

# Home Security



Stolen Christmas - 5 ways to prevent horrible holiday crimes at home

Don't let a Grinch ruin your Christmas. HouseLogic has five tips to keep your home safe and sound this season.

With Christmas just around the corner, home owners are neck-deep in decorations and last-minute shopping, excited to soon share their holiday cheer with loved ones. But thieves and vandals also have something to look forward to in the holiday season. Cars and homes filled with easy-to-grab boxed goodies and lawns decked out with opulent embellishments make tempting targets for predators. To help you make sure the naughties don't ruin it for the nice, HouseLogic presents a few tips for protecting your home.

### **1. Keep your “check-ins” in check.**

Three months ago in Nashua, N.H., burglars targeted a home because the occupant told his Facebook “friends” he was going out of town. Announcing to your whole social network that you're not home or that you just received an expensive present may not be a good idea. The ACLU and others have cautioned against posting information about where you are and what you do. If it falls into the wrong hands, the consequences could be dangerous.

It's also something to think about if you're out shopping for good deals. Through location-based applications such as Facebook Places and Foursquare, vendors are offering valuable promotions to shoppers who “check-in” at participating stores. But broadcasting this type of information could cost you more than it could save.

#### *Protect yourself:*

Never allow check-ins at your own home (you'll be alerting potential thieves to your address).

Don't make comments about items you've purchased or received as gifts.

Don't check in online when you're out of town.

Limit sharing information to friends and family by only accepting people you know as friends and followers.

## **2. Remember to lock your door.**

There's something Iraq War veteran and Rhode Island resident Christopher Adamovich, recipient of three purple hearts, will never again forget—to lock his back door. Last Christmas, the first he had planned to celebrate in his newly bought home, he was robbed. Thieves entered through the unlocked back door and made off with hundreds of dollars of presents, including a Nintendo Wii, a Sony DVD player, and assorted toys.

This type of scenario isn't uncommon. Security company ADT says 40% of all burglaries are termed as "no force entries." That means the predators gain entry through unlocked doors and windows.

*Protect yourself:*

Check all doors and windows are locked and that your deadbolt (if you have one) works.

## **3. Don't give vandals a chance to act.**

In 2009, a North Carolina family decided to turn their front yard into a winter wonderland, complete with inflatable Winnie the Pooh and Grinch figures, to celebrate their little boy's second birthday. It was a momentous occasion—their little one suffered from a rare bone disease and wasn't expected to live long. Sadly, he has since passed away.

During the display's first night out, before they could show it off to little Ethan in the morning, vandals slashed the larger-than-life characters. Some acts of vandalism are premeditated and some are spur of the moment, but both leave you with expensive property damage and a ruined holiday.

*Protect yourself:*

Install motion detector lights on all sides of your house, and if possible make sure they're visible from the road.

## **4. Deny easy access to the garage.**

In November, a Corpus Christi, Texas, family left their garage door opener in their truck overnight. To their dismay, they woke up to discover thieves

had used it to gain access to their garage. All the tools, a lawn mower, and other equipment were stolen—along with all of the Christmas presents the family had stored in the garage for their daughter.

It's convenient to keep the garage door opener in the car for easy access. It's also just the kind of thing observant criminals are on the lookout for.

*Protect yourself:*

Never leave your garage door opener in your car.

Always make sure your garage door is closed and locked, with the inside door secure.

Don't tempt fate—try not to use the garage as a hiding place for gifts.

## **5. Display the tree, not the gifts.**

For many families, a perfectly picturesque holiday includes the Christmas tree, all done up with lights, ornaments, and beautifully wrapped gifts, displayed in front of the living room window. Trouble is, it's a scene crooks also like to see.

*Protect yourself:*

Don't put out your gifts until Christmas Eve.

Dispose of product boxes at a recycling center, not your garbage cans.

All it takes is one thief's determination to potentially ruin your holiday. Remain vigilant this Christmas