

The Best Techniques Guaranteed To Turn Your Home Into A Fortress

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- If you are happy with your physical security, so is your enemy. Red team your home.
- Don't waste your money and electricity on "dusk-to-dawn security lighting." Use motion detector lighting instead.
- The only way to stop bad guys with guns is good guys with guns. Your alarm should notify you and others nearby, not some call center in India.
- Windows and glass doors are ridiculously easy points of entry unless hardened with roll-down security shutters, plexiglass or bars.

Scenario set by the editor:

"Just hacks and tips to fortify your home. It could even be as simple as sticking biohazard stickers in your window. Or... blocking off roads"

Desperation caused by competition for resources can turn normally law-abiding people into burglars and can turn burglars into violent home invaders.

At the end of the day, the only sure-fire way to stop bad guys with guns is good guys with guns. Anything else is wishful thinking.

While the initial aim of security precautions is deterrence, should deterrence fail, security measures serve to slow criminals and detect them, giving homeowners time and information they need to respond effectively to the threat at hand.

Invest in Deterrence

The primary objective of deterrence is to convince potential perpetrators that an attack or robbery would not be worth the effort. When a crook looks at your home and does a risk/reward analysis, you want him to decide your home is not worth it. He should look at your home and determine:

- There is not enough worth stealing. (Too little reward)
- Stealing would take too long and make too much noise. (Too risky)
- Getting caught could be fatal. (High exposure to risk)

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Make your home look occupied

A survey of 300 experienced burglars by the Home Office Crime Prevention Unit in London concluded that the most powerful deterrent was "signs of occupancy" followed by dogs and alarms. In my opinion, the data was misinterpreted by the analysts. Signs of occupancy, dogs and alarms all lead up to the same endgame, which is the only thing that criminals fear: confrontation by an angry and

potentially armed occupant or law enforcement.

Create physical barriers

Any barrier can be overcome. The aim of physical barriers is not to be impenetrable, but to cost the criminal time and make noise, alerting you to intrusion and giving you time to respond.

- Harden windows and skylights. Plexiglass, window security films, bars and roll-down shutters are effective deterrents for windows. Security bars and screens should be able to be released from the inside in an emergency.
- Harden doors. Upgrade doors, frames, strike plates and locks and keep them locked. Replace all screws securing hardware with long screws that penetrate deep into the framing. Install pins on the side of the door where the hinges are located.
- Build walls, fences and trenches. Obstacles such as fences, trenches or walls impede movement across the perimeter of a fixed site, but tall fences work both ways. On one hand, they can be an effective deterrent. On the other hand, they can provide concealment or cover for intruders.
- Put up signs. Barriers should include warning signs. Alarm system and beware of dog signs can be deterrents but should be backed up with dogs and alarms. Seasoned criminals are not likely to be scared off by signs alone in peace time. In an environment where worse threats exist, signs warning of those threats may be effective. In a pandemic, a yellow quarantine flag may be a no-go even for the desperate. In a region affected by war, signs warning of mines, IEDs or unexploded ordnance may be a deterrent.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Architecture, design and landscaping should eliminate cover and concealment of intruders while providing occupants with places to observe, report or even attack from behind concealment and cover.

Install shutters and blinds on garage windows

If left uncovered, a quick peek can tell intruders whether occupants are home or away.

Install security lighting

Anybody will tell you that security lighting prevents crime, and they would also be wrong. Most property-related crimes happen between the hours of 10:00a.m. and 3:00p.m. when occupants are at work, school, shopping etc. People are also often surprised to learn that turning off security lighting typically halves the number of break-ins. Security lighting may reduce fear of crime, but it does not typically reduce actual crime.

Install motion sensor lights

People usually notice crime when they see lights on inside of a building that should be dark, or flashlights indicating that people are somewhere they should not be. 'Dusk-to-dawn' security lighting helps criminals see what they are doing and spot targets of opportunity. It can also make it harder to spot criminal activity since people tune it out. Motion sensor lights are better, but only if someone is around to notice them. Set timers so motion sensor lights turn on for 2-5 minutes.

