

HOME SECURITY

Best Buy padlocks, domestic safes and window locks, plus security advice

Contrary to popular belief, the number of burglaries is falling, from 1,770,000 in 1995 to 943,000 in 2004. Police say this is partly due to a more security-conscious public.

Most burglars are lazy; they look for easy ways to get in. So we went along to the house of John and Sally Evans from Bromsgrove to advise on weak points in their security that a burglar might spot.

Sally is returning to work after maternity leave and the couple are worried about leaving their house empty during the day. Accompanied by two leading security experts, we visited them to see what advice we could offer.

HOUSE AND GARDEN

'It looks like they're on holiday,' our expert said as he arrived. 'Their front lawn needs a trim.'

If your home looks empty you may attract the unwelcome gaze of a burglar. Simply by regularly maintaining areas that can be seen by passers-by you will be less of a target.

It's also best not to leave household items lying around the garden. We found a ladder on the Evans' lawn, and a spade and rake that were easily accessible in the greenhouse. These could be used to force entry into the house. We also found two bikes in an unlocked summer house that could easily be taken.

Luckily, the location of the Evans' home provides a good deterrent to the typical burglar. The house is set back and elevated. It's easily visible to neighbours and there's nowhere for thieves to hide. At the rear it backs on to other houses, preventing access to the back garden.

But the gate along the side of the house, separating the front and back gardens, is low and easy to climb over. It's best to have a tall gate and fence – about 1.8 metres high – to discourage thieves. Adding a trellis along the top of a fence is another option, as it's flimsy and difficult to climb.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

The windows on John and Sally's house are double glazed and fitted with key-operated window locks, which provide good security. The more visible window locks are, the more they act as a deterrent. For more on which locks are best, see p49.

Don't leave keys in the locks. Put them out of view but make sure they can be found by your family – you don't want to be trapped in a fire.

And if you are buying new windows, make sure they are built to comply with British Standard 7950, which means they are certified as secure.

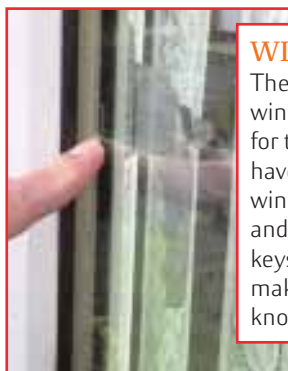
Front doors should be fitted with a deadlock, so that when you leave the house you can turn the key and securely bolt your door shut. Most insurance companies recommend you have a lock that complies with British Standard 3621:2004. This indicates that the lock is a deadlock with either five levers or pins, which means it has five locking actions inside the lock, making it hard to pick. But be wary of using the deadlock while in the house, especially if the door is your main escape route during a fire.

It's worth fitting a slam lock to your front door as well as a deadlock. If you walk into your house with heavy shopping, you can kick the door shut and the spring-based latch will lock the door, preventing anyone coming in behind you. If you buy a new door, it should comply with British Standard PAS24. Additionally, hinges are often the weakest part of a door. Hinge bolts can be fitted to them, giving added protection by stopping thieves from kicking in the door.

John and Sally had no lock on their patio door. It simply latched shut. We told them to get one fitted immediately. Most patio doors work in a similar

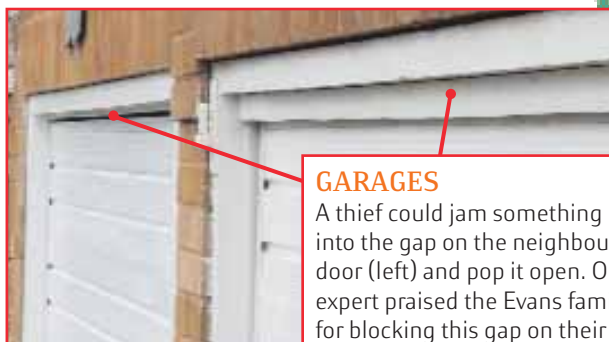
WINDOW LOCKS

The sight of a key in the window lock is tempting for thieves. All they have to do is smash the window, turn the key and they're in. Put the keys out of sight but make sure occupants know where they are.



GARAGES

A thief could jam something into the gap on the neighbour's door (left) and pop it open. Our expert praised the Evans family for blocking this gap on their garage door on the right.



NEED TO KNOW

PADLOCKS

Putting a decent padlock on your shed will help stop thieves stealing tools that they can use to break into your home.

