



# Charting Your Course to Home Ownership

## Home Security

Over 2.15 million burglaries are committed annually in the United States. Of these, over 39,000 occur in Louisiana. Sixty percent of residential burglaries occur during the daylight hours. Burglary is expensive to the victim. In 2005, the average dollar loss per residential burglary was \$1,725.00.

Taking simple precautions to protect your home against crime can be the difference between keeping your family and valuables safe or becoming victims. Inspect your home and property from a burglar's view point, keeping the following tips in mind.

### Beat the Burglar

Most home burglaries are committed by amateurs who will leave if they can't break in within 90 seconds. Anything that slows a thief down by even a minute or two may keep your house from being robbed.

Professional thieves stalk victims and observe. They look for cover with a well-thought-out plan. Good planning on your part is your defense against the pros.

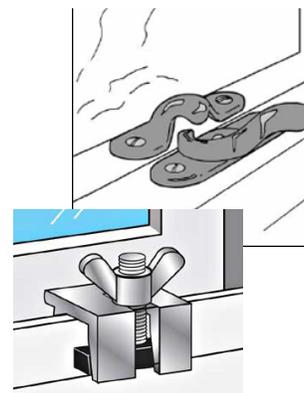
Inspect your home, looking for temptations to the amateur and with the critical eye of the pro. Check all points of entry and escape.

### Windows and Doors

Make sure windows are locked, even when you are at home.

The standard crescent or butterfly closure on many double-hung windows provides little resistance against entry from the outside. Consider securing all windows with stronger locks or a simple do-it-yourself nail or bolt window stop.

To install a stop on a double-hung window, drill a hole at the far edges of the window where the upper and lower window sashes overlap, drilling all the way through the top of the lower sash, and about three-quarters through the bottom of the upper sash. When an eye bolt or a 12-penny nail is inserted in the resulting hole from the inside, it pins the two sashes together. The hole should be drilled at a slightly downward angle to prevent the burglar from jiggling the pin out of the hole under pressure.



When drilling the holes, remember that they should be wide enough to allow the pins to be inserted and removed easily by hand. Tests indicate that eye bolts 5/16 inch in diameter are stronger than nails, easier to grasp and can resist considerable force.

If you want to have the option of leaving a window open for ventilation, drill a second hole an inch or so above the first one in the upper sash, and pin the sashes together in a slightly opened position. A 1-inch opening will not be wide enough to permit a burglar to reach in and unpin the stop.



*Red Flag: Some window manufacturer warranties are voided if the window is modified in any manner. Check your warranty before drilling.*

Trim trees and shrubs around windows to eliminate climbing and hiding aids.

Secure window air conditioning units so they can't be removed from the outside.

Important! Make sure all family members know how to open windows. Develop and practice a home fire escape plan.

All outside doors should be solid wood or metal clad. Hollow doors are easily kicked in. Door frames should be firmly attached to the house structure. If hinges are on the outside be sure that you have nonremovable hinges.

Keep doors locked and dead bolted, even when you are inside.

When you move into a new home, change all of the locks immediately. Deadbolts (Fig. 1 and 2), which extend one inch or more into the strike (the hole in the door jamb) are very secure. Vertical deadbolts (Fig. 3) installed properly with long screws are most secure.

If window panes of ordinary glass are within 40 inches of the lock, consider installing a double cylinder deadlock where a key will be required for opening either side of the door. If you have a double cylinder deadlock, it is extremely important to make sure all family members and babysitters know how to find the key quickly and unlock the door in the dark; but never leave the key in the deadlock.

Consider replacing ordinary glass in doors and side-lights with security glass or plastic.

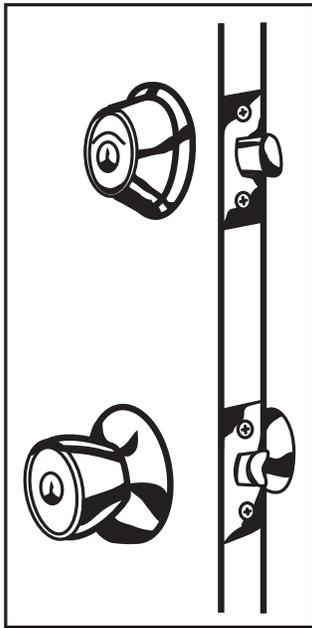
Add a peephole to solid doors (Fig. 4).

Wedge sliding glass doors with swinging metal rods (Charlie Bars) to prevent entry. A less desirable option is to wedge a broom stick into the bottom track.

