

5 affordable ways to prevent break-ins.



You've seen TV commercials for sophisticated home security systems that do everything except beat up intruders themselves. These systems are getting more and more affordable, and they can give you some precious peace of mind. But before you invest in a system, make sure you're taking advantage of these easy, affordable ways to banish burglars:

1. **Lock your doors and windows.** It seems obvious, but believe it or not, over 40% of break-ins occur without the use of force. Turns out burglars don't have much of a work ethic - they're just looking for the easiest places to rob. Some simply go door to door until they find a home that isn't locked.

Burglars like sliding doors, because they're quiet, and older models can be lifted off their tracks, making it easier to break in. An easy fix: put a steel bar or broom handle into the track or try these other methods to secure the door.

2. **Get a dog.** One more reason Fido is your best friend: he keeps burglars away. In 2017, a British insurance agency questioned a panel of former criminals, asking them what factors were most likely to deter them from breaking into someone's home. Security cameras were the #1 deterrent, but #2 - ahead of fences, gates and motion-activated security lights - was the sound of a barking dog.

3. **Invest in some vicious landscaping.** Some plant varieties are so spiky and thorny, planting them near your house is like putting up barbed wire. Rose bushes and climbing roses are great choices because they look beautiful while they fend off intruders. Some roses are fiercer than others; the stems of the Voodoo rose, for instance, actually resemble barbed wire. A

landscaper can help you choose some good security trees and bushes.

4. **Keep vacations to yourself.** You may be dying to post that photo of yourself surfing the big waves in Hawaii, but do yourself a favor: wait till you get home. Shouting out to the world, "I'm not at home!" is an invitation to burglars. Likewise, plan ahead to make it look like you're home. Discontinue any newspapers that would pile up in your driveway, have a friend or family member bring in mail, and set your indoor and outdoor lights on a timer. Consider leaving a TV or radio on as well so would-be burglars can hear voices coming from inside your house.
5. **Fake 'em out.** Some security systems are surprisingly affordable, but you know what's even cheaper? Faking it. Post a sign in your yard that says your home is protected by a security system - police say that's enough to deter some lazier thieves. For less than \$10 you can even buy fake security cameras to mount around the exterior of your home, complete with flashing red lights and wiring. Some even come with a sticker you can put on your front window, warning burglars that they are under surveillance.

With a few precautions, you can make your home as unattractive as possible to would-be robbers. But just in case, make sure you have adequate homeowners insurance to cover any losses.