A good rule of thumb is to check what a padlock's made of. Steel locks are robust but can rust in a couple of years if exposed to a lot of rain and wind. Brass or stainless steel are less secure but more durable – so will last longer if you live by the sea, where the salt in the air can corrode the metal. Our Best Buy results are on p46.

SAFES

Documents such as passports can be used by thieves trying to steal an identity. A good safe is an ideal way to keep important items secure.

It should be professionally bolted down in a space that is difficult for a thief to access – under the stairs, for example. Our Best Buys are on p48.

WINDOW LOCKS

It's important to have window locks that are easy to operate so that you won't be tempted to leave them open when you go out. On p49 we've brought forward the Best Buys from our last test. All are both easy to use and secure.

CURTAINS

Our expert spotted all the valuable tools and equipment on display in the garden shed. A curtain on this window would prevent a thief from seeing the contents and being tempted to break in.

ABANDONED TOOLS

The ladder, left, would help a burglar to reach upstairs windows. The spade in the open greenhouse, right, would make a handy lever to force entry into John and Sally's home. Lock up all tools and equipment securely in a shed or garage.

LOW GATE

It wouldn't take much effort to climb over this low gate leading to the back garden from the front of the house. Installing a taller gate and fence of around 1.8 metres would dramatically improve security. And don't forget to keep the gate shut.

way to cupboard sliding doors. If you can get them off the runners, you can lift them out. To stop this, fit anti-lift blocks at the top and bottom of the doors.

While storing all your keys next to the front door is convenient, it's not secure. If an intruder does get in, they can easily steal your car, too, if the keys are handy. And thieves will break into your house just to steal your car, our expert says.

SHEDS

Theft of garden equipment is a growing menace. Burglars will often use tools they find in an unlocked shed to break into your house. So fit a secure lock to your shed. The lock fittings should be bolted through the shed door and reinforced at the back with a steel plate. The padlock should be strong and visible. We encouraged the Evanses to put a curtain across their shed window to hide the contents so that they don't tempt a thief to break in.

GARAGES

'Garage doors are a notorious weak point in home security. The locks that are supplied are pretty useless,' our expert warned.

Many garage doors have a gap at the top. If a burglar can squeeze an object through that, it's possible to use it to open the door. To prevent this, the Evanses placed a wooden strip across the top to block the gap (see 'Garages', p44).



There are several other ways to secure your garage. First, fit a defender lock – a metal arm that fixes to the drive, preventing the garage door being opened (see above).

If you have an 'up-and-over' garage door, a cheap and cheerful option is to drill a hole through the runner and pop a padlock through – this helps stop the door being opened from the outside.

Since garage doors are often weak spots, once in, thieves can get into your home via the internal door. 'If you have a door that leads from your garage to your house make sure it has the same standard of security as an external door,' our expert advises. John and Sally's door didn't even shut properly.

VALUABLES

We advised John and Sally to list all their valuables. It's also a good idea to photograph the items so you have the information and proof you'd need for an insurance claim. You can buy ultra-violet pens to mark your property with your name and postcode. This is a good idea as it can speed up the recovery process if the police find your belongings.

If you have lots of small valuables and important documents, invest in a Best Buy document safe (see p48). As well as protecting smaller items of sentimental value, it could also save you from the further pain of identity theft.

Finally, if you're still worried about security, follow our expert's advice: 'Ask yourself: if I were to lock myself out of my house, how would I get back in? If you can find a way, then a burglar certainly will.'

PADLOCKS

BEST BUYS

The best padlocks slow down a thief the longest and are noisy to break open.

Our Best Buys stand out from the rest on test because they offer a good combination of security, ease of use and resilience to the elements. On most of our timed tests, which included picking the lock for four minutes and drilling it open for two minutes, our experts couldn't break into them. If a padlock can last this long, the average thief would probably give up.

Our Best Buys were also durable. All lasted at least the equivalent of one year on Blackpool sea front (or many years in a non-coastal area) in our simulated corrosion vault – so you should have no trouble leaving them out in the rain.



1 Abus 83%

£28. Call 01758 701 070 for stockists

Best on test was the Abus. Its stainless steel body combined with its double-bolted steel shackle gives it both the security and durability you'll want.

