

How Secure Is My Home?

A guide to help you assess how secure your home is from the possibility of burglary.



Developed by



How Secure Is My Home? - Introduction

Welcome

This on-line tool is designed to help you assess how secure your home is from the possibility of burglary.

Research shows that burglars are less likely to try and get into a secure home; they will, where possible, move on to a home that has fewer security precautions.

This assessment tool will give you peace of mind that you have done all that you can to make your home safe.

There are four sections in the assessment, which relate to security in the home:

Doors, The Exterior, Windows and Protecting your Valuables.

Think about your home in relation to the questions in each section, they will help you reflect on the security points in, and around your own home. Then read the feedback – it will suggest some simple steps to ensure that your home is more secure – reducing the possibility of you experiencing a domestic burglary.

How Secure Is My Home? - Menu

Section 01: Doors

This Section helps you assess the level of security of the Doors in Your Home

Section 02: Exterior

This Section helps you assess the level of security of the Exterior of Your Home

Section 03: Windows

This Section helps you assess the level of security of the Windows in Your Home

Section 04: Valuables

This Section helps you assess the level of security of the Valuables in Your Home

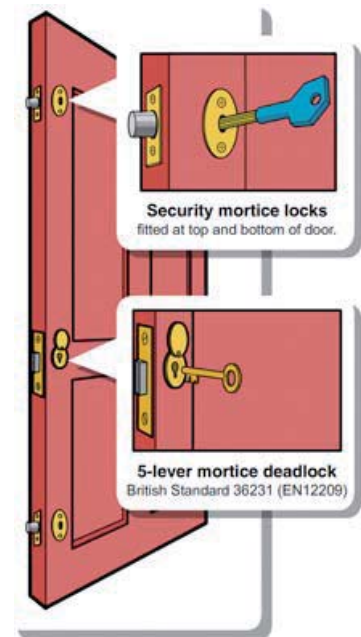
Section 01 - Doors

Exterior doors include French windows, patio doors and internal garage doors.

1. Are your front and back doors strong and safe – 44mm thick?



2. Are the frames of your doors in good condition?
3. If you have a connecting door between your garage and your house, does this have a mortice deadlock?
4. Do exterior doors have a mortice deadlock that conforms to BS3621 or the new BS EN 12209 security standards?
5. Do your exterior doors have glass panels?
6. Do you have locks at the top and bottom of French Windows / Patio Doors?
7. Is the letterbox a good distance from your door lock?



Section 01 - Doors Feedback

Remember your doors and windows are a main access point for intruders, increasing the security at these points will help add to the time a burglar will need to gain entry.

Always lock your door – even if you are only leaving your house for a short while. Look at your doors - are they securely fixed to the wall and in good condition? Otherwise good locks are useless.

If your door is in not in good condition, replace it when you can with a door at least 44mm thick, which allows for a mortice lock to be fitted. In the meantime, if your door is thinner than this, **you can fit a rim deadlock.**

Don't forget it's a waste of time fitting door security if you don't use it when you leave the house.

If you do not have a mortice deadlock on exterior doors your home may be vulnerable – **good locks are vital to putting burglars off!**

The doorframe should be as strong as the door.

Is the frame coming away from the wall?

Does it look fragile?

There is no point in having a strong front door and lock if the frame is held on by one screw.

Ensure that the frame is securely fitted using strong screws or bolts.

Ideally all external doors including any doors from the garage to the house should have three points of resistance – top, middle and bottom of door.

Make sure your garage is always locked, especially if it has a connecting door to the house. A burglar could get in and work on the inner door without being seen.

Hinge bolts would be recommended for outward swinging doors. They should be located 100-150mm below the top hinge and similarly above the bottom.

Not having good locks on French Windows or Doors will have resulted in a 'red light' scoring here too. Having the appropriate locks at the top, middle and bottom of French Windows or Doors will provide suitable security.

Section 01 - Doors Feedback cont.

