



How
Secure
is your home?



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Working for a safer London



www.met.police.uk

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Introduction

Operation Safer Homes is the anti-burglary campaign of the Metropolitan Police. We are using intelligence-led policing and the latest technology to target burglars and those who receive or handle stolen goods.

Don't become a victim of burglary. Make your home secure. This booklet gives you practical advice on the security measures that you should take for different parts of your home.

Tick the boxes in the coloured panels at the end of each page to show that you have completed the work listed for different parts of your home (or if the work has already been done) to increase your level of security step by step.

Leaving your home

When leaving your home, even for a short period, always lock all external doors and windows and set your burglar alarm (if you have one).

If you are going away for a longer time, use a timer or sensor to control your lighting (see page 7, Lighting) so your home looks occupied. Make sure you cancel your milk and newspaper deliveries while you're away.

Fire safety

Fit smoke alarms that conform to the British Standard (BS 5446) on every floor.

Bogus callers

Not all burglars break in. Some will try to get you to open the door and let them in. They may pretend to be from the water, gas, electricity, phone or TV company. Protect yourself against bogus callers by remembering:

stop – are you expecting anyone? Put the door

chain on before opening the door; and

check – ask to see an identification card and phone the company they say they are from.

If they really are who they claim, they won't mind waiting while you check or coming back when you're not alone. **If in doubt, keep them out.**

Front door security

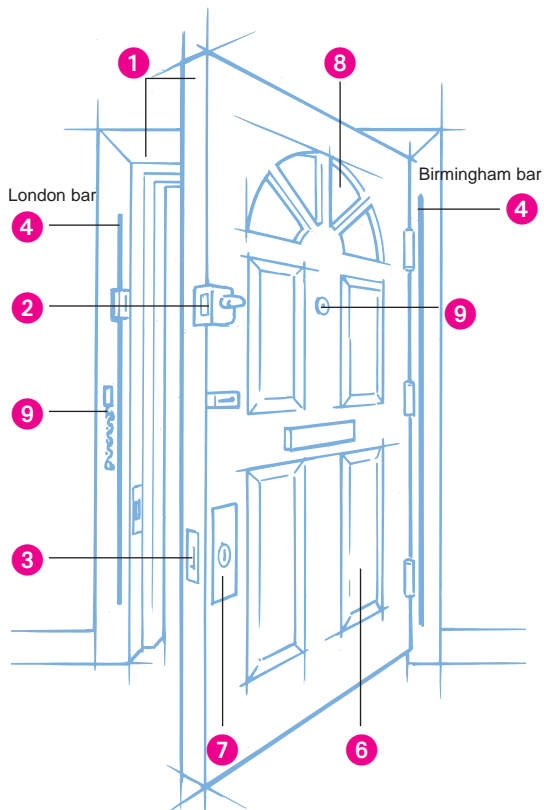
Your front door is most likely to be made of wood, PVCu or metal (usually aluminium).

The construction of PVCu doors makes it difficult to install additional locks and other security fittings at a later date. It is important to seek advice from the installer or manufacturer if you require additional security. If you try to fit locks, door chains or viewers yourself, you could cause irreparable damage and invalidate your guarantee. Your door should be secure if it is installed to the manufacturer's specifications including being fitted with a good quality multi-point locking system. If you have any doubts about the strength or solidity of your door or frame, you should ask an expert for advice.

Metal doors are generally solidly built and can be fitted with suitable locks and security fittings, but you should consult the installer or a qualified locksmith before making any modifications.

Most doors are wood, and anyone with DIY experience should be able to make improvements.

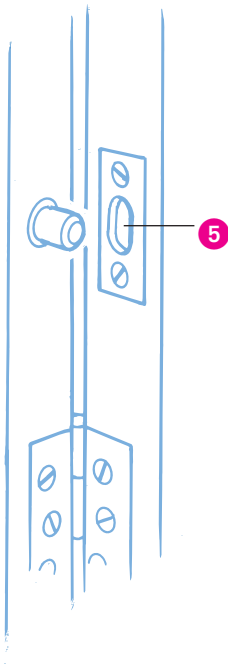
If your home has a porch with an inner and outer door, both doors must be made secure. If intruders get through the outer door of your porch they could attack the inner door without being seen or heard.



