

Do You Live in a Burglar-Friendly House?

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It's the last thing you want to hear when you've just been burgled, but the awful truth is that if you've been burgled once, you'll probably be burgled again. In fact, it's likely to happen another four or five times. Why? Because some of us have '**burglar-friendly**' houses.

1.

Burglars think that the bigger the house, the richer the **owners**. 'You can't do much about the size of your house,' says Professor Pease of Huddersfield University, 'but if it's large, you need to be even more careful than if it's small'.

2.

You should take a good look at your house – not you **normally** do, but as a burglar would. If you were a burglar, which home would you choose to **rob**, - a house with a shiny new car parked outside or one with a rusty vehicle? Anything which **signals** nice possessions and money will certainly catch the burglar's eye.

3.

People may complain about their nosy neighbors, but there's no better way of stopping burglars than having watchful neighbors around. If a house is far away from others, or **hidden** from the road, it is more **attractive** to burglars, who think they can get in and out without being noticed. So a burglar alarm is a good idea. And remember, you may get **privacy** from a tall **hedge** or a tall wall – but so does a burglar.

4.

Ian Stephen, who works with the Scottish prison service, believes that you're more **at risk** if your house looks nice. "Window-boxes, nice curtains and beautifully painted walls all tell the burglar you're **proud** of your home and care about your possessions and are more likely to have nice things in your house," he says. He advises people to try to make their homes look as plain as possible and not to draw attention to any new things they have bought by leaving the empty boxes next to the **dustbin**.

5.

People often leave a light on when they go out. "But be sensible," advises Ian Stephen. "Don't leave a light on in the hall as it never makes the burglars believe that you're in. Have you ever heard of a family enjoying an evening at home in the hall? Leave it on in the living room." An open window is also an open invitation to burglars. If you sometimes forget to shut and **lock** doors and windows, **stick** a note on the inside of the front door to **remind** you. And make sure any **ladders** are **put away** and not left outside where burglars can use them.

6.

By leaving newspapers and letters **sticking out** of the letter box, or full milk bottles on the **doorstep**, you are giving burglars the green light to break in to your home. Similarly, if you're away from the house at regular times – out at work or doing the shopping – then your home is also in danger of being burgled. Ask a neighbor to **keep an eye on** your house at these times.

7.

It's a good idea to take photos of your valuable possessions. By doing that, if you're burgled, you'll be able to identify stolen **property**, which could lead to the thief being put behind bars. It is also possible to label valuable items such as TVs and videos with your **postcode**. If they are stolen, this will make them easier to find. One more good idea is to ask a **crime prevention officer** to visit your home to identify weak points in its **security**.

- A. Houses which are very private are less safe.
- B. Make your possessions easy to identify.
- C. The first time you have your house broken into probably won't be the last.
- D. Burglars look at our houses differently to the way we do.
- E. Draw attention to your home to make it burglar-proof.
- F. Burglars are attracted by signs of absence.
- G. Large homes suggest large bank accounts.
- H. Lock up and turn the lights on.
- I. Don't let the outside show what's inside.