French Doors

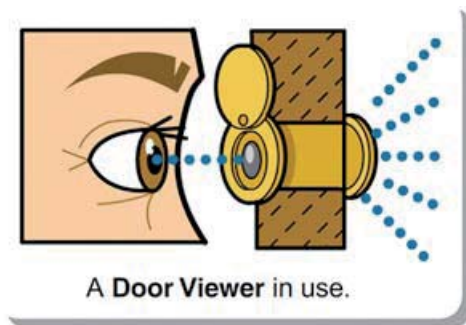
Both doors should be fitted with either mortice rack bolts (bolts fitted within the door and operated internally by a threaded key) or surface-mounted locking bolts (push to lock, key to open). **Make sure they are rigid on installation.**

Patio Doors

Entry through a patio door is a common means of entry and therefore, unless the doors are fitted with a multi-locking system, it is best to fit extra locks. Most such locks are push to lock and key to open and are therefore easy to use.

Some patio doors can be lifted off their track. If you can lift it more than 1/4" (6mm) simply screw wood blocks of a suitable depth into the channel above the opening door to prevent this.

Door viewers help people see who is at the front door before they open it. They are especially useful for vulnerable groups such as older people.



Don't have letterboxes positioned near locks – a burglar can slip his hand through and open it.

Section 02 - Exterior

Good security begins on the outside – with very simple measures that will delay a burglar or put a burglar off!

1. Are there any potential hiding places for a burglar round your home?
2. Do you have a secure fence at the back of your home?
3. Does your garage / shed contain tools that are easy to access?
4. Does your garage door have strong locks?
5. Do you have a burglar alarm that is clearly visible from the outside of the house?
6. Do you have good exterior lighting outside your home?
7. Do you have a trellis, pergola or gazebo archway close to an accessible roof of your home?

Section 02 - Exterior Feedback

First Impressions... Remember – the outside of your home is the first level of assessment for a burglar – make it look secure!

A home that looks well cared for will seem more difficult to break into – this could simply mean tidying the garden, repainting window frames or...

Close gates and make them secure – make sure they can't be lifted off their hinges!

Hedges, shrubs and walls in the front garden should be no higher than 3ft or 1 metre, in order to avoid giving a burglar a screen behind which they can conceal themselves. Thorny bushes can be planted on the perimeter and below ground floor windows to deter burglars.

The use of gravel on paths or driveways prevents a silent approach, and can alert the occupier to someone's presence.

Not having a secure fence at the back of your home can present an opportunity to a burglar, so **Fence it**: Low hedges/fences at the front give maximum visibility while high fences or walls at the back provide good security.

Put it where you can see it: Make sure sheds have strong locks and clearly visible!

Garages and sheds are targeted as an easy option, **fit strong padlocks to shed and garage doors**. Alternatively, alarms can be fitted to both, and can even be wired into the existing house alarm. Remember that leaving garden tools lying around makes the burglar's life easy - they should always be locked away securely in a shed or garage. If you have ladders, they should be secured with a chain or padlock to a strong post or wall.

If you can, install a burglar alarm – opportunist burglars tend to avoid houses where they can see one - and your insurance premium may also be reduced!

Throw some light on the subject – good lighting is an essential deterrent. Make sure you have constant lighting at the front and security lights at the rear.

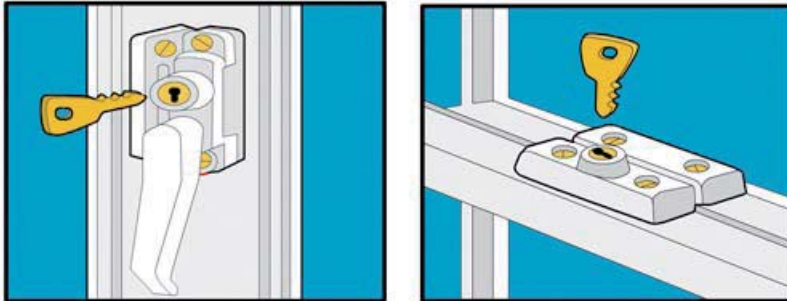
Make sure that the lighting at the exterior of your home is adequate – if you feel it isn't – change it now. **Good exterior lighting is a vital deterrent for potential burglars.**

Even if you are out - **Pretend you're at home**: Leave lights on in the evenings when you go out to give the impression that there is some one home – light sensitive switches or timers are effective if the house is going to be unoccupied for a period of time. Perhaps leave the radio on!