Security measures for wooden front doors

- 1 Doors should be solid timber (not hollow) a minimum of 44 mm (1 $\frac{3}{4}$ ") thick, supported by three 100 mm (4") hinges. The frame to be of sound timber, securely bolted or screwed to the walls every 600 mm (23") around the whole frame. (If fitting a new door and frame, look for British Standard PAS24.)
- 2 Fit a good automatic dead-latch cylinder lock (rim lock) about a third of the way down, avoiding joints in the timber.
- 3 Fit a good 5-lever mortice deadlock with boxed staple (conforming to British Standard BS 3621) about a third of the way up.

- 4 Strengthen the door frame by fitting a 'London bar' to support the locking points and a 'Birmingham bar' to reinforce the hinges.
- 5 If your front door opens outwards, fit hinge bolts at the hinge edge approximately 150 mm (6") below the top hinge and 150 mm (6") above the bottom hinge.
- 6 Recessed or decorative panels should be a minimum of 9 mm (1/3") thick to resist attack.



Think about fitting a strong barrel (tower) bolt inside your front door (at the bottom). When you are at home at night you can use it instead of the mortice lock so that you can get out quickly in an emergency.

Flats/apartments

If the front door is less than 4.5 metres (15') above ground level, security advice is the same as for ground floor front doors. If the front door is higher than this (for example, most flats on the second floor or above), in the interests of fire safety the front or final exit door should not be fitted with a lock that needs a key to open from the inside. For example, you should not use standard mortice deadlocks if they can be operated from inside. You should fit locks that comply with British Standard BS 5588: these allow you to release the lock with a single action (turning the handle or thumb turn) to leave the flat.

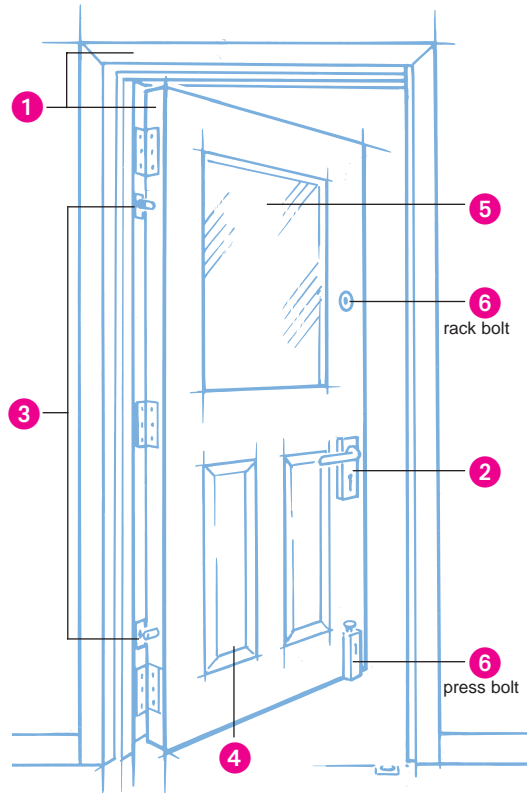
- 7 Fit metal plates on both sides of the door to reinforce the area around the mortice lock. This will increase the door's resistance to forced entry.
- 8 Fit any glass panels within or to the side of the door with laminated glass. You can strengthen existing glass by adding security film to the inside face. Fit glass from the inside to guard against putty or beading being removed. If this is not possible, use glazing mastic, which is stronger than putty. You could also fit a decorative metal grille on the inside face of glazed panels.

- 9 Fit a door viewer and door bar/chain or limiter, and always use them before opening the door to callers (see page 1, Bogus callers).
- 10 Keep your car and house keys away from the front door area, to prevent them being 'hooked' out by thieves.

Note: Check your home contents insurance policy. These recommendations are a minimum requirement for insurance and your company may require more security.

