

# STEER CLEAR OF CAR CRIME



Security tips for motorists

Home Office

KEEP IT SAFE, KEEP IT HIDDEN, KEEP IT LOCKED

LET'S KEEP  
CRIME  
DOWN



# SECURITY TIPS FOR MOTORISTS

British Crime Survey statistics for 2005/06 indicate that all vehicle thefts account for 16% of all crimes in England and Wales.

Car crime can be distressing and annoying as it can cause a lot of inconvenience – you could be without a car for weeks, waiting for the garage to make repairs or for your insurer to pay. That's why the security features of your car should be as important as any other feature.

A lot of vehicle crime results from criminals seeing opportunities and taking them. But you can easily outsmart the car thief by following the simple advice given in this booklet.

**Remember, most car crime can be prevented.**

**Don't give criminals an easy ride.**



# SECURE Y

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR CAR SECURE

### KEEP YOUR VALUABLES AND POSSESSIONS SAFE

- **Don't leave anything on display in your car.** Even an old coat on the back seat is a temptation for someone to 'smash and grab' – they steal first and think about value later.
- **Take all your belongings with you when you leave the car.** If you can't, lock them in the boot, preferably before you start your journey.

**Never leave any of the following on display in your car as they are all particularly attractive to car thieves.**

Mobile phones

Laptop computers

Credit and debit cards

Cheque books

Cash

Vehicle registration documents

Private mail, especially with your address on it

**You can get more information about alarms, immobilisers and other security devices by phoning the Vehicle Security National Helpline on 0870 550 2006 or the Sold Secure Helpline on 01327 264687.**

# YOUR CAR

## SECURITY DEVICES

Locks or other security devices are always great ways to secure your car and put off would-be thieves.

**Electronic immobilisers** (which prevent the car from starting) are a sure way to put off car thieves, but they must be fitted by main dealers or installers accredited by the Vehicle Systems Installation Board. All new cars sold in the UK since October 1998 are fitted with electronic immobilisers.



**Mechanical immobilisers**, such as steering-wheel locks, are a good alternative to electronic immobilisers. They are not expensive and are easy to fit yourself.



**Fit locking wheel nuts**, as wheels are often a target for car thieves. Wheel nuts are not expensive and are easy to fit.



An **alarm** can help to keep your car secure but it must be installed professionally to be effective.



# SECURE YOUR

## KEEP YOUR CAR KEYS SAFE

When you leave your car, always remove the ignition key and lock all doors – it only takes a few seconds for a thief to jump into your car and drive away. Follow this routine all the time, even when filling up with petrol or just popping into the shop.

On icy mornings, **never** leave your vehicle unattended with the engine running to warm it up or defrost the windows.

At home, always keep your car keys in a safe place which is out of sight and away from windows and doors.



## ETCHING

Arrange to have your car's registration number etched onto **all** glass surfaces – including the headlamps. Or you could have the last 7 digits of the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN), or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognised database, etched in this way. Ideally, use a marking system associated with a database which keeps to the Loss Prevention Council (LPC) standards 1224 (requirement for secure database management for use in asset marking systems) and 1225 (specification for asset marking systems).



# YOUR CAR

## SECURITY MARKING

Consider marking all your valuables, especially those that you frequently take in your car. Mark items with your postcode or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognised database which meets the standards set out opposite. If any of your valuables have serial numbers, keep a note of them in a safe place. This should help the police return your possessions to you if they are stolen and recovered. It also helps to convict criminals.

The crime prevention officer at your local police station should be able to give you further information about marking schemes.

## DOORS AND WINDOWS

Lock all doors and close all windows and the sunroof **every time** you leave your car unattended – however briefly. Many cars get broken into in the few seconds that a car is out of the driver's sight. You should also have a fuel cap which locks.