It sports a couple of nice added features to help bolster its strength. Its internal anti-pick disc prevented even our expert lock pickers from prising it open. It also has a drill-protected key hole to slow the thief down. Our experts gave up trying to drill it open after two minutes – the amount of noise it created would probably be too much for the average thief.

Our only slight criticism of it is its relatively small size, which does not give it the high visibility of some of the other models on test. The more visible the padlock is, the more it can act as a deterrent to a thief.

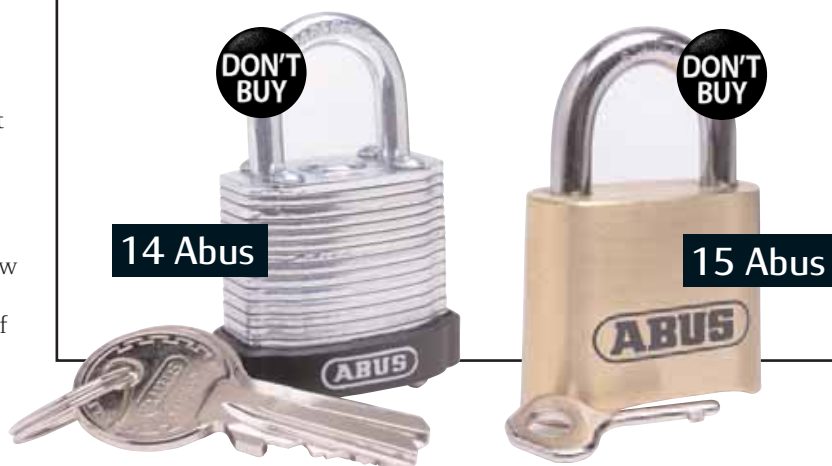
DON'T BUY

Abus has the dubious honour of being both best and worst on test. The Abus (15) is truly awful and should be avoided at all costs. It scored just six marks because of its abysmal security and durability. Its small and flimsy-looking shackle won't deter thieves, who

could regard it as a bit of a pushover. And they'd be right – our experts could saw it open in only 17 seconds.

If that wasn't bad enough, it rusted badly in our simulated coastal environment – so if a thief doesn't get to it, the weather will.

The Abus (14) is another padlock to avoid. Although the combination of brass and stainless steel prevents it from rusting easily, its small and weak shackle meant it broke open with one sixth of the force needed to open the Abus (1).





2 Kryptonite

2 Kryptonite 79%

£49. Call 01908 326 000 for stockists

The Kryptonite is the most expensive padlock on test, but its all-round excellence means that it is well worth paying that little extra for it. It's made of stainless steel and is one of the most durable padlocks – it was still looking great after the equivalent of a year left out on Blackpool sea front. So it's the ideal purchase if you get a lot of wind and rain where you live.

It's not quite as secure as the Abus (1). For example, we found that the shackle was not as strong. But it's still good enough for us to have no hesitation in recommending it.

It looks sturdy, being the heaviest Best Buy at 530g, which helps it act as a visual deterrent – an average thief would be put off from attempting to break it open.



3 Squire

3 Squire 79%

£15. Call 01922 476 711 for stockists

The Squire is another great padlock, and at just £15 it's almost half the price of our Best on test. Like the Abus (1), it is disc-shaped and robust, resisting all attempts by our experts to break it open. It was slightly let down by ease of use – we found putting in the key a little fiddly and it was a bit stiff to close. Our only criticism is its smaller size, which doesn't make it as visible as some of the other models on test.

KEY



SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Security	60%
Durability	30%
Ease of use	10%

USING THE TABLE

We tested best-selling locks from leading brands.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide. **Body** The material that the body of the padlock is made of.

Shackle The material the shackle of the padlock is made of.

Performance

Security Indicates how well the padlock stood up to our variety of attempts to break it open.

Visibility The verdict of our security experts as to how much of a visible deterrent the padlock is. A larger padlock is more likely to put a thief off.

Durability Indicates how well the padlock withstood simulated corrosion tests. See 'Best Buys', opposite.

Ease of use Indicates how easy it is to open and close the padlock with the key.



