

DON'T BE A VICTIM OF A CAR BREAK-IN!

Car break-ins happen millions of times a year in the US alone. They don't just happen at night in bad neighborhoods. They happen in broad daylight in all kinds of neighborhoods, in parking lots, parking garages, and on the street. And, unfortunately, thieves prey on students, relying on them to be careless.

While it is virtually impossible to totally prevent all car break-ins, there are ways to decrease the possibility that your car will be the subject of a break-in. The most obvious theft deterrent is a car alarm system. Even a cheap after-market alarm with a visible blinking red light will help scare off thieves.

Aside from a car alarm, there are other ways to help prevent your car from being broken into:

1. Leave **NO BELONGINGS** visible inside the car. Leaving valuables, or what may appear to be valuable, inside your car in plain view is asking for trouble. This may sound obvious, but many people tend not to seriously evaluate what a thief may consider to be valuable. Many thieves will break into a car simply to steal a GPS system you may have left stuck to your window or an iPod you left sitting on the center console. Even the simple act of leaving a gym bag or a backpack in your back seat can tantalize a thief into breaking into your vehicle. Although the bag may have nothing in it but gym clothes or books, they may steal the bag in hopes of finding expensive sneakers, an mp3 player, a laptop, wallet or other valuable items. To be as safe as possible, always put bags in your trunk, and remove your GPS from your window every evening. If your GPS uses a mounting bracket or device, try to remove that as well, just to be extra careful. Remove your stereo faceplate if possible. And, don't think that leaving your laptop in the back seat and covering it with a blanket will keep it safe. Put it in the trunk or take it inside your apartment!
2. Do not assume you know what is valuable. Value, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. To a person who wants to smoke a cigarette and doesn't have a match, a lighter may be worth the deed. So may the cigarettes themselves, of course. Loose change in a cup holder is also inviting a thief to break into your car. (You may think that no one will break into your car for \$2.00, but when a thief can buy a bottle of beer for \$1.99, breaking into your car may be worth it to them!) If you want to keep loose change handy, put it in the ash tray and close the ash tray before you get out of the car.
3. Be aware of your surroundings. Watch out for your neighbors. If you see someone walking through the lot looking into cars, even in the daylight, call the police. (You can report a suspicious person anonymously if you don't want to leave your name.)

THINGS NOT TO LEAVE VISIBLE IN YOUR CAR:

iPod, including chargers
Laptop
GPS, including mount or bracket
Cell phone or cell phone charger

Loose change
Clothes, shoes, purses, etc.
Books or backpacks
ID badges, driver's licenses, student IDs
Papers or mail with your name/address on them

While these tips will not provide you with 100% protection from theft or robbery, they will definitely make your car less attractive to thieves, and will enhance your chances of finding your car exactly as you left it.