

Window Security

Windows are an existing opening, and may also be exploited by a burglar if not adequately secured. Most burglars are, however, extremely reluctant to break glass as this sound carries further than almost any other noise, and elicits a response from most people who hear it. Therefore, if you protect your windows, they are not a security liability, and can provide some security benefit.

The best single protection for windows is storm glazing. Installation of auxiliary storm windows on an existing house puts a whole additional security layer in place, and usually provides very adequate security. On new homes, double and triple glazing is normally used for insulation value, and accomplishes the same function of defense against simply breakage. Multiple layers of glazing are desirable.

Windows should be equipped with a locking device; most manufacturers install devices which provide very adequate security if properly maintained and used. Any lock used on windows should operate from the inside so the window can be used for emergency exit.

Older homes may need supplemental security devices if the original locks are no longer operable or if none exist. Double-hung sash windows can be secured with a pin-lock similar to those described above for sliding doors; a hole is drilled completely through the inside sash so that a pin can be inserted which projects into the outside sash, thus securing both in place. Care must be taken not to drill too close to the glazing.

Consider whether you want to install "stops" on windows to prevent them from being opened more than a pre-selected width, typically six or eight inches, which is adequate for ventilation but

will not admit a human body. This is readily accomplished by screwing a block of wood (or metal to match the window, if available) into the track above the sliding sash. With stops in place, even if a would-be intruder defeats your lock, he cannot open the sash more than the limited width without breaking glass. Thumbscrew metal stops are also available for some windows, which are easier to adjust/remove than traditional wooden stops. Obviously, "stops" limit the ability for you to use windows as a means of emergency exit, requiring you to break out the window to quickly exit a room.

Security grilles or bars are not recommended for home use; because they must be equipped with a device to enable them to be opened in the event of an emergency, they are vulnerable to manipulation from the outside. While they give the appearance of being secure, any competent burglar knows they really aren't effective.

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