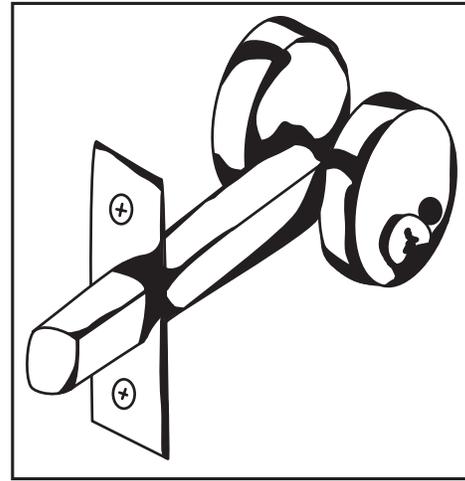
For complete details, see Web site below:

<http://www.usaonwatch.org/pdfs/HomeSecurityBooklet.pdf>

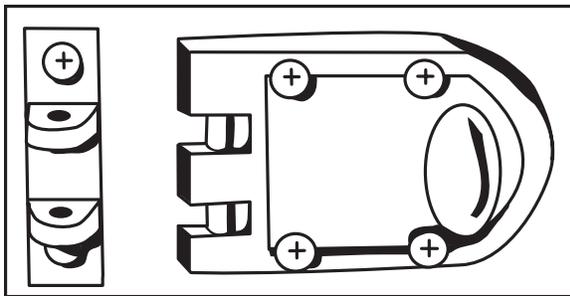
Be very careful with door keys. Do not hide a key outside. Burglars know the good hiding places. Know who has keys to your home. Detach house keys from car keys for auto repairs or valet parking.



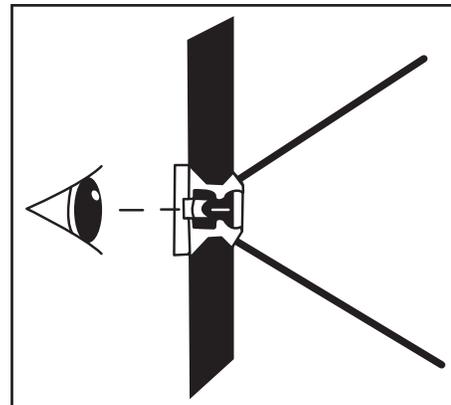
**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**

## **Alarms**

Residential burglar alarms are available from electrical and hardware dealers, as well as entire systems that may be leased or purchased from alarm companies. Most residential alarms emit a loud noise from a bell, siren or tone generator. An audible alarm on doors and windows can be an effective deterrent to the amateur burglar. If you do install an audible alarm, make sure that your family and your neighbors are informed about its function and that they are trained to call your law enforcement agency when they hear the alarm. Your law enforcement agency should be consulted when you install an alarm.

When selecting an alarm company, contact several different companies, then narrow the field to 3 or 4 firms. Check the Better Business Bureau to find out if any complaints have been filed against the companies. Then, arrange an

appointment with each company at a time when all members of your household will be present. Be sure to ask for the name of the person who will be calling on you, and verify his or her identification upon arrival. Ask for an inspection, demonstration, and a price quote in writing. Also, ask for and check references. Study each contract to ensure you know exactly what you are getting.

An alarm system is only as good as its user. Be sure the installer thoroughly explains how the system works and answers all of your questions. Everyone who will be using the system should participate in this educational process.

## **Outside the Home**

Eliminate dark areas around doors and windows by keeping porch or special outdoor lights on at night. To avoid forgetting and wasting energy, install photosensitive fixtures that turn on automatically when it gets dark or motion detector lights that come on when anyone approaches your home.

Tool sheds should be securely locked. Don't provide a burglar with the equipment to help break into your home. Put away ladders and equipment.

Outdoor accessories can help burglars. Don't display your name on your home or mailbox; use numbers only. Your name could be used to phone first to see if the coast is clear.

Be sure to lock unusual entrances to your home, such as attic stairs or access panels.

If you have an enclosed garage, its door should be closed and locked, whether the car is inside or out.

See-through fences are preferable for home security since they won't give an intruder cover. Any privacy fence gates should be padlocked.

## **Thwart the Tricks of the Trade**

Burglars use all kinds of tricks to pick their victims and get into their homes. Use these tips to protect your home and family:

Keep anyone asking for help outside of your home while you make emergency phone calls for them.

Make appointments with service firms so you know when and who to expect and check identification of service personnel. If you are not expecting anyone, phone the firm's office to verify they have sent an employee to your home. Don't call a number they give you. Take the time to look up the phone number yourself.

Don't give clues about yourself, your age or family make-up by items left outside. Some burglars target only older people, females or those who live alone. Use your own visible or audible tricks to confuse or discourage would-be criminals. For example, you could:

- Display things to appear as if a larger family lives inside – men's clothing, children's toys, etc.
- Put up a "Beware of Dog" sign and place a large feeding dish near gate or door.

- Use a timer to turn lights on and off or use motion-sensor lighting. Leave TVs and radios playing or use sound effect tapes to deter a criminal looking for a quiet, deserted target.
- If you are approached by a suspicious person or see something unusual in your neighborhood, report it to the police immediately. If you are not a victim, someone just down the street may be.
- Your driver's license number is the one in police records. Use it to mark valuables. Some police departments lend etching devices for this purpose.
- Don't leave the packaging for new valuables outside for garbage pick-up with labels showing. Cut up boxes or hide them in garbage cans or bags to avoid inviting a burglar.
- Do invite good neighbors to help. Ask friends to pick up mail and cut the lawn while you are out of town. Give them permission to question anyone on your property while you are away, even just during the day.
- Stop delivery of the newspaper any time no one will be home.

Adapted from: Reichel, C. (1998). *Your Path to Home Ownership*. Baton Rouge, La.; LSU AgCenter.

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This material is based on work supported by the Restoring Home Ownership in Louisiana Hurricane Recovery project funded in part by USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, Smith-Lever Special Needs project number 2007-41210-03986.

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 Pub. 3088-F 09/08

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

