

Car Security

Doors and windows

Lock your doors, windows, boot and sunroof every time you leave your car.

Keys and immobilisers

Remove the ignition key every time. Always set the immobiliser, even when filling with petrol or popping into a shop.

If you do not have an immobiliser, seriously consider having one fitted.

Steering lock and other security devices

Always use them.

A lockable petrol cap forces thieves to abandon your car when it runs out of petrol.

Valuables and other possessions

Never leave them on display. If you can't take them from the vehicle, lock them in the boot.

In particular, NEVER leave the following anywhere in the car:

- cheque book and credit cards;
- driving documents and personal correspondence;
- mobile phones. Forty per cent of car break-ins involve the theft of a mobile phone. Property mark your phone and battery and keep details of serial numbers in a safe place;
- radio/cassette players.
- GPS units

Always remove them. All equipment should be marked visibly and permanently with the vehicle registration number - keep details of serial numbers in a safe place.

Etching

Have all the glass surfaces of the vehicle etched with the vehicle registration number. This includes side windows and headlamps.

Aerials

When parked, put the aerial down.

Security when driving

Keep valuables out of sight and keep all doors and windows locked. Thieves have stolen handbags by opening car doors or breaking windows while vehicles have been stationary or in slow-moving traffic.

Security when parking

If you have a garage USE IT AND LOCK IT. If you do not have a garage, park your vehicle on the drive or in a well-lit, open location.

Thieves target car parks. Look for one that is well managed with restricted entry and exit points, good lighting and security cameras.

If possible, use the police 'SECURED CAR PARKS' scheme.

This shows that the operator is meeting conditions that create a safer parking environment. Holders of the award display a plaque and road signs indicate its location.

Buying a new car

It is a fair assumption that if you buy a new car it should be SECURE.

Insist on a model with built-in security features.

Look for:

- An immobiliser - most manufacturers now fit these as standard.
- Doors fitted with deadlocks - sometimes called double locking. Or you could have doors fitted with new electronic locks.
- A central locking system.
- Visible VIN - Vehicle Identification Number. The VIN is a seven-digit number which identifies your car from every other car on the road. Some manufacturers now bond the VIN plate to the dashboard so that it is visible through the windscreen. A thief knows that if they steal a car marked in this way they will have to remove the whole windscreen and damage the dashboard before they can sell it on. This cuts into profit and acts as a deterrent. A visible VIN also helps the police check a vehicle's identity.
- Removable panel and/or security-coded car stereo equipment - some manufacturers now fit stereo equipment with component parts dispersed throughout the vehicle. Some cars are fitted with stereos that don't fit into other makes of vehicle.
- Etching - the vehicle registration number and/or VIN etched on all glass surfaces is a further deterrent to theft.
- Lockable fuel cap.
- Car alarm.
- Wheel nuts - especially if you have expensive alloy wheels.
- Security glazing - specially strengthened glass fitted to the side windows of your car makes it much more difficult for a thief to break in, particularly if deadlocks have also been fitted. However, a British Standard for car security glazing has only recently been agreed so it may be some time before this feature is standard on most cars.
- Tracking devices - you may wish to check whether a vehicle tracking device can be supplied. These enable a car to be tracked by the police or system operator if it is stolen.

Buying a second-hand car

Many cars are stolen in order to be sold to innocent purchasers. Although the majority of used car sales cause no problems, always consider the following:

- Does the dealer use the services of HPJ Equifax or CCN Motor file? These two organisations can confirm whether or not a vehicle:
 - has been reported stolen;
 - has been written off by an insurance company;
 - is subject to outstanding finance.
- Be cautious with small ads.
- Check that the vehicle details on the car are the same as the vehicle documents.
- Be wary if there are signs that marks or etchings have been removed.
- If there is a mark showing the car is linked to a security register - CHECK IT OUT.
- Don't buy if the seller cannot produce the registration document.
- If you buy at auction, take advantage of indemnity clauses.

A small fee is charged but you are protected if you subsequently find you've bought a stolen car.

- Consider having the vehicle professionally inspected.