

Supplement to “Interview with a Thief”:

Appear to Be at Home - Burglars will avoid entering a property where the owners are at home and will look for houses that appear empty. Take simple measures such as leaving a light or a radio on to make your house look lived in. If you are going away for a long period of time, ask a neighbour to empty your letterbox, collect the newspaper and take out your bins. Some burglars will call your home phone number to see if anyone answers. It is therefore a good idea to have your phone line forwarded to your mobile so that you can always answer.

Hide Your Valuables - Make sure your important and valuable items are not visible from windows. Burglars will choose to enter homes where they know they are going to be rewarded, so hiding wallets and phones and installing curtains or roller blinds will make it harder for thieves to see items of interest.

Inside Your Home

The weakest point in nearly every home is the wooden door frame, Kirkpatrick said. When enough pressure is applied, the average person will be able to weaken the frame and eventually gain access to the home.

- Install a strike plate — a steel strip that runs the length of the door frame and reinforces the lock. It's a less-expensive alternative to replacing a wooden frame.
- Blinds should be pointed upward so residents can easily see out a window while limiting the view of a burglar.
- Replace a standard peephole with one that provides a 180-degree view. For less than \$10, that fix could help residents spot attackers hidden in blind spots.

Free safety survey

Most law-enforcement agencies will provide free home surveys to residents concerned with crime prevention. Call your local law-enforcement agency to learn more about the service and schedule a survey of your home.

Think Like a Thief: Protect Your Home From Burglars

Just as anticipating your opponent's next move in a game makes you a more difficult competitor, understanding how thieves think makes you a more difficult burglary target.

Burglars typically live close by and only spend only a few minutes before deciding to break in or not. Thieves are looking for homes that have easy, unhindered access that they can get into undetected.

Easy Access

The average burglary takes no more than ten minutes. The thief is looking to get into the house easily, find valuables and get out. Lock yourself out of your house, then walk around and look at the following areas to see if there are any vulnerabilities a thief could easily expose.

Doors & Windows - The most common entry point for burglars and thieves is the front door. Other common points of entry include the first floor windows, back door and garage door. Make sure your entry points are secured whenever you leave the home.

Locks - Use high-quality locks on your doors and windows. Deadbolts are a must for your doors and locks on all your windows are essential. It is a good idea to install motion and [glass sensors](#) at each entry point as well.

Valuables - Don't put your valuables in easy-to-guess places like your bedroom. Put rarely used valuables in a safety deposit box and be creative with hiding places for those you keep in your home. Don't leave high-dollar items visible from the windows.

Hide-a-keys - Avoid the temptation to hide a spare key under a mat or rock outside your home. No matter how clever the hiding spot seems, thieves know where to look. You may be leaving them an invitation to easily burglarize your home.

Undetected

Thieves do not want to be seen. Burglars look for houses that are dark and have plenty of hiding places where it's difficult to be detected. Take a look around your home, both during the day and at night, and see if you can eliminate easy hiding places.

Outdoor lighting - Many robberies happen at night. Thieves can easily go unnoticed by neighbors and passersby. Homes with little or no [outdoor lighting](#) are easier targets for the same reason. Install motion-sensing floodlights and solar-powered pathway lights along your driveway and entrance.

Security System - Install a [security system](#) and make sure you have a sign posted in your yard so anyone casing the home knows your house is not an easy target. Studies have shown that homes with security systems are three times less likely to be broken into.

Landscaping - Keep your bushes and trees trimmed away from your doors and windows. Large plants serve as perfect hiding places for thieves to sit while they attempt to jimmy your locks.

Activity - If you go on vacation, have a neighbor visit and pick up your mail and newspaper. The more activity that occurs at your home, the less likely it will be broken into. Also, don't post your whereabouts online. You're broadcasting to thieves that you're not home!

Thieves already know what to look for. With these tips, now you do to and you can make your home more secure.

If you follow all of these guidelines, your risk of being a target of burglary is greatly reduced. However, nothing can completely prevent it from happening. It is important to make sure you have adequate home insurance coverage that will protect you in the unfortunate case of burglary and help provide some comfort throughout the painful experience.

(Source: William Ross from a column by Desiree Stennett, Orlando Sentinel)

