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Things You Can Do For Free: A Guide to Better Home and Apartment Security for Older Americans

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Things You Can Do for Free:

A Guide to Better Home & Apartment Security for Older Americans

Security for your Home & Apartment - Things You can Do for Free

It is quite possible to spend several hundred dollars on fancy locks, alarm systems, or even a steel-plated door. *But what good does it do if you don't use them, or go on vacation and let the paper and mail pile up as a clear signal to the would-be burglar that no one is at home? The key thing to remember is that you want to make the would-be burglar believe your home is occupied, even when you are not at home.*

Did you know that there was a man in New Jersey who bought a steel-plated door for his apartment before he left for an extended vacation, *and then forgot to lock it.* Of course, his apartment was robbed.

Few persons make mistakes like that, *but most of us really don't practice good security habits.* It is said that wisdom comes with age. That may be true for many things, but not when it comes to crime prevention. As we live out our lives, we learn an occupation or trade, we learn to keep house, we learn a thousand different things. But do you remember your teachers, your parents, or even your friends telling you how to properly behave in order to make where you live more secure? *Most of us weren't so lucky.*

No home or apartment will ever be completely burglar-proof. Remember, most burglars are looking for opportunities, not challenges. If you put into practice good home security habits, you will decrease the chances that your home or apartment becomes an opportunity.

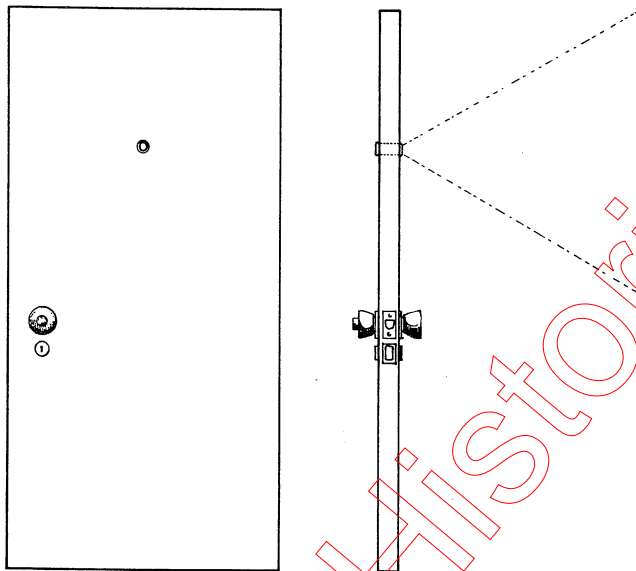
How Well Did You Score On The Crime Prevention Quiz?

Remember the crime prevention quiz? Questions 16 through 32 were about *Do you practice these safety habits?* To how many of these questions did you answer no? Let's go over each of the questions about safety features and talk about why you might have a security problem if you answered no.

16. Locking doors at night—This is a basic, simple rule to always follow. Some people pretend that if a criminal wants to break into their house, he will. But why invite illegal entry, especially when you are there in your house or apartment? If your doors are locked, then it is more likely that the would-be criminal will make noise (which he doesn't want to do). *This gives you time to react. Don't be caught by surprise.*

17. Locking doors during the day—did you say that you do not lock your doors during the day when you are at home? Not many people think about keeping the outside doors locked during the day. It seems unfriendly or something that only apartment dwellers would do. But think about this: if the TV is on, or your sweeper is running, could you hear anyone enter your home? Maybe not? Keeping your doors locked during the day may seem unfriendly, but your real friends will understand. *Don't be caught by surprise.*

18. Locking basement doors—It is easy to forget to lock basement doors. They somehow don't seem as important. Your security is only as good as the weakest point of entry. It does you no good to lock your first-floor doors and not do the same for your basement doors.