**THIS ITEM IS SECURITY  
BRANDED AND CAN BE  
POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED**

**SECURITY MARKING** ✓



# SECURE Y

## CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

**Always** remove your in-car electronic equipment, particularly satellite navigation devices and car stereos, if you can – these are the most sought-after items in your car. With satellite navigation equipment remember also to remove any support cradle and suction pads, and wipe away any suction pad marks on the windscreen and dashboard as thieves will look out for these. All in-car electronic equipment – whether you can remove it or not – should be permanently marked, in a visible place, with the vehicle's registration number or some other unique identifying number linked to a recognised database which meets LPC standards 1224 and 1225. Make a note of the equipment's serial number and keep it in a safe place. When choosing electronic equipment, look for models with anti-theft security features.



## STOLEN GOODS

A lot of stolen items are sold on to the public. If you are offered a 'bargain' you could be buying something that has been stolen. Stick to reputable shops and dealers.



**If you have any information about criminal activity, particularly concerning cars stolen for spare parts or items stolen from cars and then sold to the public, you can contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111. You do not have to give out your name.**



# YOUR CAR

## PARKING

If you have a garage, use it. **Always** lock your car and garage. If you don't have a garage, always try to park in a well-lit, open place.

Thieves always like to steal from cars parked in places where they run the least risk of being seen. When you park your car away from home, always try to avoid places that:

- are unattended;
- have easy access;
- are concealed from public view; and
- have many escape routes.

Try to look for a public car park which is part of the police-approved '**Safer Parking Scheme**', which aims to make car parks safer and more attractive places by setting high crime prevention standards for design and also managing them. Car parks that meet the standards are entitled to display the official 'Park Mark™' plaque. For a list of safer car parks in your area, contact the crime prevention officer at your local police station, who will be happy to help, or visit [www.saferparking.com](http://www.saferparking.com)



# SECURITY

## BUYING A NEW CAR

**When buying a new car, always check what security features it has. You should insist that the model you intend to buy has built-in security features. You should also check what insurance group the exact model you are intending to buy is in. (All models of car are placed in one of 20 groups according to a number of factors, including the security features fitted as standard by the manufacturers.) The group your car is in can have a great effect on the premium you pay.**

**You can get information about insurance groups and how security can affect insurance premiums on the ABI website ([www.abi.org.uk/car insurance](http://www.abi.org.uk/car%20insurance)).**

**Below we have listed some of the security features that you should check for.**

- **An electronic immobiliser.** Since October 1998 car manufacturers have been fitting these in all cars sold in the UK.
- **A car alarm**
- Doors fitted with **deadlocks** (sometimes called double locking or super locking) or the new electronic locks.
- **A central-locking system**
- **A visible VIN** (Vehicle Identification Number). The VIN is the unique 17-digit number which identifies your car from every other one on the road. Most manufacturers now bond the VIN plate to the dashboard of the car so that it can be seen through the windscreen. A thief knows that if he steals a car marked in this way he will have to remove the whole



# Y CHECK

windscreen and damage the dashboard before he can sell it on. This cuts into his profit and can put the thief off. Visible VINs also help the police check a vehicle's identity.

- **Etching.** The vehicle's registration number or VIN etched on all glass surfaces (including headlamps) is another useful way of putting off thieves.
- **Security glazing.** Specially strengthened glass fitted to the side and rear windows of your car makes it much more difficult for a thief to break in, particularly if deadlocks have also been fitted. Unfortunately, this glass is not widely fitted by manufacturers. A British Standard for car security glazing (BSAU 209 Part 4A) was published in 1995, but it may be some time before this feature is standard on most cars.
- **Stereo.** Look for a stereo which has a removable front panel or a security code. Some manufacturers are now fitting stereo equipment which has its parts spread throughout the vehicle.
- **Lockable fuel cap**
- **Lockable wheel nuts.** These are especially important if you have expensive alloy wheels.
- **Tracking devices.** These enable a car to be tracked by the police or system operator if it is stolen. If you are buying a particularly desirable car, a tracking device will probably be a condition of your insurance.