Padlocks	Specification					Performance				Score (%)
	Price (£)	Weight (g)	Size hxxwxd (cm)	Body	Shackle	Security	Visibility	Durability	Ease of use	
MODEL										
1 Abus 20C70	28	260	7x7x3	Stainless steel	Steel	★	○	☆	○	83
2 Kryptonite Marine 851110	49	530	8x5x3	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	☆	☆	★	○	79
3 Squire DCL1	15	240	7x7x3	Stainless steel	Steel	★	○	☆	●	79
4 Yale P130	14	250	7x7x3	Stainless steel	Alloy steel	★	○	☆	○	76
5 Zone 750/80/SS	24	850	7x8x3	Steel	Steel	★	★	○	○	76
6 Zone 1350/50	26	560	9x5x3	Steel	Steel	★	☆	○	○	75
7 Sterling WPL158	8	400	9x6x4	Laminated steel	Steel	★	●	☆	○	73
8 Era 975	28	510	9x7x3	Laminated steel	Steel	★	☆	○	☆	71
9 Chubb 1k160WR	14	430	9x6x2	Brass	Stainless steel	☆	○	☆	☆	69
10 Squire ATL5	13	320	9x6x3	Brass	Steel	○	●	★	○	69
11 Yale P220 Exposed Padlock	16	280	8x5x3	Laminated steel	Steel	☆	●	☆	○	69
12 Yale Outdoor Padlock P300	35	580	9x6x2	Hardened steel	Boron steel	★	★	●	○	61
13 Chubb 1k160	8	420	9x6x2	Brass	Steel	★	○	●	○	51
14 Abus Nautilus 180/b/50	17	260	7x5x2	Brass	Stainless steel	●	●	☆	●	31
15 Abus 41/30	5	130	5x4x2	Laminated steel	Steel	●	●	●	☆	6

SAFES

BEST BUYS

All the safes on test offered either excellent or appalling security, with none in-between. All the models scoring ★ would be incredibly difficult to open without the key.

But the Best Buys stood out because they were well built and easier to use. They also have clear instructions and are easier to install. But we recommend that you seek advice from a locksmith before fitting one. This is because all the safes are heavy and only as secure as their fitting.

Visit the Master Locksmith Association's website, which is at www.locksmiths.co.uk, for local specialists. The cost of installation will vary. As a guide, we were quoted £45 to install the Burton (1) in a house in London.



1 Burton

BEST ON TEST

1 Burton 85%

£259. Call 01484 663388 for stockists

The Burton is easily the most secure safe we tested. Costing a reasonable £259, it successfully passed every trial our experts put it through. We drilled it, hammered it and tried to wedge open the door with a hammer and chisel, but it wouldn't budge. It's the only model on test that we couldn't get into at all – so you can put important documents and small valuables in it with confidence.

It's well built, with a heavy-duty steel body – so the average thief will be put off just by looking at it. The only downside is that its large size and heavy weight mean it can take a while to install. But it comes with all the bolts you'll need and good clear instructions. It can either be mounted on a sturdy wall or secured to the floor.



2 Chubb

BEST BUY

2 Chubb 79%

£206. Call 01902 364 627 for stockists

This Chubb and its pricier brother (3) are both excellent choices. This Chubb is smaller and lighter, weighing just over 20kg – about half the weight of the pricier version. As a result we found it easier to install than the Burton (1).

Like the Burton, its heavy-duty steel body means it stood up well to our barrage of attacks. But it wasn't completely impenetrable – we eventually broke into it with some heavy-duty drilling. Nevertheless, this wasn't bad enough to stop it receiving a ★ for security. It would be worth bolting this safe down in a position that prevents easy access to its sides, such as in a narrow cupboard, to make sure that the dedicated thief would have a very difficult task.

