

SELF DEFENCE TO AVOID A HOME INVASION

These simple precautions will help you to protect yourself, family, your home and property

- Never open the door until you can establish the identity of the person on the doorstep. (Collectors for legitimate charities should have identification).
- Outside doors should be solid core and installed with deadbolts of at least an inch and a half throw, all door hardware should have at least 3" screws that go through the frame.
- Use door chains. You can purchase strong devices which allow you to open the door a few inches, but will prevent someone from pushing the door open from the outside.
- Keep trees and shrubs around windows trimmed for best visibility of entrances.
- Have a safe room in your house where you can go and lock the door. Make sure there is access to a phone in this room.
- Never confront an intruder if possible.
- If escape is not an option cooperate with the intruder.
- Install an alarm system and consider a personal alarm which can be worn as a pendant.
- If you have elderly neighbours, assist them with safety measures and check on them often.
- Report suspicious activity to the police, if it is a crime in process call 000 (in Australia).
- Join the Neighbourhood Watch Program. Get to know your neighbours - watching out for each other will create a safer neighbourhood.
- When away on holiday or for extended periods of time
- Do not leave newspapers in your front yard or driveway.
- Have your newspaper, deliveries and mail delivery suspended. If you don't have time to do this, ask a neighbour to pick them up for you.
- Close and lock your garage door when not in use.
- Do not leave mail in your mailbox or flyers stuck on your door.

- Do not keep windows hidden by making sure bushes cover them.
- Have a neighbour check your home.
- Do not leave a key under a doormat or in a nearby flowerpot.
- Do not leave windows unlocked or open.
- Buy electronic timers that turn lights on and off at different times. Hook up a timer to your TV for a few hours each evening. Turn up the volume, too--not enough to annoy the neighbours, just enough that a lurker at the windowsill couldn't miss hearing it.
- Think about having someone housesit your home.

IN THE GARDEN

- In general, don't leave anything around the yard that might help a thief get into your house: ladders, stackable boxes or any garden tools should be put away, preferably in a locked shed.
- Install a light in your yard that is sensitive to movement. Place it high and out of reach.
- Trim hedges or bushes that are near doors or windows. These can be good hiding places.
- Don't place outdoor furniture tables nearby the house. These could become an easy stepladder to the roof.

PROTECT YOUR VALUABLES

- Don't leave your valuables (stereo, computer, jewellery, etc.) where they can be seen from the window. If you don't want to hide everything from sight, consider draperies and blinds.
- Make a valuables inventory. Keep a record of your expensive and personally significant items--not just a listing, but a photographic or videotape record if possible. Store this inventory at another location. This is helpful for both the police and the insurance agency to identify the stolen goods.
- Use an engraving pen to mark these items with some kind of personal identifying information, such as your initials, in an inconspicuous place. This also helps record your possessions in case of any other mishap, such as fire or flood.

SECURE THE DOORS

- If you don't have a peephole, install one in the front door. If you have one, make sure that you and your family are in the habit of using it.
- Don't open the door to anyone you don't know, especially at night.
- Teach children not to open doors without knowing who is at the door or to advise an adult that there is someone at the door.
- If there's any glass within two feet of your front door lock, consider a locking device that would be out of reach if that glass was broken.
- Don't leave windows and doors open during the night whether you're home or away. That's a common-sense precaution, but a surprising number of people forget to do just that.