

# Home Security Challenge

Is your home likely to attract a potential burglar?



*Is the security in your home sufficient to frustrate a potential thief or increase their chances of being caught?*

*The Home Security Challenge was developed to give you an indication of the level of security in your home. Take the Home Security Challenge and learn how to improve your peace of mind in and around your home. Go through this checklist carefully and score five points for every "YES" answer. While making corrections to all of the issues addressed in this assessment will not make your home burglar proof, it will certainly improve your level of protection.*

## OUTSIDE THE HOME

*Are there clear views of all windows and doors?*

Yes  No

The more private an area is, the more likely it is to attract the attention of a burglar. Trim trees and shrubs that block straight lines to your windows and doors, particularly side yard windows.

*During the evening is there visible interior or exterior lighting that gives the impression that you are home, even if you're not?*

Yes  No

Install outside lighting to eliminate dark areas around doors or windows. Use motion lights with a low intensity feature as an alternative to bright constant level lighting.

*Is the access to your side and back yards secured?*

Yes  No

Burglars frequently break into houses via side or back door windows to avoid detection. Securing access to these areas can help deter burglaries.

## DOORS

*Is there a convenient way of clearly seeing who is at your door without opening it?*

Yes  No

Every entrance door should have a convenient way of clearly seeing who is there without opening it. For most doors this will require the installation of a wide angle lens peephole. Alternatively a locked screen door provides an additional level of security. Chain locks should not be used as a security device as they can easily be broken. A locked screen door also provides additional security to any door.

*Do all of your exterior doors have a deadbolt with at least a one inch throw?*

Yes  No

Criminals with tools easily defeat conventional key in the knob locks. Deadbolts should be installed on all exterior doors.

**EL CERRITO POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**10900 SAN PABLO AVENUE**

**EL CERRITO, CA 94530**

**(510) 215-4400**

**(510) 237-3233 – DISPATCH**

**911 – EMERGENCY**

## DOORS (CONTINUED)

***Are the screws that secure your entry doors and the strike plates located on the door jamb opposite the lock at least 2 ½ inches long?***

Yes  No

Door kick break-ins to homes are becoming common. Most door installations use screws less than 1" in length. To secure a door properly the screws should be at least 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches long, and the strike plate should have a minimum of four offset holes.

***Have you taken steps to reinforce any windows located in or next to doors?***

Yes  No

Glass within 40 inches of a door lock can be broken and a criminal can reach inside to unlock the door. The security of windows at the sides of doors can be improved by adding a polycarbonate panel (available at home improvement centers).

## SLIDING DOORS

***If you have a sliding door, do you have screws in the top of the track to prevent the door from being lifted out when they are in the closed and locked position?***

Yes  No

There is a 1" gap at the top of sliding doors, which allows them to be lifted in and out of their tracks. The addition of 3 flat headed wood screws in the upper track of the doors in the closed position will prevent criminals from lifting them out.

***If you have a sliding door, do you have either a broom stick in the bottom track or a security bar to prevent the door from opening?***

Yes  No

The standard locking pin on sliding doors is usually cast metal, which is weak and easily broken. A snug fitting broom stick or security bar should be added to the door to prevent it from being pried.

## WINDOWS

***Do the sliding windows of your home have a: "pin" (removable nail like object drilled through the overlapping vertical frame at a downward angle), piece of wood in the track beside and above the window frame or secondary aftermarket locking device?***

Yes  No

Most window locks are easily broken. Criminals target sliding windows because they are easy to jimmy open. To prevent quiet entry, add one or more of the security measures mentioned above. Remember, it is important that you can escape in the event of fire when using a barrier type countermeasure.

***Do the double hung (moves up and down) windows of your home have a pin secondary aftermarket locking device?***

Yes  No

## GARAGE DOORS

***Do you always close and lock your garage door?***

Yes  No

Thefts from garages are one of the most common yet easily prevented crimes. Keep garage doors closed and locked. Keep ladders in the garage or otherwise secured.

## VALUABLES

***Do you limit your exposure to risk by storing valuables in a safe or keep them in a safety deposit box?***

Yes  No

Criminals typically ransack or search a residence for valuable property. Keeping your access in a safe which is secured is a great way to protect your valuable property.

***Have you marked all valuables with an engraver to assist in the recovery of goods in the event they are lost or stolen?***

Yes  No

Engraving your property with an Operator Applied Number assists the Police Department with the recovery of your property in the event that it is stolen. Law Enforcement has access to a nationwide database that queries serial numbers.

**NEIGHBORS:**

***Do you know your neighbors across the street and on all three sides of you?***

Yes  No

***Are you involved in Neighborhood Watch?***

Yes  No

Neighborhood Watch is a great way to help increase the safety of your neighborhood. The goal is for neighbors to watch out for one another. The City supplies information to these neighborhood groups and assists them in various crime prevention techniques. Interested in joining or starting a Neighborhood Watch program? Learn more at the El Cerrito Police Department webpage: [www.el-cerrito.org](http://www.el-cerrito.org).

**WHEN AWAY:**

***When you are away from home do you leave lights on timers both inside and outside the home?***

Yes  No

Timers make a home look lived in and will potentially avoid leaving your home in darkness or leaving the outside lights on during the day.

***Do you have a trusted neighbor or friend pick up your mail, newspapers and flyers when away for more than a day?***

Yes  No

The accumulation of mail, newspapers and flyers is a sure sign that nobody's home. Avoid sending the wrong message to burglars.

***When you go out of town, do you contact the Police Department and notify us that you are on vacation?***

Yes  No

Prior to every shift, Patrol officers attend a briefing where the vacation log is reviewed. Officers will periodically check your residence to make sure that it is secure.

***Do you have a burglary alarm system?***

Yes  No

An alarm system is an excellent deterrent to residential burglary. They not only deter thieves but also notify the police department, should your house be broken into. Please visit the El Cerrito Police Department webpage for more information on residential burglary alarms.

**RESULTS:**

To calculate your score, multiple every "YES" answer by five.

- 100% Excellent
- 90% You are almost there
- 80% You have a little work left to do
- 70% Your home would benefit from further security measures.
- 60% Its time to address your security needs.
- 50% Improve your security. Don't delay.
- 0-50% Your home is vulnerable – take action!

Your results reflect the level of security your home has in relation to the most common security weaknesses. Please review your security as all of the above changes to your home can, in most cases, be done at a reasonable cost. The results are substantial considering the amount of money and time invested in your home. While making the suggested improvements to your home will not make your home burglar proof, it will certainly enhance the level of safety you feel at your residence.

If you would like an El Cerrito police officer to come to your home and conduct a security assessment, please contact us.



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*The El Cerrito Police Department is committed to service, safety and enhancing the public trust through professionalism and leadership.*