Don't make it easy for a burglar to access an upstairs window – make sure any trellising or gazebos don't provide an access point to upstairs windows for burglars.

Section 03 - Windows

1. Do your windows conform to BSI 7950 safety standards?
2. Do your windows have locks?
3. Do you always use the locks?
4. Are your window frames in good condition?
5. Do you have double-glazing?
6. Are downstairs windows screened by foliage or fences?



Examples of good **Window Locks**

Section 03 - Windows Feedback

A good lock will delay and deter a burglar!

If you don't have locks or if you don't use them, you should install good locks and start using them as soon as you can.

There are a variety of locks available to fit all windows – whether wood, metal or PVC. A specialist should fit these. Make sure the lock is fitted correctly and in a position where it will have the most effect.

Make sure window frames are well maintained and in good condition.

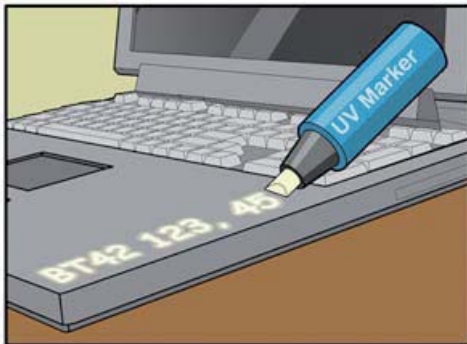
If burglars can see window locks it may put them off, because they would have to break the glass and risk attracting attention.

If you have, or intend to use, the type of lock that screws to the window, the following test is a good guide to help decide how many are required. With the window closed, press each opening corner - if there is any movement, fit a suitable lock, such as a push lock, at each corner on the opening side. If there is no movement a lock fitted to the centre of the opening frame will suffice.

Make sure valuables can't be seen from the outside.

Section 04 - Valuables

1. Do you use timers on your lights to make it look as though you are in when you are out?
2. Do you have a list of the valuable items in your home?
3. Do you keep photographs of these items?
4. Are your valuables kept hidden from view in the home?
5. Are your valuables permanently marked with your postcode?
6. Do you leave your car keys on the hall table at night?
7. Do you leave your portable computer / handbag or other valuable close to the door when you get home?



Section 04 - Valuables Feedback

Use Timers on your lights – they are a simple, inexpensive and effective way to keep your home secure and put burglars off.

Always try to make it look as if you are at home – either by using timers on your lights and asking a friend or neighbour to open and close the curtains for you! These are simple, inexpensive steps to put burglars off!

Most burglars are attracted by items that are easy to carry – cash, jewellery, small electrical items are popular. Hide these items from view – the burglar will have to take time to find them. **Lock them away.**

Prepare a list of items of monetary and sentimental value – for insurance purposes.

Take photographs of these items too – they are invaluable in helping police in the event of a burglary. Keep these photographs in a safe place.

Permanently mark items with your postcode – with an ultra violet pen or marker.

Thieves like portable, high value, easily saleable goods like televisions, DVDs, videos, computers, cameras, jewellery, silverware, antiques etc. **Mark these items with your postcode, followed by the number of your house or flat.**

Keep all valuables - for example wallets, purses, watches, jewellery - out of view when going to bed. Draw curtains and blinds. Additionally, small security safes can be relatively inexpensive and can be hidden and secured out of sight.

Remember – make it difficult for burglars – don't leave your handbag / portable computer on view in a place that's easy to access – this is the same for car keys! Don't leave them in view. Don't leave them near front or back doors. Find a discreet but secure place to store them.

Congratulations!

Thank you for taking time to assess your home security. We hope you have gained some useful information on how to make your home more safe and secure.

It would be helpful to us and to others if you could take a moment to tell us what you think of the online tool. **All feedback will be treated with the utmost confidence.**

To leave feedback, click on the link below:

www.howsecureismyhome.com/feedback.aspx