

## **Crime Prevention Tips**

### **Outside the home**

Retaining walls and thick shrubs can lend curb appeal. Unfortunately, lush hedges can provide cover for a burglar looking for his way in. Nearby trees, too, can be used by a second-story man if the branches about your windows. Keep vegetation trimmed low, and consider installing thorny plants close to the house to thwart thieves.

### **Mirror, Mirror in the Hall**

A mirror in the entryway lets you assess your look before heading out the door. But check its position from your front windows. Can you see the reflection of your alarm system? If so, would-be intruders can too—and they'll know at a glance if you neglected to arm it when you dashed out on an errand.

### **Bowling for Dollars**

Here's another entryway no-no: that bowl or basket where everyone tosses keys, wallets, phones, and the like. Sure, you'll know where they are—but so will a burglar. The best place for car keys is beside your bed. If you wake up to noises that sound like someone breaking in, hit the alarm on the fob to make noise to scare off any intruder.

### **Now, This Is Key!**

No one likes to get locked out, but a spare key stashed under a rock or above the door frame is bound to be discovered. Criminals learn where homeowners store that extra set, so exchange yours with a neighbor you trust in case of emergency.

### **Back to Business**

You might keep the deadbolt locked on the front door at all times, but what about the back door off the patio? Or maybe you leave the garage door wide open during the afternoons? Be as conscientious about your less-used entrances as you are with your main one.

### **Secret hiding spots**

Hiding valuables among your socks drawer may not be a good idea. Your nightstand and underneath the mattress are common areas that criminals check. Better hiding places for jewelry, cash, and other small precious items include the attic, basement, kids' rooms, kitchen pantry, or even the broom closet.

### **Think Outside the Box**

To keep on enjoying that brand-new flat-screen TV, computer, or gaming system, discard the packaging properly. Cut it up into small sections, and stack the pieces to obscure what came inside from passersby. Better yet, keep cut-up cartons in a covered bin or inside the house until the morning of recycling pickup.

### **Friends, Followers, and Fiends**

When you're out of town, you have a neighbor pick up your mail and you stop newspaper delivery so thieves won't see them piling up—but then you blab your far-off whereabouts all over social media! All a burglar has to do is look up your address and then leisurely help him, knowing you won't be back from Cancun till Sunday. And when it comes to geo-tracking apps like Foursquare and Glympse, share your comings and goings only with people you trust.