

10 steps to increase home security

Step 1: Join Neighbourhood Watch

If you are not an online member of Neighbourhood Watch WAonline, you may like to join and receive emails about crime prevention in your local area from your local police. If you are already an online member, you may like to consider becoming a street representative. Maybe ask your neighbours to do the same – your neighbours are your most valuable security asset.

Step 2: Marking of valuables

The engraving of your driver's licence number on household property is strongly recommended. Engrave the letters "WA" before the numbers to indicate Western Australia, e.g., WA 1234567. When the engraved item is sold or disposed of, engrave the letter "S" after your driver's licence number to indicate change of ownership. To obtain an engraver please contact your local crime prevention officer (see www.police.wa.gov.au/ Local Police page).

Step 3: Fences, trees and shrubs

Your trees and shrubs should be trimmed or the front fence lowered to allow a clear view of your house. This will remove hiding places for the "would be" offender and improve your neighbour's visibility should you need assistance.

Step 4: Backyard security

Consider putting up fences or other barriers, such as garage doors at either side of your home. This will make it more difficult for an offender to enter and work in the "safety" of your backyard. Also ensure that all tools are stored away and outbuildings are locked securely.

Step 5: Lighting

Good lighting, such as flood lamps, should be installed to minimise hiding spots for the "would be" offender, particularly while you are at home. "Motion sensor" or "reactive" lighting is excellent for this and is quite inexpensive to buy and install.

Step 6: Protect your power supply

Have a viewing window installed in the lid of your meter box, and a Western Power approved padlock or key lock installed. Circuit breaker switches installed within the home are also an advantage, but the meter box must still be locked.

Step 7: Door locks

Have door locks fitted without delay. Normal key in the knob locks, which are fitted to most homes, are a burglar's delight. These locks must be backed up with a security lock. Fit a key operated lock (commonly referred to as a patio door bolt) to aluminium sliding doors. Do not rely upon manufacturer fitted locks or catches.

Step 8: Window locks

Windows that are not fitted with key operated locks are an easy target for offenders, and will offer little or no resistance. Key operated locks provide a much greater level of security than manufacturer fitted catches, there is a lock for every type of window. Remember, do not leave the keys in the locks.

Step 9: Security screens and doors

Have security screens fitted to the doors or portion of the windows that are left open for ventilation. This will prevent an offender from "walking in" on you. Remember, although security screens and doors increase your security, they are for use when you are at home. Ensure the doors are "key locked" as the latch (snib) device on many doors does not achieve maximum security.

Step 10: Alarms

Consider the installation of an Australian Standard 2201 approved burglar alarm. Intruders are far less likely to break into a house with an alarm system. An alarm will usually only tell you after an offender has entered your home. For immediate response to an alarm, the use of a monitoring service will make arrangements for your premises to be checked. All security products should be installed by licensed security installers.

More tips and hints

When leaving your home, ask yourself, "Does it look like this house is empty?" If it does, try to make it look like someone is home.

If going out at night, leave on inside lights which you would normally leave on if you were at home. A house in darkness is a prime target for a burglar.

Consider using timing devices to turn on the television, radio or lights at selected times.

Ask your neighbours to keep an eye on your property, especially if you are going on holiday.

Participate in Neighbourhood Watch.

Consider installing movement activated (motion sensor) external lights.

Secure windows by fitting locks, safety film, security screens or external roller shutters.

Don't leave blinds or curtains closed – it makes the house look empty.

Ensure all windows and doors are locked before leaving your home.

If you intend returning home after dark, leave a light on inside and a radio or the television. Remember the lights should be visible from the street and reveal a room that is apparently occupied.

Don't leave messages on your door. All you are doing is advertising that you aren't there!

Don't leave packages uncollected. If unavoidable, arrange for a neighbour to take delivery or collect packages.

Protect your credit cards and cheque book. Destroy useless credit cards and carry others with you when going out. Keep a record of all credit card numbers and notify the company if lost or stolen.

Keep cheque books and credit cards in a safe place (a kitchen "bill and letter" holder or the glove box of your car are **not** safe places – it is the first place offenders will look).

Use a home safe or a safety deposit box for smaller valuables and documents.

Have a letter box large enough for a normal day's mail.

Separate car and house keys when you leave your car at a garage.

Don't give keys to workmen.

Don't leave identification (name/address) on your key-ring, a driver's licence number is recommended.

Always change exterior locks when you move into a new home. Throw away old keys. If you lose a house key, change the lock or have it re-keyed immediately.

Don't tell a burglar when and where to strike. Avoid the use of addresses in classified or other forms or advertising.

Be cautious in conversation.

If you are working in the backyard, or an isolated part of your house, lock the front door. Homes have been entered unlawfully while the owners have been occupied out of sight.

NEVER use Miss, Mrs, or Ms on mail boxes or in the telephone directory.

Report broken street lights to Western Power and keep your own external lights in working order.

Pet doors should be restricted to cats or small dogs.

Have a telephone extension in your bedroom. This will allow you to quickly and quietly call police (131 444) to report suspicious activities, ie. prowlers, unusual behaviour etc. Call 000 for a life-threatening emergency. For general enquiries contact your local police on 131 444.

Make your property unique. Identify your property with your driver's licence number (eg WA 1234567) by using engravers supplied free through Neighbourhood Watch. It can then be identified as (1) stolen and (2) yours, if recovered.

Record serial numbers of all valuable property, keep this information in a safe place.

Never let a stranger into your home, always check their identity first. All public service employees, door-to-door salespersons and collectors carry identity cards and are required to show them.