

TOP MISTAKES **THAT MAKE HOMEOWNERS** **PRIME TARGETS FOR BURGLARS**

- *3 Safest places to hide your valuables*
- *Why leaving the lights on when you go out is an invitation to burglars*
- *Why you should never display alarm company stickers on your door or window.*
- *And much more.....*

Most of us consider our home to be our haven, the place we go to feel safe. But every year, over 2 million homes are violated by burglars. That's a burglary every 15 seconds!

Many times, the victims are careful people who think they're doing all the right things. But in reality, they're making crucial mistakes that make them targets.

To get the best scoop on how to protect your home, the best source to consult is a reformed burglar. The former burglar that was consulted stole over \$70 million worth of jewelry during his career, and spent 11 years in prison for doing so. Here's what he has to say about the mistakes people make most often:

Mistake #1: Leaving the burglar alarm off when you're running out for a few minutes. Nearly all the houses we robbed had expensive alarm systems – and more than half the time, the alarms weren't turned on!

Mistake #2: *Posting detailed alarm signs. When you post a sign that identifies the alarm company. You've just given the burglar the information he needs to disable the alarm.*

Mistake #3: *Hiding valuables in the bedroom. It's the first place burglars look. They used to spend 15 minutes or less in each house they robbed. More than half that time was spent in the bedroom, checking the usual places – the under-wear drawer...under the mattress...high closet shelves, etc.*

Keep money or jewelry you rarely wear in a safe-deposit box. Hide other valuables in places where burglars don't think to look – in the garage, above removable ceiling tiles, the freezer or fake soup cans.

Don't hide all your valuables in one place. A burglar is less likely to get everything if you put items in different places.

Mistake #4: *Getting a big dog. A 100-pound Rottweiler or German shepherd might look scary, but burglars know better. Most big breeds, unless they are trained as guard dogs, aren't barkers. What you want are "yappers", small dogs that make a lot of noise. Breeds such as Chihuahuas or Pomeranians are better deterrents than large dogs.*

Mistake #5: Hiding windows with landscaping. Tall bushes and shrubs allow burglars to jimmy windows without being seen. Keep all bushes trimmed to below window level.

Also, don't count on thorny plants to prevent entry. Professional thieves routinely wear gloves and 2 layers of clothes – and carry cutting tools to remove any thorny obstacles that may get in their way.

Mistake #6: Leaving the lights on. A light that stays on all the time is no more of a deterrent than a dark house. In fact, it helps burglars see better once they're inside.

Better: Use timers that turn lights on and off in different parts of the house at different intervals. Electronics and home-improvement stores sell motion detectors that turn on lights or appliances if someone enters the house. They cost about \$20 each.

Mistake #7: Having newspaper and mail delivery stopped when you go away. You may trust your mail and newspaper carriers, but the fact is that you don't know who else is getting the information. Burglars get tips all the time about homeowners going on vacation. Keep your plans quiet. Have a neighbor or close friend pick up your paper or mail. Ask them to drop by at different times of the day. The more activity burglars see, the less likely they are to target your house.