

# Take the Home Security Challenge!

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## Is your home an easy target for thieves?

Your home is the most valuable asset you have and it is worth protecting. Answer these simple questions and you will have a better idea of where your home is vulnerable. These are just some of the steps you can take to decrease the likelihood that you or your home is targeted. *(If not applicable, check 'Yes')*

### 1. Are outdoor belongings and tools put away when not in use?

Yes  No

If possible, store ladders in a shed or garage and put tools away after a day or yard work. A ladder can be used to gain entry to second story windows and screwdrivers, hammers and pry bars can be used to break into your home, garage, or vehicle.

### 2. If you have an outdoor grill, is it secured to your deck or patio?

Yes  No

Don't get caught in the disheartening position of walking out to your patio, corn-on-the-cob in hand, only to discover that your grill is gone. Avoid keeping your grill in a spot that is easily accessible from a back alley or near a driveway or street. Consider moving your grill to a more secure location on your property. Tether the grill to your deck or patio with galvanized or stainless steel aircraft cable or chain. Run the chain or aircraft cable around the grill's leg and attach it to the deck or patio. Secure the chain's or aircraft cable's ends with a padlock.

### 3. Is your yard well maintained and your fence/gates in good repair?

Yes  No

Keep your yard maintained to give the home a lived-in appearance. Trim trees and shrubs that could conceal thieves, especially around windows and doors. Cut grass, rake leaves, shovel the walkways, remove dead branches and debris. Ensure your fence and gate are in good repair; check for holes and damage that may need repair. Keep your gate locked at all times and consider a padlock when you are away.

### 4. Do you remove all valuables from your vehicle and ensure your vehicle is locked?

Yes  No

Most vehicle crime is opportunistic and therefore preventable. Never leave ANYTHING on display when you leave your vehicle including your garage door opener. Even loose change, cigarettes, cigarette lighters, sunglasses, CD's, cell phones, cameras, and clothing, if they can see it they will steal it. When parking at home, always use your garage if you have one, and lock both your vehicle and your garage. If you don't have a garage, try to park in a well-lit, open place.

5. **Do you always lock your garage door including the door between your garage and your home?**

Yes  No

Garages are a favourite target because they often have other valuables, such as vehicles, power tools, sporting goods, and bicycles in them. Thefts from garages are an easily preventable crime. Keep garage doors closed and locked, even when you are home or working in your backyard. Be sure the overhead door closes completely after you drive in or out of your garage.

6. **Are there clear views of all windows and doors i.e. not obscured by bushes or high fences etc.?**

Yes  No

The more private an area is, the more likely it is to attract the attention of a criminal. Thieves like to work where they can't be seen. Trim trees and shrubs that block sight lines to your windows and doors, especially basement windows.

7. **Do you leave lights on timers, both inside and outside the home when you are away?**

Yes  No

Timers make a home look lived in and avoid leaving your home in darkness at night and leaving the outside light on during the day.

8. **Is there an easy way of seeing who is at your door without opening it?**

Yes  No

Every door should have a way of clearly seeing who is there without opening it. This will allow you to keep your door locked while assessing the visitor prior to opening it. Leave your door locked when you are at home, including your screen door. If you have a screen door, you should have it locked and you can open the main door to converse with any person while maintaining security. A locked screen door also provides additional security to any door. Ensure doors are locked at night and every time you leave your home, even if only for a few minutes.

9. **Do all of your exterior doors have a deadbolt with a part that extends into the door frame that is at least one inch long? Are the screws located on the door jamb opposite the lock at least 2.5 inches long??**

Yes  No

Criminals with tools easily defeat conventional key in the knob locks. Deadbolts should be installed on all exterior doors. Door kick break-ins are becoming common. To secure a door properly, the screws should be at least 2.5 – 3.5 inches long, and the strike plate should have a minimum of four offset holes.

**10. If you have a sliding door, do you have a security bar in the bottom track to prevent the door from opening?**

Yes  No

The standard locking pin on sliding doors is usually cast metal, which breaks easily. A snug fitting security bar, or even hockey stick, should be added to the door to prevent it from being pried.

**11. Do the windows of your home have a: pin (removable nail-like object drilled through the overlapping vertical frame at a downward angle); or secondary aftermarket locking device?**

Yes  No

Most window locks are easily broken. Criminals target sliding windows because they are easy to jimmy open. Add one or both of the security measures mentioned above. *Note: It is important that you can escape, in the event of a fire, when using a barrier-type counter-measure.*

**12. Do you store your valuables in a safety deposit box or an isolated area of your home?**

Yes  No

The best place to put valuables is in a safety deposit box. A good alternative is to hide valuables in a lock box in a general storage area concealed in your home.

**13. Are your valuables marked with your personal identifiable number?**

Yes  No

It's a good idea to make a list of your valuables, take photos of them, and list their serial numbers and descriptions. Engrave your electronics, bikes, and tools.

**14. Do you ensure that mail, newspapers and flyers are collected, the driveway is shoveled and the grass is cut when you are away for a period of time?**

Yes  No

The accumulation of mail, newspapers and flyers is a sure sign that nobody is home. The appearance of your home should not vary whether you are home or away.

**15. Do you know your neighbours across the street and on all three sides of you?**

Yes  No

Neighbours can look out for one another and their property. Building your community connections enhances the security and quality of your home. Neighbours are also excellent people to watch over your home when you are away.

**16. Do you belong to a community league?**

Yes  No

Community Leagues create a sense of belonging for every citizen, regardless of background, age or ability. Participation helps bring a small town feel by bringing neighbours together and creating opportunities to volunteer and practice personal development skills. Community members look out for one another.

**17. Do you report suspicious activity to law enforcement?**

Yes  No

Typically, when a crime occurs and is left unreported, the frequency and severity of occurrences will increase if they are not dealt with. This makes the importance of reporting crime and disorder, regardless of severity, absolutely vital for law enforcement and your community.

**18. Do you have a social media account(s) and have you audited your social media footprint?**

Yes  No

Review your social media accounts and find out what information about you and your family is displayed for the world to see. Learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks. They are there to help you control who sees what you post.

**19. Do you post personal identifiable information on social media i.e. home address, children's schools, vacations, etc.?**

Yes  No

Protect your reputation on social networks. What you post online stays online. Think twice before posting pictures you wouldn't want your family or future employers to see. Be cautious about how much personal information you provide on social media sites. The more information you post, the easier it may be for a hacker or someone else to use that information to steal your identity, access your data or commit other crimes such as stalking.

**20. Do you have a security system?**

Yes  No

Adding a security system to your home gives you an extra layer of defense against any potential intruders. It can help protect valuables, deter crime, allows remote access to your home, lowers home owner's insurance, notifies you of gas or fire problems, keep tabs on what's happening inside the home (via cameras), and improves electricity management. Whether you rent or own, you can enjoy the benefits that come with having a security system.

# How did you do?

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**Results** - Please add up the number of “yes” answers you had.

14-20 You are in good shape (you may want to improve on the areas where you answered ‘no’)

7-13 Your home would benefit from security improvements.

0-6 Your home is vulnerable - Take action!

Your results reflect the level of security your home has in relation to the most common Security weaknesses. Review your home security.