

Security for your home

Crime time

You don't need to spend a fortune to keep burglars at bay. Here are some inexpensive (yet very effective!) DIY home security ideas.

The latches on most [double hung windows](#) are no match for a burglar with a pry bar. [Pin locks are an easy solution](#). To install one, all you have to do is drill a hole. If you want to lock the window in a partially opened position, drill a second hole. You can find pin locks at home centers and online. They work well on sliding patio doors too.

Install Motion Detector Lighting

Put [motion detector lighting](#) anywhere. Motion detector lights are a [proven crime deterrent](#), and standard hard-wired models cost as little as \$15. If running a power supply would be difficult, buy ones that run on solar power. The only real downside is the cost.

Secure Sheds With Screws

Your locked shed seems secure, but an experienced thief can bypass the lock by using a screwdriver to remove hinges and other hardware with exposed screw heads. Foil would-be thieves by using [Allen head, Torx head or hex-head cap screws](#) instead of standard Phillips head screws. You can also order [tamper-proof security screws](#) that require special removal tools that an opportunistic thief is unlikely to have. You'll also need to buy the special bit or tool.

Two Ways to Secure Shed Door Hinges

Shed doors usually swing out, so the [hinge pins are accessible from outside](#); all a thief has to do is pop out the pins and remove the door. To stop this, buy a security hinge with tamper-proof pins and a locking tab at a home center.

You can also retrofit an existing hinge by removing the center screws on both sides, inserting a finish screw through one side and allowing it to protrude about 1/4 in. Drill out the receiving hole slightly so that when the door is closed the finish screw head engages the other hinge. That way, even if the hinge pin is removed, the door can't be taken off.

Add Inexpensive Door and Window Alarms

Keeping doors and windows locked is your first line of defense. Make [wireless alarms](#) your second. Burglars hate noises, so even a small alarm usually [sends them running](#). Keep in mind that these alarms don't provide the same security as [professionally installed and monitored systems](#) since the wireless devices are activated by doors or windows opening (not glass breaking).

Install Door Reinforcement Hardware

You can spend hundreds on a fancy "pick-proof" deadbolt for your burglar proof front door. But you're kidding yourself if you think that'll stop most burglars. The truth is, most don't know how to pick a lock. They gain entry with one really well-placed kick or body slam that splits the doorjamb (and often the door as well), and they walk right in. The good news is that that means you can stop burglars in their tracks by [beefing up your door and jamb](#) with [reinforcing hardware](#).

Defeat Bolt Cutters

"A determined thief with an angle grinder and enough time can cut through nearly any lock," "But more often, the thief has a bolt cutter and is trying to work fast." The thicker a lock's shackle and the less it's exposed, the more secure the lock is from bolt cutters. And the kind of locking mechanism makes a difference in how easily a lock can be picked. There are keyed padlock and the [and](#) combination locks that resist bolt cutters.

Reinforce Your Entry Door Strike Plate

[Reinforcing your door's weak spot](#), the jamb, with a heavy-duty strike plate and extra-long screws gives it the added strength needed to withstand a burglar trying to kick in your door. If your dead bolt was installed within the last 10 years, it's probably already reinforced. To check, simply remove the strike plate. If it's heavy steel with at least 3-in. screws or has a heavy reinforcing plate, you can rest easy. If not, buy strike plate-reinforcing hardware. To install, remove the old strike plate, then hold the new one in place and deeply score around it. Chisel out space for the new plate, then mount it by driving 3-in. screws through predrilled holes.

Secure Patio Doors

Patio door locks are easy to pick. Placing a heavy-duty stick in the door track will bar the door closed, but it looks crude and it's inconvenient to remove every time you want to open the door. Fortunately, there's a better way to get the security you need. [Andersen Corp.'s auxiliary foot lock](#) fastens along the bottom of the door and has a bolt that fits into a grommet to hold the door secure. A similar lock, the Door Guardian, attaches at the top of the door. Both locks allow the door to open 3 in. without compromising security. Installation takes about 10 minutes. Screw the bracket containing the pin to the door, then drill holes and insert grommets in the track for the pin to slide into.

Keep Spare Keys in a Lock Box

Hiding a house key is risky business. Clever (or lucky) burglars sometimes find hidden keys. And insurance companies may refuse to cover your losses if there's no sign of forced entry. [The solution is a combination lock box](#). Screw it to a fence post or your house in an inconspicuous spot. But don't use the short, wimpy screws provided by the manufacturer. A crook could pry off the box, take it home and patiently saw it open. Instead use four No. 10 x 2-in. screws, preferably stainless steel.

Lock Up the Overhead Door

Some people "lock" the overhead garage door when they go on vacation by unplugging the opener. That's a good idea, [but physically locking the door is even better](#). An unplugged opener won't prevent "fishing," and—if you have an attached garage—it won't stop a burglar who has entered through the house from opening the garage door from inside, backing in a van and using the garage as a loading dock for his plunder. Make a burglar's job more difficult and time-consuming by locking the door itself. If your door doesn't have a lockable latch, drill a hole in the track just above one of the rollers and slip in a padlock.