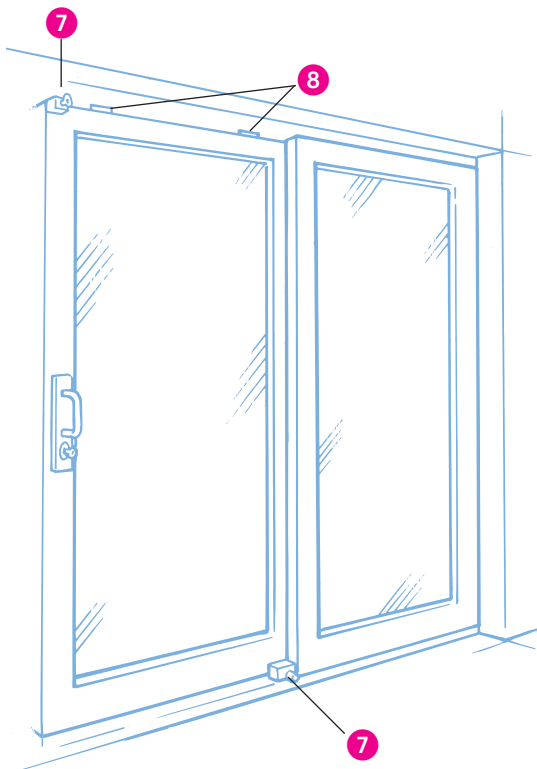
Back door security

The back door is just as vulnerable as the front, so it is important to make sure that it is just as secure. If your home has a conservatory with an outer and inner door, both doors must be made secure. If intruders get through the outer door they could attack the inner door without being seen or heard.



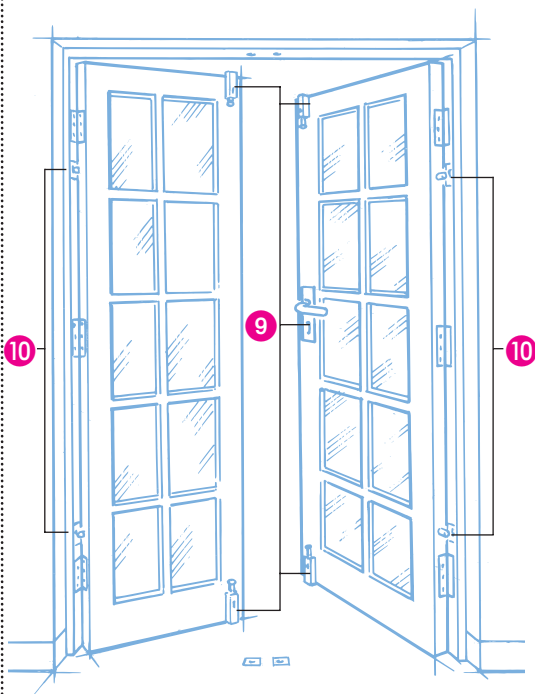
Security measures for wooden back doors

- 1 Doors should be solid timber (not hollow), a minimum of 44 mm (1³/₄" thick, supported by three 100 mm (4") hinges. The frame to be of sound timber, securely bolted or screwed to the walls.
- 2 Fit a good 5-lever mortice sash lock with boxed staple (conforming to British Standard BS 3621) about halfway up the door (avoiding joints in the timber).
- 3 Fit hinge bolts at the hinge edge, approximately 150 mm (6") below the top hinge and 150 mm (6") above the bottom hinge.
- 4 Recessed or decorative panels should be a minimum of 9 mm (1/3") thick to resist attack. They can be reinforced with wooden or metal sheeting.
- 5 Fit any glass panels within or to the side of the door with laminated glass. You can strengthen existing glass by adding security film to the inside face. Fit glass from the inside to guard against putty or beading being removed. If this is not possible, use glazing mastic, which is stronger than putty. You could also fit a decorative metal grille on the inside face of glazed panels.
- 6 Fit mortice rack bolts a third of the way down from the top and a third of the way up from the bottom of the door on the opening side, or fit surface-mounted, key-operated press bolts.



Patio doors

- 7 Fit patio door locks at the top and bottom of the opening section of the patio door. There should be a minimum of three locking points.
- 8 Fit an anti-lifting device to prevent the opening door being lifted and removed.



Double French doors

- 9 Fit security press bolts or mortice rack bolts to the top and bottom of both doors and a 5-lever mortice sash lock (conforming to British standard BS 3621) on the first opening leaf.
- 10 Fit hinge bolts to both doors.

Window security

All ground floor windows and any that an intruder could reach by climbing must be made secure by fitting key-operated window locks. These should always be locked when there is no-one at home or when the room is unoccupied. Whenever you go out, you should close all the windows, even those you think a burglar could not reach.