Permanently install safes. Safes should be of high quality and installed in a steel-reinforced concrete floor or bolted to the floor and walls. When a burglar finds a safe, he knows he may have just hit the lottery. He will leave everything else to get at the contents. Most safes aren't nearly as hard to break into as safe companies would have you think. Install safes in tight areas where the criminal will not have room to work. If they can get the safe on its side with room to work, it is done for, so bolt it in place well.

Limit information shared via social media. Do not display location data, routines, current photos, wealth and other sensitive data to social media. I can't believe people who post their entire life online are surprised when they end up victimized. Criminals justify their crimes against people who post their lives on line with the phrase, "They were asking for it."

Do not receive mail or packages at home

This makes is much easier to spot a crook trying to pose as a mail carrier or delivery guy.

Invest in Detection, Surveillance & Situational Awareness

Early detection buys occupants precious time and can relay information needed to respond and a picture can be worth a thousand words. Understanding who is coming and their numbers should factor into a decision to hold ground to slip away.

Install an alarm system

Security systems have sensors and reporting mechanisms. Motion detectors, glass break detectors, cameras and microphones are types of sensors. Examples of reporting mechanisms are sirens, strobe lights and auto-dialers. Ideally, sensors should be deployed in zones, so the homeowner can tell where entry occurs and reporting mechanisms should be able relay that information.

Leverage biological alarms

Low tech is still effective. Many species of animals have keen senses to protect themselves from predators and paying attention to their behaviors can warn occupants who understand them.

- Install bird feeders. An inexpensive intruder alert. This tactic can be as simple as tossing out a little seed.
- Keep livestock. Many survivalists keep livestock that serve double duty alerting the homesteader to potential threats. Even some livestock most people would not think of as guard animals will make a racket when strangers approach.
- Keep and train dogs. Dogs and humans have lived together so long we do not know who adopted whom. Many breeds have keen senses and a dog does not need to be large or intimidating to pull guard duty. Some of the more practical strategies use one or two 'inside' dogs of a smaller breed and two or more 'outside' dogs to patrol outside the home.

I recommend against planning to use a dog as a weapon since a human can easily kill a dog, especially if it is alone.

Install video and electronic surveillance

While video and electronics surveillance are less expensive and more useful than ever, survivalists must consider which features may or may not work without electricity, internet access or monitoring.

Unfortunately, video and electronic surveillance often give consumers a false sense of security. Criminals understand that even a hat and bandana can render footage nearly useless. Homeowners must also consider who the reporting mechanisms will alert. Unless the security system alerts someone is both armed and nearby, a security system will not do much good because most break-ins are over in less than 10 minutes and sometimes much less.

- **Cameras** – Security cameras have come a long way. High resolution cameras that can amplify ambient light are more affordable than ever. A peephole or doorbell camera is a must-have. They use motion detection to film everyone who comes to your door and can display video or images to your cell phone as long as the grid is up.
- **Microphones** – Microphones are great for places you may not want a camera. Microphones can be grouped with other sensors, can detect alarms and can be set to notify you if there are sounds coming from your home when they shouldn't be, so you can listen in.
- **Motion Detectors** – Motion detector technology is inexpensive and very effective. Motion detector technology is one of the most important sensor technologies for survivalists as several models exist that run on batteries and transmit reporting signals over radio. This means that they will work even if the electrical grid is down. Simple radio motion detectors can be purchased for as little as \$10. Longer range units that support different zones are also available.
- **Vehicle Detectors** – Vehicle detectors can be buried under or next to roads and sense cars coming up the drive. These are great for ranches that only have one or two roads in and out. Radio version are also available.
- **Break-beam Detectors** – Break-beam detectors can be set at different heights to cut down false alarms by animals and can also report via radio.

Start or join a neighborhood watch program

Get to know your neighbors and participate in programs like Neighborhood Watch. Programs like this one really do help to deter crime, and criminals hate a nosy neighbor with a cellphone in hand.

Patrol and learn to track

Get out and walk your neighborhood. Random patrols can disrupt reconnaissance efforts or efforts to case homes and give you an idea who lives in the area and who doesn't.

