

# Vehicle Burglary and Theft Prevention



According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, over 773,000 motor vehicles were reported stolen in 2017. While auto theft has decreased over the last few decades, the Insurance Information Institute (III) notes that a vehicle is stolen every 40.9 seconds in the United States.

Thieves have gotten increasingly savvy, using smart keys to steal cars and switching vehicle identification numbers to avoid detection, says the III. So, how do you help protect yourself from becoming a victim of car theft? Be vigilant about securing your car, and take preventive measures to keep your car safe.

Here are 10 things you can do to help protect your car from theft.

## **1. Lock Your Doors**

Keeping your doors locked is the first step in deterring a thief. It's good to get into the habit of checking your car doors.

## **2. Remove Your Keys from the Vehicle**

Never leave your keys in the ignition, says the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB). If your key is in the car, a thief can simply break a window and drive off. Firestone also cautions against leaving your car running, even if you're just going into a store for a quick errand. A running vehicle may be an easy mark for a thief, especially if it is unattended or unlocked.

## **3. Do Not Leave a Spare Key Near Your Vehicle**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends taking your keys with you when you leave your car. Some people keep a spare key under the car or in the glove box, just in case they get locked out — but thieves know where to check for an extra key. While getting locked out of your car is a pain, think about the potential hassle of your car getting stolen.

## **4. Close the Windows**

Keep your windows closed completely, says the NICB. A thief can simply reach into your car through an open window — taking what they can reach or unlocking the door to gain full access to your vehicle and everything in it.

## **5. Park in Well-Lit Areas**

Avoid parking in areas that are poorly lit or places that are not immediately seen by passers-by. Firestone Complete Auto Care recommends parking under a light and in a well-trafficked area, as thieves may be deterred if they know they can easily be seen.

## **6. Install an Audible Alarm System and Anti-Theft Device**

The NHTSA recommends installing an audible alarm system, if your car did not come with one, and using a visible anti-theft device. An audible alarm is designed to emit a loud noise, often the car's horn, if someone attempts to enter the vehicle while the alarm is on. The unwanted attention attracted by the noise may chase off a potential thief, says the NHTSA. There are quite a variety of car alarms available, says Angie's List, but keep in mind that you may need to have a mechanic or alarm technician install it for you — especially if the installation requires working with the vehicle's wiring system.

Visible devices, such as a steering wheel lock, window etching or an alarm system's flashing light, may also be enough to deter a car thief, according to the NHTSA. If they are not sure they can get away with the car quietly or fear they may get caught, Firestone says they may just avoid your vehicle altogether.

## **7. Install a Vehicle Immobilizer System**

Thieves can bypass your ignition by “hotwiring” your car, but you can help prevent this by using a vehicle immobilizer system, says the NHTSA. According to the NICB, immobilizer systems may incorporate smart keys, kill switches and wireless ignition authentication. They'll essentially disable the vehicle so that a thief cannot make off with it. You may need to have a mechanic or technician who is familiar with the vehicle's wiring and computer systems install the immobilizer in your vehicle, says Angie's List.

## **8. Install a Tracking System**

You may want to consider installing a tracking system, which can also be called a vehicle recovery system. (As with the other alarms, you may need to have a professional install the device.) When your car is stolen, this tracking system will use wireless and/or GPS technology to emit a signal to the police or a monitoring service of your vehicle's location, says the NICB. This may help the police recover your vehicle faster.

## **9. Don't Leave Valuables in Your Car**

One way to attract a thief is to leave a purse, cell phone or another high-value item in a highly visible area of your car. It's best to leave anything of value at home, but, if you must have something important with you, keep it out of sight. Firestone also recommends putting valuables in the trunk before you get where you need to be, as some thieves scope parking lots — looking for people who are moving items to their trunk. Once you've left the vehicle, they'll break into the trunk to grab whatever you stashed away.

## **10. Be Alert**

Be aware of your surroundings when you park your car, says PropertyCasualty360.com. If you are wary of the safety of your car or see someone loitering around the parking lot, it's best to park somewhere else. Firestone also recommends double-checking that your vehicle's windows and doors are closed before leaving your car unattended.

## **What To Do If Your Car Is Stolen**

If your car is stolen, contact the police department immediately. The NHTSA says you may need to provide the following information to the police: The year, make, model and color of the car, license plate number, Vehicle Identification Number (also called the "VIN")

You'll also want to let your insurance company know within 24 hours if your vehicle has been stolen, says the NHTSA. While auto theft is not as common as it once was, it is unfortunately still something you need to protect yourself against. Thankfully, taking a few simple precautions may help you reduce the chances of your car being stolen.

Source: <https://www.allstate.com/blog/10-tips-to-avoid-car-theft/>