Locks to suit all window types are available from locksmiths and DIY stores. Anyone who has DIY skills can fit them to most wooden frame windows. You may have to get a qualified locksmith or the installer to fit locks to replacement PVCu or metal frame windows.

Use glazing mastic, not putty, to bond replacement glass to the wooden frame for strength.

All windows that an intruder could reach should be fitted with laminated glass.

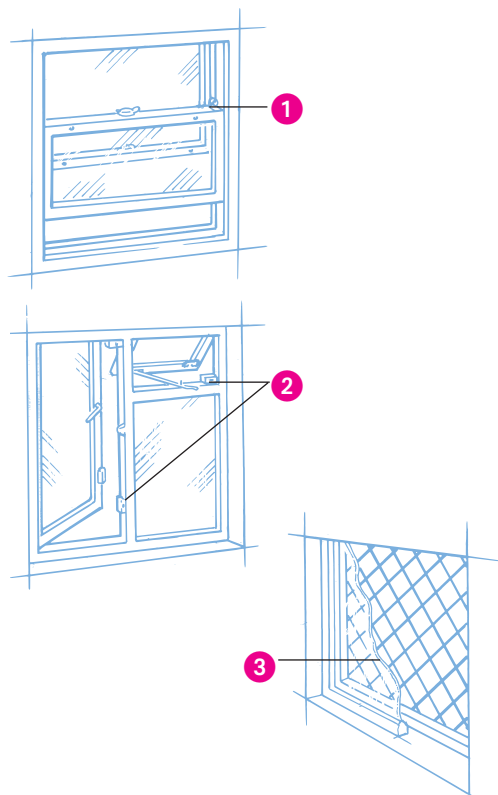
Note 1: Georgian wired glass may look strong but it will easily break. It is a fire safety glass not a security glass.

Note 2: The ideal standard for window construction can be found in those windows with the BS 7950 kitemark.

PVCu windows

Special security locks for PVCu windows are available but may be difficult to fit. You should ask the installer to confirm whether your glazing is secure and if you would invalidate any guarantee on the windows by fitting additional locks.

If you buy replacement PVCu windows, choose ones with security features such as internal beading, hinge protection and key locking, handle-operated shoot bolts to BS 7950.



Sash windows

❶ Do not rely on existing sash fasteners. Fit key-operated sash stops to both sides of the upper window. The maximum window opening should be 130 mm (5").

Casement (hinged) windows

❷ With the windows closed, gently press at each opening corner from the inside. If there is any movement, fit two locks per window, approximately a third of the way from each corner on the opening side. If not, fit a lock near the centre of the opening edge. Buy locks that secure the **frames** together, rather than those that lock the handles or stay bars.

Leaded windows

❸ These are not secure unless you fit secondary laminated glazing, polycarbonate sheeting, or internal grilles.

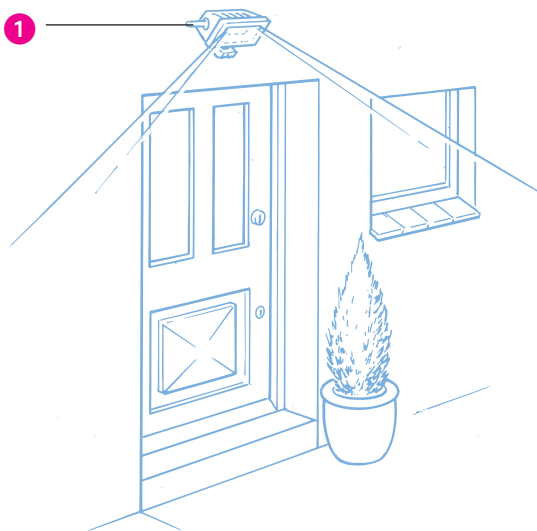
Lighting

Lights can be a very successful crime prevention measure at night. You can help to make your home less attractive to burglars by fitting exterior lights and by putting lights on to make it look as if you are at home. It is useful to have an outside light by your front door so you can identify callers through your door viewer even at night.