19. Using the peephole in your door—Remember to use the peephole or doorviewer if you have one in your door, and install one if you don't. Remember to ask repairmen, salesmen and others who claim to have business with you to show

positive identification. If you have any doubts whatsoever, telephone their superiors, using a number from the telephone directory, not one given to you by the person at the door. A peephole is a valuable aid to good crime prevention.

20. Locking doors and windows when you are not at home—did you say that you do not always lock your doors and windows, even when you will be gone for only a short time? Then you are inviting trouble. Even if you are gone for only a few minutes, a would-be burglar can gain easy entry into your home. For your personal safety, you certainly would not want to walk back into your house and discover someone there who isn't supposed to be. If you're coming and going all day, it seems like such an inconvenient thing to have to lock your doors and windows. *But shouldn't your personal safety be of greater convenience?*

21. Hiding door keys—Hiding door keys in such obvious places as under a door mat or in the mailbox is taking a big chance. Your best bet is to make sure that all members of your household, who are supposed to, have their own personal key. This way you won't need to hide one in places where a burglar might find it.

22. Locking your garage—did you say you do not always lock your garage door when you leave your home? Then you are asking for trouble. Not only might valuable garden tools be stolen, but if you store a ladder there, then a burglar could use it to gain entry into your house through the second floor. The garage could also provide a hiding place until you get home. Or a burglar might enter your home through an interior door between your garage and house. Once the burglar is inside your garage, chances are he will not be seen.

23. Locking garage windows—Why bother with an expensive garage door, or auxiliary garage door locks when the burglar could gain entry through the windows?

24. Keeping the car locked when in the garage—Keeping your car locked even when it is parked in your garage is a good idea. Remember, put as many obstacles in the way of the burglar as you can.

25. Leaving the car at a parking lot—When you take your car to be serviced, or leave it at a parking lot, leave only your car keys. Take the car key off of the key chain, and whatever you do, don't leave your house keys. This gives a dishonest employee a chance to get a duplicate made. Then it wouldn't make any difference what kinds of locks you put on your doors.

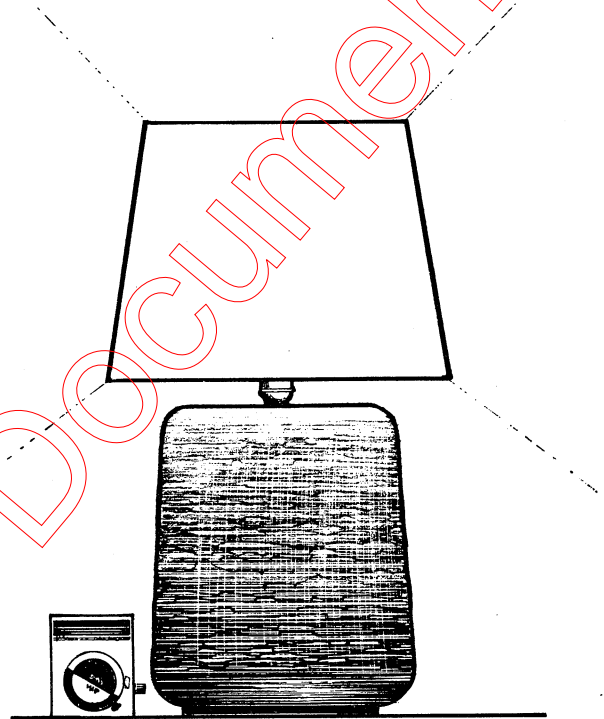


26. Emergency telephone numbers—can you write down the phone numbers of the police and fire departments, or the emergency service in your area? You should at least know one of these numbers. In times of an emergency you may not be able to get to a telephone directory. In times of emergency, every second counts. For your own safety,

EMERGENCY NUMBERS	
Police	_____
State Police	_____
Sheriff	_____
Fire Department	_____
Emergency Medical Service	_____
Doctor	_____
_____	_____

memorize one or more of these telephone numbers, and test yourself on occasion to see if you can remember it. Make it a game, and get together with some friends, and quiz each other.

