



### Theft and Your Car

Did you know that nearly half of all auto thefts are due to driver carelessness, such as leaving doors unlocked or leaving keys in the ignition? In many cases, cars are stolen because the owner didn't take reasonable, common sense precautions. Unfortunately, if a professional criminal really wants to steal your car, there is little you can do to stop it. What you can do is discourage thieves by making your vehicle as difficult to steal as possible. The following safety tips can make your car less appealing to thieves and may help prevent car theft.

**Keep your vehicle locked at all times.** When you park your car, even in your own driveway, roll your windows all the way up and lock the doors. Resist the temptation to leave windows cracked open during warm weather. Leaving windows open, even just a little, encourages break-ins.

**Always take your keys with you.** An unlocked vehicle with a key in the ignition is an open invitation to any thief. Keep spare keys secure, never in or on your vehicle. Many people make the mistake of hiding a spare key in the wheel-well or some other place under their car for emergencies. The problem is, just like putting a spare house key under your doormat, criminals know all the hiding places.

**Never leave your car running and unattended.** Never leave your vehicle unattended while it's running. Leaving the car open with the keys in and engine running, for even a few seconds, is an open invitation for thieves. This type of crime can happen anywhere, but is especially prevalent at gas stations, ATMs and convenience stores. If you're not behind the wheel, you can deter car theft by turning off your vehicle.

**Keep personal items out of sight.** Never leave valuables like a laptop computer, briefcase, purse, wallet or cellphone in plain sight. Leaving anything of value on display, even small change, is enough incentive for some people to break in. It takes only seconds to smash a car window and steal your property, or your car. If you must leave valuables in your car, lock your belongings securely in the trunk, lockable glove box or console.

**Watch where you park.** Parking in a well-lit area will help deter criminals. Thieves are less likely to target your vehicle if passersby or cameras can easily see them. At home, lock the garage and your car. If you use a parking garage, try to park near a security camera or attendant, but keep in mind: thieves are more likely to try to steal cars close to exits for a quicker getaway. Try to park in the middle of a row in a heavily trafficked area.

**Invest in a vehicle security system.** If your car doesn't have an electronic engine immobilizer, consider having a professional install an approved system that disables the ignition, and activate it every time you leave the car. In addition to an electronic immobilizer, a visual and physical deterrent can put off potential thieves. Devices such as steering wheel, brake and wheel locks, as well as theft-deterrent decals, flashing lights and window etching create a strong disincentive that may well ward off thieves. Audible devices such as a horn alarm deter theft by emitting sound that calls attention to an unauthorized attempt to steal or enter your vehicle. Finally, consider a vehicle tracking and recovery system. If your car is stolen, it can be tracked and recovered using GPS, transmitter or similar technology.

You can't stop every crime or thwart every vehicle theft, but by following a few sensible precautions, your car can become a much less attractive target to would-be thieves. For more information, please visit the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website](#).

Visit [Allstate Be Aware and Prepare](#) and the [Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety](#) for more, helpful information.