

8 Great Car Security Tips

In the UK, car crime is a depressingly common occurrence - and partly responsible for the price we pay for car insurance. But there are plenty of security measures that can easily be taken to help prevent you from becoming a victim - and what's more, some of these measures could also get you a reduction in the cost of car insurance.

1. Car Alarm

Car alarms aren't just about waking the neighbours at three in the morning when a big lorry trundles past, they're also about alerting you to the fact that some unscrupulous so-and-so could be meddling with your motor. Although they can't physically stop a car (or valuables kept inside) from being stolen, a thief will likely think twice before tackling a set of wheels that he or she knows will get everyone's attention if the alarm's set off. The threat of a piercing sound and flashing lights is a powerful deterrent, and some alarms also come with a pager to alert you if they are activated. Most modern cars come pre-equipped with an alarm, but if you drive an older vehicle, getting an alarm professionally fitted will help secure your car and could result in [cheaper car insurance](#).

2. Car Immobiliser

An immobiliser is an electronic device which prevents a car from being started by someone who doesn't have the proper key. Although an immobiliser won't stop a car from being broken into, it may stop it from being stolen. And even if a thief can somehow start an immobilised car, the extra time this would take would very likely dissuade them from even attempting it. Since 8 October 1998, all new UK cars have had immobilisers fitted as standard, but if you drive an older car, getting an immobiliser professionally fitted will help secure your car and could mean cheaper car insurance.

3. Car Tracking Systems

Car tracking systems require a transmitter to be hidden in your car. If stolen, the vehicle can then be tracked and recovered. There are two main types of tracker: GPS systems can find your car whilst it's at street level, and VHF systems can find your car even if it's hidden in an underground car park or storage container. However, tracking systems can be quite expensive, often requiring a significant monthly subscription charge.

4. Steering Locks/Gearstick & Handbrake Locks

These tough metal locking devices prevent the steering wheel, gearstick or handbrake from being used when the car is not in use. They are relatively cheap to buy (prices start at around £20), but in general, the more you pay, the better the security. Although not impenetrable to a seasoned car thief, the real value of these locks is as a visual deterrent. Their bright colour (sometimes with flashing lights) lets a thief know that this car will take longer to pinch, so they may as well move along and try their luck on an easier steal.

5. Secure Parking

If your home has a driveway, or better still a garage, then use it. Cars parked off-street are far less likely to be stolen than those parked on the road. When away from home, try and leave your car in a secure car park - one with a ticket barrier or attendant. If you have to park on the street, do so in a busy, well-lit area, and if at all possible, beneath the gaze of a CCTV camera.

6. Hide Valuables

It's not just car thieves you have to worry about, there are plenty of crooks out there who are simply after your valuables. Therefore, never leave expensive goodies out on display within your car - it's just too tempting for the opportunistic thief. Sat Navs, mobile phones, CDs, laptops, briefcases, jackets and sunglasses are all fair game - so make sure you hide them out of sight in the glove compartment or boot.

7. Don't Forget to Lock Your Car

This may seem like a no-brainer, but plenty of cars get stolen as a result of forgetful owners. Even if you're only leaving the car for a short while - at a petrol station, for instance - your vehicle, or any valuables left on the seat, are at a very real risk of theft. The same goes for windows and sunroofs - always close them when you leave the car, no matter how short a time you're away (the exception, of course, is if you have a pet on board - in which case just leave a small gap). But worse than leaving a car unlocked is leaving a car unlocked and with the key still in the ignition - that's just making a car thief's job too easy. So try and get into the habit of checking the door handles every time you leave the car. One more thing - once you get home,

don't leave the car keys on a table near your front door. Thieves have been known to pop a coat hanger through the letterbox to hook the key ring.

8. Marking/Etching

Marking and Etching are ways of stamping your car with a unique identifier. Marking can be as basic as writing on various parts with an 'invisible' ultra-violet pen, or as sophisticated as covering the car with thousands of micro dots - each encoded with your identifiable details. Etching involves engraving your car's serial number or registration number into the windows and light covers of your car. Of course, none of these methods will stop your car being stolen, but they can act as a deterrent and will certainly help make it more recoverable if stolen.

About the Author

And finally...if you're thinking of buying a car, you can get an idea of how safe and secure it is by checking out its Thatcham New Car Security Rating. And don't forget to protect your car even further by covering it with comprehensive [car insurance](#).

Source: <http://www.car-articles.co.uk>