Study the tracks you see. Tracks contain surprising amounts of information. Suburban and rural neighborhoods offer many opportunities to track, but even in urban areas, snowfall brings opportunities to track; so much so that some 'professional' burglars take the day off if there is snow on the ground.

Identify or make 'track traps' on your property. A track trap is a muddy, dusty or moist and sandy area that is easy to track in. Locate track traps along fence lines, roads, river beds and other lines of drift. Lines of drift are places people tend to walk because the path is easier or because they are channeled by obstacles.

Control access

Systems that monitor and control entry and accessibility, such as gates and doors, are only as good as the person operating them.

Teach family members when to open the door and when not to open it

Whether the target is in an armored car or behind a locked door, criminals know that the easiest way to gain entry is typically to get someone to open the door.

One of my purported ancestors found out the hard way that even the best fortress on the planet is worthless if somebody opens the door from the inside. He was Priam, the King of Troy at the time of the Trojan war. Most of us might not have to worry about giant wooden idols on our doorsteps, but many of us do need to worry about members of our households opening doors.

Install mechanical controls

Mechanical doors, locks and gates have the benefit of not requiring electricity to function. Any automated access controls must have a mechanical override. If the grid goes down, finding out that your most important locks no longer work will be the last thing you need.

- Upgrade doors. Exterior doors should be high quality steel or steel-reinforced hardwood. Key interior doors, such as bedroom and saferoom doors should be upgraded to solid core models.
- Upgrade locks. Locks are only as effective as the people who use them. About 30% of the time, burglars make entry through unlocked doors or windows. Find a good locksmith you can trust and have him upgrade your locks, upgrade the pins and configure them so they will be difficult to pick.
- Keep gates locked. Walls and fences are only as good as the gates you install in them.
- Wrap your keys. Keys should be kept out of sight since they can be duplicated from photos and cameras have become ubiquitous. Car keys should be stored in an EM shielded container while at home to prevent criminal from pinging your key fob, capturing the unlock code and stealing your car.
- Upgrade you garage door opener. The garage door is the weakest point on many homes. Criminals and law enforcement alike take advantage of garage door openers and use them to gain access to homes.

Defend your fortress

A 'fortress' of a home means one thing to the average home owner and another to a survivalist. Preparing a field of battle ahead of time can give a homeowner an important advantage should he or she need to defend hearth and home.

Carry concealed

The average gunfight is over in less than 3.5 seconds from the first shot to last. If you have to run, dig your weapon out of your sock drawer, I shouldn't have to tell you that you will be on the losing end of that fight. Use your sidearm to fight your way to a long gun.

Even an unarmed response from members of a neighborhood watch has deterrent value, but at the end of the day, the only sure way to stop armed bad guys is with armed good guys.

Build a safe room

A safe room is a room with a stout door that can buy you a little time to arm yourself. Under the stress of a home invasion, it takes less time and less fine motor coordination to roll out of bed and dart into a room and slam the door than it does to roll out of bed, find a weapon and deliver aimed fire.

A safe room should provide some cover against small arms and provide you with weapons, communications and a trauma kit. A well designed safe room will also have a concealed exit.

Have a plan 'B'

No one wants to consider the possibility of having to bug out and leave their home to criminals, but nothing in your home, apart from your family, is worth your life. Do what needs to be done to ensure that you have multiple unobstructed exits for your vehicles and on foot. Ideally, at least some of these exits should be concealed.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Cache critical equipment and supplies. Having caches means that even if your home is burned to the ground, you will still be able to start over. If you have prepared caches, you can bug out in your boxers and still return with your friends to take it back one day at a time of your choosing. If you survive, you have that option.

Red team your home

"If you are happy with your physical security, so is your enemy." -Unknown

A red team is a group that tests an organization's security to identify and improve weaknesses. It is not possible to effectively secure a structure until you have seen it through the eyes of the enemy. Effective preparations for defending your home cannot be made from inside it. Red teaming will help you find the chinks in your armor and close them.

By getting out and seeing your home from the point of view of your enemy, you will see where he is likely to perform recon and probing, stage his attack, avenues of approach and his options for concealment and cover. Knowing this, you can take these things away from him. Slow him down, channel him, cut down his concealment and mine his cover.



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