# SECURITY

## BUYING A USED CAR

**When buying a second-hand car, think about the security features. Also, you should check to make sure that the car you are thinking of buying has not been stolen.**

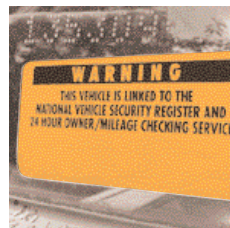
**Criminals will attempt to disguise the identity of a stolen car before selling it on to an innocent car buyer – a process commonly known as ‘ringing’. Although it is not usually a problem to buy a used car, it is always worth following the advice given below.**

- Consider checking with one of several private companies that hold information on vehicles whether the car you are interested in has been reported stolen, seriously damaged or is still subject to finance. Details can be found at the website [www.direct.gov.uk/motoring/buyingandsellingavehicle](http://www.direct.gov.uk/motoring/buyingandsellingavehicle)
- Be cautious if you're buying privately. Meet the seller at their house so you know their address and look for signs of car dealing, such as other vehicles lying around in various states of repair, or lots of spare parts scattered around the garage or drive.
- Check that the car's vehicle identification number (VIN), including any number etched onto glass surfaces, matches that on the documents. Also make sure that the vehicle registration document (V5) hasn't been tampered with.
- Be wary if there are any signs that etching has been removed.



# Y CHECK

- If there is a mark showing that the car is linked to a security register – check it out.
- Do not buy if the seller cannot produce the vehicle registration document.
- If you buy a car at an auction, take advantage of 'indemnity clauses'. For a small fee you are protected if you find you've bought a stolen vehicle.
- Consider having the vehicle professionally inspected before you buy (see the 'Contacts' section).



## SELLING TIPS

- When selling your car, it is worth remembering that thieves can pose as potential buyers.
- Never let the buyer go on a test drive alone. They may not come back.
- Don't leave the buyer alone with your keys in the ignition.
- Be careful about accepting cheques or banker's drafts. If they are fraudulent or counterfeit you will lose the money. If in doubt, contact your bank.

**The crime prevention officer at your local police station can give you a copy of the Home Office publication 'Car Theft Index'. This can help you to make an informed decision about the make of car to buy, as the index lists those cars with the highest levels of theft last year.**



## CONTACTS

**CRIME PREVENTION OFFICERS** – you can contact a crime prevention officer at your local police station for crime prevention advice and a list of secured car parks in your area.

**THATCHAM (The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre)** – for information on immobilisers and other vehicle security devices.

Colthrop Lane

Thattham, Berkshire RG19 4NP

Vehicle Security National Helpline

**Phone: 01635 862255**

**Website: [www.thatcham.org](http://www.thatcham.org)**

**SOLD SECURE** – for a list of recognised security products.

**Phone: 01327 264687**

**Website: [www.soldsecure.com](http://www.soldsecure.com)**

E-mail: [admin@soldsecure.com](mailto:admin@soldsecure.com)

### **ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH INSURERS**

**(ABI)** – for information on insurance group ratings and vehicle security.

51 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7HQ

**Phone: 020 7600 3333**

**Website: [www.abi.org.uk](http://www.abi.org.uk)**

E-mail: [info@abi.org.uk](mailto:info@abi.org.uk)

**VEHICLE SYSTEMS INSTALLATION BOARD** – for a copy of the list of fully accredited installation companies.

Bates Business Centre, Church Road  
Harold Wood, Romford, Essex RM3 0JF

**Phone: 01708 340911**

**Website: [www.vsib.co.uk](http://www.vsib.co.uk)**

**CRIMESTOPPERS** – if you have any information on car crime.

Crimestoppers Trust

Apollo House, 66A London Road

Morden, Surrey SM4 5BE

**Phone: 0800 555111**

**Website: [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org)**

Useful crime prevention advice, including this leaflet, can also be found on the crime reduction website.

**[www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)**





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