Safes

MODEL

	Specification					Bolts supplied	Performance				Score (%)
	Price (£)	Exterior hxxwxd (cm)	Interior hxxwxd (cm)	Weight (kg)	Cash rating (£)		Installation	Security	Build quality	Ease of use	
1 Burton Torino GMK/4	259	28x40x35	27x39x29	35.2	3,000	✓	○	★	★	☆	85
2 Chubb Black Box 2020	206	27x35x35	26x34x28	20.4	2,000	✓	☆	★	★	☆	79
3 Chubb Black Box 3030	317	32x44x40	24x36x35	40.3	4,000	✓	☆	★	★	☆	79
4 Phoenix A165 BK Siguro	182	22x35x30	20x23x24	41.8	3,000	✓	●	★	☆	☆	64
5 Dudley Harlech Lite Level 2	348	48x43x43	38x33x29	46.4	4,000		●	★	☆	○	62
6 Dudley Harlech Lite Level 1	297	48x43x43	38x33x29	45.9	2,000		●	★	☆	○	60
7 Sentry Electronic Fire Safe S3607	283	45x42x47	35x32x30	46.9	1,000	✓	○	●	☆	☆	33
8 Sentry T3-130 Security Safe	105	31x37x30	30x27x24	19.2	1,000	✓	○	●	☆	☆	30
9 Sentry S0409 Fire Safe	234	34x42x44	25x32x30	36.7	1,000	✓	○	●	☆	○	28
10 Phoenix Mini Vault A100BK	26	22x23x17	21x22x16	4.6	1,000	✓	●	●	☆	☆	27
11 Point Safe P3E	143	32x44x37	31x44x29	21.9	1,000	✓	●	●	○	☆	27
12 Argos Electronic Digital Safe	25	25x35x25	19x30x19	9.7	n/a	✓	○	●	○	○	25
13 Yale Home Safe	30	20x31x20	19x30x15	7	n/a	✓	○	●	○	○	25
14 Burton Milano 530/ACH	170	22x35x30	21x35x27	11.9	1,500	✓	●	●	☆	☆	24
15 Detroit Digital Safe	20	20x31x22	20x31x14	6.4	n/a	✓	●	●	○	○	22



3 Chubb

3 Chubb 79%

£317. Call 01902 364 627 for stockists

This Chubb is the heaviest of the three Best Buy safes, weighing in at just over 40kg. Despite its weight, we found that it was still as easy to install as its lighter brother, the Chubb (2).

It's more spacious than its brother and costs about £100 more. But in most other ways the two Chubb Best Buys are identical.

It has a heavy-duty steel body, which meant that it didn't cave in when we tried to hack it open. As with the Chubb (2), we did eventually break into it with some professional drilling. So, if you buy this model, make sure it's securely bolted down in a narrow space, such as the cupboard under the stairs. This will ensure that there's no easy access for the more dedicated thief.

USING THE TABLE

We tested best-selling safes from leading brands.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other models are a guide. **Cash rating** The amount of cash kept in the safe that insurance companies will typically cover. The general rule is that valuables, such as jewellery, can be worth ten times the cash rating. But check this with your insurance company.

Performance

Installation How easy the safe is to install. Includes quality of instructions, whether the bolts are

supplied, and the time and effort needed to install it.

Security Overall rating that indicates how well the safe stood up to our attempts to break it open. **Build quality** Measures the quality of the lock, the safe's body and materials used. **Ease of use** How easy the safe is to open and close.

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

Security	50%
Ease of use	20%
Installation	20%
Build quality	10%

KEY



DON'T BUY

Nine of the 15 safes on test are Don't Buys. In most cases, you get what you pay for. All the safes costing £50 or less were easily broken into.

Fire safes, such as the £283 Sentry (7)

and £234 Sentry (9), may protect paper documents in a fire, but offer poor security.

Incredibly, our experts picked the locks of the Argos (12) and Detroit (15) in five seconds. It took 22

seconds to drill open the Burton (14), so it's not a patch on its Best Buy brother, the Burton (1), while the Yale (13) was prised open in ten seconds by whacking it hard with a metal bar.



7 Sentry



8 Sentry



9 Sentry



10 Phoenix



11 Point Safe



12 Argos



13 Yale



14 Burton



15 Detroit

Best Buy window locks

We've brought forward the Best Buy window locks from our last test.

All were good enough to stop the window being forced open from the outside

for several minutes.

In addition, they were all easy to operate so you won't be tempted to leave the window unlocked when you go out.

USING THE TABLE

We've brought forward Best Buys from our last test (February 2004, p26).

Specification

Price The cheapest widely available high-street price we found. The number in brackets is the number of locks supplied for that price.

SCORE

This ignores price and is based on:

External security	50%
Ease of use	25%
Internal security	10%
Visibility	5%
Durability	5%
Ease of installation	5%

KEY



Window locks

	Spec	Score
	Price (£)	(%)
METAL CASEMENT		
1 Era 2806-12	20	96
2 Chubb 8K106	19 (2)	82
3 Rola R3/04W	8	82
PVCu CASEMENT		
4 Chubb 8K123	20	86
SASH		
5 Chubb 8K114	22	85
6 Yale P123	8	85
7 Chubb WS1 (ventilation lock)	18	81
8 Rola Sash Stop R1/06W	9	80
WOODEN CASEMENT		
9 Chubb 8K102	10	91