- Consult a qualified electrician for advice on lighting and installation.
- A light activated by photo-electric cell will come on automatically when darkness falls, and switch off when it gets light. You can use a photo-electric cell and a 60-watt bulkhead lamp together as an effective and inexpensive form of automatic external lighting. The use of a 12-watt compact fluorescent lamp will be even more cost-effective. These act together as a good anti-burglar device because they give light all night and, in most circumstances, are the preferred form of external security lighting.
- A passive infra-red (PIR) light will automatically come on if it detects heat movement. This type of system is available in most DIY stores. These systems are very sensitive and can be set off accidentally by pets or wild animals. It is important you aim

the beam away from buildings if fitted with a high wattage bulb as it may annoy your neighbours.

- All external lighting units should be placed where they are difficult for intruders to reach or designed so that they are suitably protected.



Lighting

- 1 Fit dusk to dawn lighting with compact fluorescent lamps around your house.
- 2 Fit timer switches to lamps in different rooms and set them to come on at different times during the evening while you are away. This creates the impression that you are at home. If you're away for a long time, you can also install motorised curtains to make the illusion even more realistic.

Intruder alarms

Intruder alarms are widely accepted as being effective in deterring burglars. They give an audible warning and can help limit theft and damage. Fitting an alarm system does not mean that you can afford to ignore the other security measures in this booklet. An alarm system and other security measures work together to make your home secure.

Buying an alarm system

The cost of an alarm system varies according to the level of sophistication, the installation, and the maintenance costs. Some buildings are difficult to wire or present security problems that will make the system cost more. It is important to fit the correct system for you and your home. There are two main types of alarm on the market:

- **An audible system** – these can vary from very simple to highly sophisticated, but all types sound an alarm when they detect an intruder. A police response will be provided when, in addition to the alarm's activation, there is an indication that an offence is in progress. This is the most widespread alarm system. You should always check that a reputable alarm company installs it to British Standard BS 4737. DIY systems are available from DIY stores and security specialists. If you buy one make sure it conforms to British Standard BS 6707 and that it is installed correctly to the manufacturer's specifications.
- **A remote signalling system** – this alerts the police via the alarm receiving centre as soon as the alarm is activated. A police response will be provided in accordance with the ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) intruder alarms policy. This type of alarm is becoming more common in the residential sphere. Only approved alarms can be used in this way, so you should consider this prior to purchase. Contact your local Crime Prevention Officer for more details.

Choosing an installer

To ensure that your alarm system is installed properly you must use an installer who works to British Standard BS 4737 (or BS 7042 for high security systems and BS 6799 for wire free systems). Your local Crime Prevention Officer can give you advice on how to choose an installer. Check that your system has a 12-month guarantee and read the installation contract carefully before signing to find out whether you will own or rent the system and what the maintenance agreement is. Make sure that you thoroughly understand how to operate your new system. The installer should give you a training session.

Note 1: Alarm companies installing remote signalling systems have to be certified by the Security Systems and Alarms Inspection Board (SSAIB) or National Security Inspectorate (NSI).

Note 2: It is anticipated that BS 4737 will be replaced by the new European standard BS EN 50131 in 2004.

You should make sure that your system is properly maintained, and all alarm systems should have two keyholders, trained to operate the alarm, able to attend an activation within 20 minutes, contactable by telephone and with their own transport.

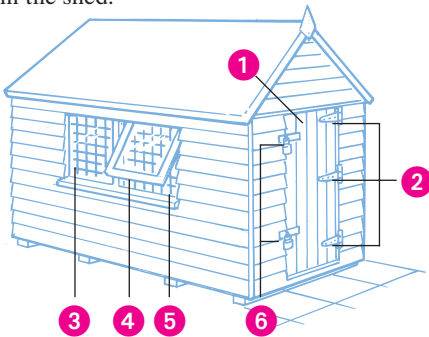
For more information about the Met's Keyholder Database, see page 12.

Garden security

Garden shed

Garden sheds are often easy targets for burglars, who will steal tools, lawnmowers and electrical goods. Even if you don't keep anything of value in your shed, burglars can use garden tools to break into your home (or your neighbour's home).

Remember that sheds were never designed for the storage of valuable goods. If you lock up items such as gardening tools in your shed you should mark them with your postcode (see page 11, Property marking). A strong chain that can be wrapped around handles and secured with a padlock or an anchor device will make it more difficult to take property from the shed.



