

6 Near-Genius Ways to Fool Burglars Into Thinking You're Home

Your home: You love it, but sometimes you have to leave it.

Whether it's the eight hours a day or eight days on a dreamy beach, allowing your biggest investment to fend for itself can be stressful. And it's a legit concern; when your home looks empty, break-ins happen. A lot. Ugh.

You could deter burglars by never leaving your house again. Or you could do the next best (OK, way better) thing, and just make it look like someone is there all the time. Here's how.

#1 Light Up a Room (From the Road)

Your parents may still rely on their lighting timer — on at 8 p.m., off at 7 a.m. That old-fashioned option still works, but apps are more fun. They not only turn your lights on and off, but can do so randomly for a more realistic effect. And you can decide to flip on your porch light while sipping a mojito in Fiji.

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#2 Fake a Netflix Binge

Nothing says “we are definitely home” like the colorful glare of a television dancing in the window.

Put the little FakeTV gizmo where it can project light onto a curtain, and that’s exactly what your home will say to passersby.

#3 Change Up Your Shades Remotely

Leave your window shades down while you’re gone and you might as well put out a “Gone Fishin’” sign.

Check out wireless options to throw some shade on the go. Several companies have systems — including Hunter Douglas PowerView, Pella Insynctive, and Lutron Serena — that allow shades to go up and down at your command for about \$300 to \$500 a window.

#4 Make Some Noise

Burglars can change plans in a hurry at the first sound of life inside a home — they're a bit tetchy that way. So one option when you're just gone for the day is a noise app, like Sleep And Noise Sounds that can play on a homebound phone, tablet, or computer. With noises like vacuuming and a boiling kettle, it can deter a thief who cracks open a window.

#5 Make Them Ring And Run

“Burglars will often ring your doorbell, and if no one answers, they'll go around back and kick in the door,” says Deputy Michael Favata with the Monroe County Sheriff's office in New York. Now you can answer the door with the Ring Video Doorbell (\$180 for the basic model).

If someone pushes the doorbell, you can talk to them through an app on your phone. Whether it's your nosey neighbor or a sketchy stranger, you can say, “I'm in the basement” while you're really on the slopes. They'll never know. And even if they don't believe you, they know they're being watched (insert devilish laugh here).

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#6 Try a No-Tech Technique

Not everything requires a gadget. Here are ways to up your home security without downloading a single app:

- * Hire a house sitter. Then someone will be home.
- * If there's snow, have a neighbour walk up and down the path to your door, shovel a passage up to the garage door and drive in and out of the driveway. If it's hot out, ask them to keep your plants looking fresh with regular waterings. And don't forget to bring them a nice gift from your getaway.
- * Ask friends, family, or neighbors to just be present on your property — use your patio, play in your yard, or bring in the mail.
- * Invite a neighbour to keep a car parked in your driveway. During the holidays, they may be happy if they need overflow for visitors.
- * Install a fake security camera for as low as \$8. Burglars may not notice these fakes don't have all the wiring necessary to be real. And their blinking red lights offer reasonable doubt.
- * Get a dog. A real dog. While you're at work or running errands, nothing deters bad guys and gals like a barking, slobbery security guard. And when you go away, having a pet sitter stay can be as economical as some boarding facilities (especially if you have multiple dogs), and you'll get the benefit of a human and canine sentinel.

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