger won't know if a man or a woman lives there.
- If you see signs of a break-in at your home, like a smashed window or open door, don't go in. Go to a neighbour and call the police.
- If you are selling your home, don't show people around on your own. Ask your estate agent to send a representative with anyone who wants to view your house.
- When you answer the phone, simply say 'hello'; don't give your number. If the caller claims to have a wrong number, ask him or her to repeat the number required. Never reveal any information about yourself to a stranger and never say you are alone in the house.
- If you receive an abusive or threatening phone call, put the receiver down beside the phone, and walk away. Come back a few minutes later and replace the receiver; don't listen to see if the caller is still there. Don't say anything – an emotional reaction is just what the caller wants. This allows the caller to say what he or she wants to say, without causing distress to you. If the calls continue, tell the police and the operator and keep a record of the date, time and content of each phone call. This may help the authorities trace the caller.

Staying safe when you're out and about

- If you often walk home in the dark, get a personal attack alarm from a DIY store or ask your local crime prevention officer where you can buy one. Carry it in your hand so you can use it immediately to scare off an attacker. Make sure it is designed to continue sounding if it's dropped or falls to the ground.
- Carry your bag close to you with the clasp facing inwards. Carry your house keys in your pocket. If someone grabs your bag, let it go. If you hang on, you could get hurt. Remember your safety is more important than your property.
- If you think someone is following you, check by crossing the street – more than once if necessary – to see if he follows. If you are still worried, get to the

nearest place where there are other people – a pub or anywhere with a lot of lights on – and call the police. Avoid using an enclosed phonebox in the street, as the attacker could trap you inside.

- If you regularly go jogging or cycling, try to vary your route and time. Stick to well-lit roads with pavements. On commons and parklands, keep to main paths and open spaces where you can see and be seen by other people – avoid wooded areas. If you wear a personal stereo, remember you can't hear traffic, or somebody approaching behind you.
- Don't take short-cuts through dark alleys, parks or across waste ground. Walk facing the traffic so a car cannot pull up behind you unnoticed.
- If a car stops and you are threatened, scream and shout, and set off your personal attack alarm if you have one. Get away as quickly as you can. This will gain you vital seconds and make it more difficult for the car driver to follow. If you can, make a mental note of the number and description of the car. Write down details as soon as possible afterwards.
- Don't hitch-hike or take lifts from strangers.
- Cover up expensive looking jewellery.
- Self-defence and safety awareness classes may help you feel more secure. Ask your local police or your work if they have classes.

Staying safe on public transport

- Try to stay away from isolated bus stops, especially after dark.
- On an empty bus, sit near the driver or conductor.
- On a train, sit in a compartment where there are several other people – ideally one which will be near the exit of your destination. Check to see where the emergency chain is.

When driving

- Before a long trip, make sure your vehicle is in good condition.
- Plan how to get to your destination before leaving, and stay on main roads if you can.
- Make sure you have enough money and petrol. Carry a spare petrol can.
- Keep change and a phone card in case you need to make a telephone call. Carry a torch.
- Before you leave, tell anyone you are planning to meet what time you think you will get there, and the route you are taking.
- If someone tries to flag you down, drive on until you come to a service station, or somewhere busy, and call the police. Do not pick up hitch-hikers.
- Keep doors locked when driving and keep any bag, carphone or valuables out of sight. If you have the window open, only wind it down a little. Don't wind it down far enough to allow someone to reach in while you are stopped in traffic.
- If you think you are being followed, try to alert others by flashing your lights and sounding your horn. Make as much noise as possible. If you can, keep driving until you come to a busy place.
- After dark, park in a well-lit, busy place. Look around before you get out. If you're parking in daylight, but coming back for your car at night, think about how things will look in the dark.

- Have your key ready when you go back to your car. Make sure there is no-one in the car.
- If your car develops problems, find a telephone. On motorways follow the marker arrows to the closest phone. They are never placed any more than a mile apart, on opposite sides of the motorway. **Never** cross the carriageway to use a phone.
- While on the hard shoulder or telephoning, keep a sharp look-out and don't accept lifts from strangers – wait for the police or breakdown service. Don't wait in the car – there is a high risk of an accident. Wait on the embankment nearby with the front passenger door open. If someone approaches you or you feel threatened, lock yourself in the car and speak to them through a small gap in the window.
- If you frequently have to travel after dark, or if your job involves visiting people at home, eg a health visitor or a district nurse, consider getting a mobile phone or ask your employer to provide one.

Your Home

Home security is the best way to reduce your chances of being burgled. A lot of burglaries are spur of the moment, as a burglar may see an open window or other easy point of entry and take their chance.

Basic tips:

- When you go out, always lock the door and close the windows - even if you are just going out for a short time.
- Window locks, especially on older windows, will help stop people getting in (and remember, a burglar is less likely to break in if they have to smash a window).
- If you have deadlocks, use them. They make it harder for a thief to get out again. But don't leave the key near the door, or in an obvious place.
- Don't leave spare keys outside, or in a garage or shed, and put car keys or garage keys out of sight in the house.
- Use timers for lights and radios if you need to be away from home overnight. They will create the impression that someone is in.
- Visible burglar alarms, good lighting, and carefully directed and limited security lighting can act as deterrents. But make sure that lights don't disturb your neighbours, and that alarms turn off after 20 minutes.
- Fences at the back of the house may make this area more secure, but walls and solid fencing may let a thief break in without being seen. A good compromise is chain-link fencing, or trellises with prickly shrubs.
- Fitting a 'spy hole' allows you to see who is at the door. Having a door chain means you can open the door a little way to talk to them.