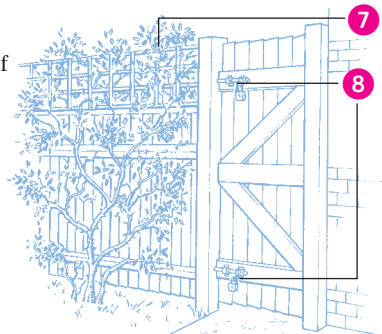
Garden security

- 1 Make sure that the door, door frame and walls are solid and replace any damaged or rotten areas with new sections.
- 2 Secure padlock hasps and door hinges with threaded coach bolts, with backing plates or large backing washers to prevent the bolt being pulled through the wood.
- 3 Replace any broken panes with laminated glass.
- 4 Fit key-operated window locks on opening windows (see page 6, Window security). If the windows are never opened, screw them permanently shut from the inside.
- 5 Fit wire mesh or bars to the inside of window frames.

Perimeter fencing

Keep all garden fencing in good repair and make sure that the panels cannot be moved or lifted. The ideal height for a perimeter fence or wall around the back garden is 2 metres (6'7") including trellis. Anything higher may require planning permission. Garden gates should be of a similar height. At the front, the fence or wall shouldn't be any higher than 1 metre (3'), so as not to screen off the front of your home from view. Do not build in any features that might make the fence easier to climb.

You can make fences more effective by planting a prickly or thorny plant next to them. Train a thorny climbing plant, like a rose, through the trellis on top of your fence. Plant prickly shrubs along the bottom of your fence. Remember these plants can be harmful to young children.



- 6 Fit two closed shackle padlocks on strong padlock hasps, one a third of the way up from the bottom of the door and one a third of the way down from the top of the door, using coach bolts with a backing plate.

Perimeter fencing security

- 7 Fit a trellis on top of the back garden fence securely with screws on the garden side. It should be strong enough to support a climbing plant but not a climbing intruder.
- 8 Fit two padbolts/padlocks/mortice locks a third of the way from the top and bottom on the inside of the garden gate. The outside opening latch should be one that does not provide a 'scaling foothold'.

Garage security

Garages can present an easy way for burglars to gain access, not only to your car but also to tools and other equipment and possible entry to your home. If there is a door leading directly into your home from the garage, a burglar who can get in to your garage can then attack the door to your home without fear of discovery.

Make sure that all opening windows are secure (see page 6, Window security).

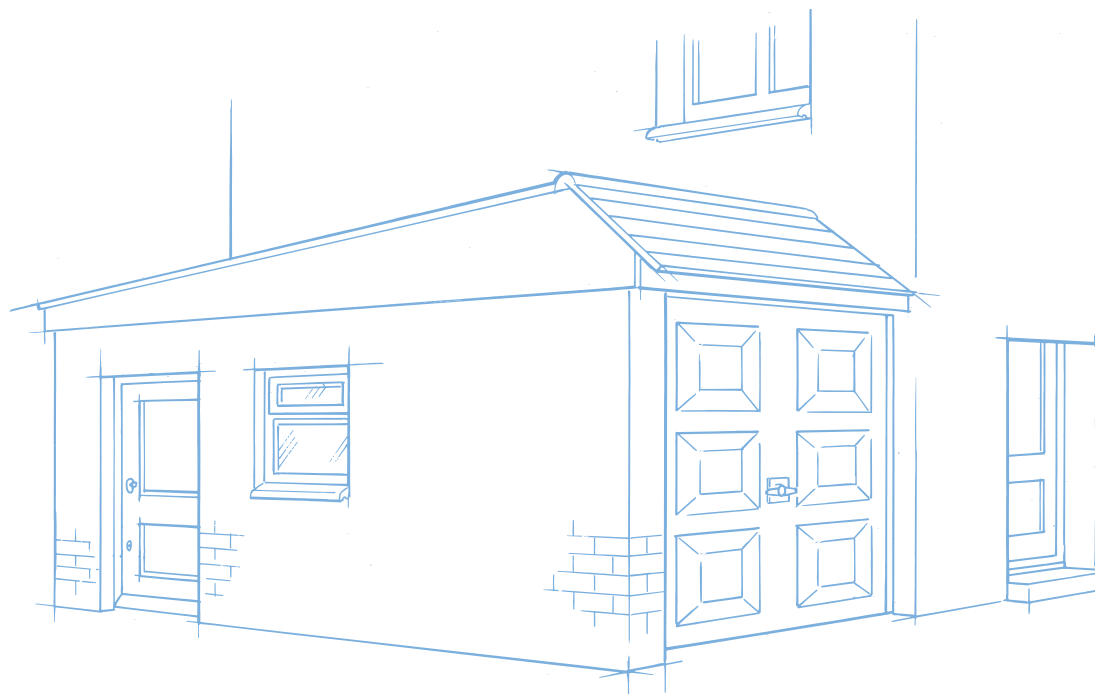
If your garage has a door that leads into your home, make sure that this access door is secure (see page 4, Back door security) and conforms to fire regulations.