27. Automatic timer—do you use your automatic timer when you leave your house? Especially in the evenings it is important to keep a light or two on in your house so it looks like you are home. If you will be gone for more than one day, the automatic timer will turn your lights on and off (or your TV or radio) according to how you set it. It works like an alarm clock, or the timer on your stove. Use it whenever you plan to go out for more than an hour or two. *Develop good crime prevention habits.*



28. Radio and television—To make your home look occupied when you are away (even for a few moments), leave a radio playing or the TV on. Many burglars are looking for unoccupied dwellings because they are easier targets.

29. Extended trips and mail delivery—do you arrange to have mail, milk, newspapers or other types of deliveries canceled while you are away for more than one day? Don't make your home look unoccupied.

30. Extended trips and lawn and sidewalk care—Making arrangements to have your grass cut or snow shoveled from your sidewalk whenever you are away from your home for a day or two seems like such an obvious thing to do. But have there ever been times that you forgot to make such arrangements? If you plan to go away for more than one day, sit down a week or so before your trip and write a reminder list of things you have to do. Don't forget to include on that list to cancel deliveries of mail, newspapers, etc., and also to make sure someone will cut your grass or shovel the snow. *There are so many other things to worry about when you go on a trip, it's easy to forget about something or other.* So make a list!!!

31. Extended trips and informing neighbors—One of the best ways to prevent crimes are good neighbors. If you have a neighbor you can trust, ask him to keep a close watch and encourage him to call the police about any suspicious activities. Leave information with them on where you can be reached in emergencies.

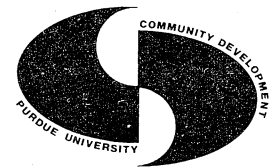
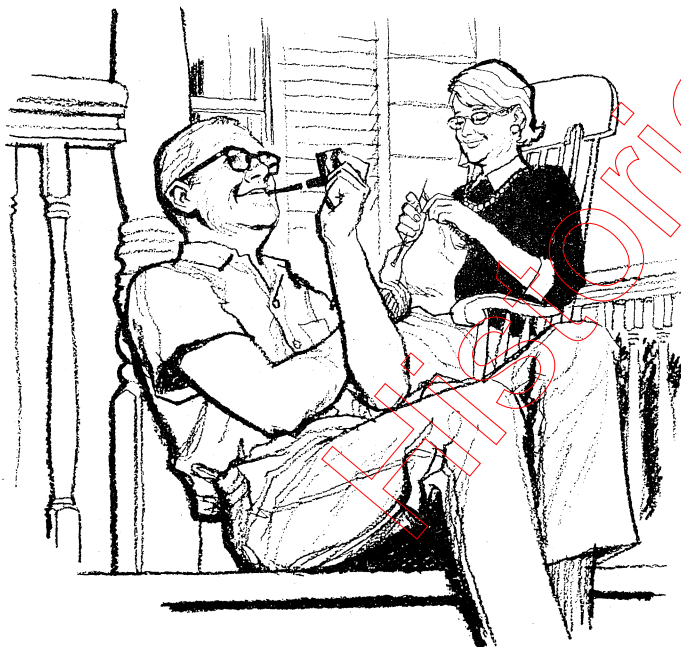
32. Extended trips and informing the police—It's also a good idea to tell your local law enforcement agency when you will be away from your home. They can spot-check your house and, together with your good neighbors, keep a close eye on where you live. *Don't forget to put on your reminder sheet to inform a responsible neighbor and the police that you will be going away on an extended trip.*

There are two important strategies you should remember for your own safety.

First, when you are at home, whether at night or during the day, make sure you keep your doors locked. Use the peephole to screen people at your door. Don't be caught by surprise. *Make sure you have time to react* if someone is attempting to illegally enter where you live while you are there.

Second, when you are away from home, make sure *your residence looks occupied*. Cancel deliveries and have the police and neighbors watch over your place.

Remember, be good to yourself, practice good crime prevention habits!!!



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