

## Protect Yourself Against Burglary

Burglary is one of the more preventable crimes. By taking a few precautions, you can dramatically reduce your risk.

Most burglars do not give a great amount of thought to planning the job, but understanding how they choose a target can go a long way in reducing the chance of becoming a victim. Most burglars look for:

- something worth stealing
- easy access with low visibility
- a home that is unoccupied

### How to Prevent Break-ins

**1. Fool them by making your home look occupied at all times.** Most burglaries happen during the day because homes tend to be vacant then.

- Use automatic timers on lights when away from home.
- Place radios on automatic timers.
- Lower the sound of your telephone ringer and answering machine.
- Never leave notes on your door that can tip off burglars.

**2. Eliminate hiding places.** Most burglars in this neighborhood gain entry through the rear of the house. Most homes have a high rear fence that can hide a burglar.

- Install motion detector lights to illuminate rear door and windows.
- Remove bushes and shrubs near doors and under windows.

**3. Use common sense caution.** We live in a community with a lot of foot traffic. Think safety, and make it routine.

- Call 911 if you see anything suspicious. (Do not call 311 if you want police response.)
- Know your neighbors.
- Always lock all doors and windows, even when you step out for just a minute.
- Use a peephole to identify visitors.
- Don't hide a spare key outside the house. Give one to a trusted neighbor.
- Don't leave anything of value in view of a window.
- Do not tell strangers your daily routines.
- Don't put out the box from your computer or TV for recycling. (Cut it up and put it in a trash bag.)

**4. Make your home a harder target.** Most burglars will spend no more than 4-5 minutes trying to break into a residence. With a few simple steps, residents can make their homes harder for a burglar.

- When moving into a new residence, have the locks changed. Consult a good locksmith to make sure you have the correct types of locks on doors and windows.
- Secure exterior doors with good quality deadbolt locks.
- Secure windows by installing additional locks, and impact-resistant glass within 42 inches of a door lock.
- Secure patio doors with a pin-type lock, a key lock or a steel rod inserted into the door channel.

**5. If you are away for more than a day, make your house look the same whether you are home or away.**

- Have a trusted neighbor pick up mail, newspapers and pizza flyers.
- If you are away from home on garbage pickup day, ask a neighbor to bring your garbage cans back in. Burglars sometimes check for empty cans as a sign that residents are not home, so don't leave them an invitation. (This is particularly a problem on Portland Street and Melvin Drive.)
- Have a plan in place to have the grass mowed or the snow shoveled.
- Tell a trusted neighbor that you will be gone for a few days.

**6. Inventory and mark your belongings.** Use an engraving pen to mark your belongings, so they can be traced and returned, if stolen. Never mark them with your social security number.

**7. Be a good neighbor.** The easiest and most enjoyable way to prevent crime is to know your neighbors. Who belongs in the community and who does not?

- Attend community meetings and events. Baltimore City Police and University police make periodic presentations on crime issues.
- Join the Citizens on Patrol (COP). Get some exercise, walk your dog, and help fight crime.
- Join the neighborhood Watch Program. Applications are available at community meetings and from the Baltimore City Police.
- Call 911 if you see anything suspicious. Don't call 311 if you want police response.

*Information provided by the University of Maryland Police.*