If your garage has a side access door, make sure that it is secure (see page 4, Back door security).

Fit strong locks to the bottom corners of the vehicle access door. There are locks on the market to suit most styles of door. If you are not sure which one to choose, consult a qualified locksmith. For additional security, doorstops can be fitted in front of the vehicle access door to prevent it being opened. If you have a side access door, then the vehicle access door can be secured from the inside by fitting a padlock. Secure property kept in your garage by wrapping a strong chain around handles and padlocking it together or to an anchor device.

You may also wish to think about installing a low-cost garage or shed alarm.

Remember to mark all items in your garage permanently and visibly with your postcode followed by your house number (see page 11, Property marking).



Property marking

By visibly marking (or UV pen marking) your possessions with your postcode followed by the number of your house or the first three letters of the house name, and illustrating this fact to potential thieves (by stickers on windows, etc), you can reduce the risk of burglary. Additionally, if marked items are stolen and then recovered, it is easier for the police to identify the criminals and return property to its owner.

Valuables that cannot be marked, such as jewellery, paintings or antiques, should be photographed. This helps the police to trace your property.

When photographing your possessions, remember:

- Use a non-reflective background and put a ruler next to the item to show its size.
- Make sure there is enough light and the object is in focus. Store the final pictures in a safe place. You could even give a second copy to a close friend or relative.

There are numerous other forms of property marking on the market. For advice, contact your local Crime Prevention Officer.



Neighbourhood Watch

A Neighbourhood Watch scheme gives you and your neighbours the chance to act together to fight local crime and help keep each other's property safe. If you live in an area where there isn't a scheme running, why not start one? Your local police station will be happy to supply you with all the details. Many insurance companies now offer reduced rates on household policies to Neighbourhood Watch members.



The Keyholder Database

Under the Safer Homes initiative, the Met is also advising owners of residential and business premises, with or without alarms, to register with their new Keyholder Database. This database will record details of alarm systems and the names of nominated keyholders. By registering on the Keyholder Database, alarmed property owners will be fully complying with the requirements of the London Local Authority Act 1991.

Once the owner of an address has registered their details with the new scheme, their details will be recorded on a central database. This database is accessible by police control rooms and environmental health departments and allows police and local authorities to contact keyholders more easily in the event of an incident at the individual's premises.

There are two services available to property owners: a basic free service and a comprehensive Premium Service.

The basic free service is only available to owners of audible alarms and records very basic property details. To register, members of the public should phone 0800 197 7711 and provide details of the name of the person who holds the key for their property.

The comprehensive Premium Service offers additional benefits, which include the recording of additional property information and keyholders' names as well as the ability to update records via the internet. This service is available for everyone (with or without an audible alarm) and costs £15 per property (residential) or £35 plus VAT (for businesses). Members of the public can register online at www.metkeyholders.org.uk or by calling 0870 060 1212.

Crime prevention advice is given freely without the intention of creating a contract. Neither does the Metropolitan Police Service take any legal responsibility for the advice given.

What to do if your home is burgled

- 1** If you think that your home has been broken into and the burglar could still be indoors, don't go in. **Dial 999**, ask for the police and wait for them to arrive.
- 2** If you discover a burglary and you are sure that the burglar has gone, call your local police.
- 3** **Do not touch or move anything unless told to do so by the police**, especially if it has been moved or is at the point where the break-in (or getaway) happened.
- 4** When police investigate your burglary, you will be informed of your local Victim Support Scheme and given basic home security advice.
- 5** Contact your local police station to get more detailed advice on security for your home.

If you have any information regarding a burglary or a burglar, please phone Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111. You could get a cash reward.

