

Bicycle crime

The Government is encouraging us all to take to our bikes and while this is a good for our health and environment, more bikes mean more opportunity for thieves so we need to ensure our bikes stay secure and in our possession.

When buying a bike, allow some money in the budget for security.

Take out insurance, either by extending your home contents insurance or through a separate policy. Cycling organisations and bike shops may offer specialist cover. Do this at the time of purchasing the bike; otherwise you may not get around to it.

Record and register your bike.

- Register your bicycle model, make and frame number. This assists the police in returning recovered bikes to their rightful owners. Contact your local police station for further advice.
- Take a clear, colour photograph of your bike and make a written record of its description, including any unique features, so that you can report it accurately if stolen.

Security mark the bicycle

- Be clearly visible – advertise that the bike is security marked or tagged. For example, attaching a clearly visible label is a simple option.
- Be secure – for example, by using a tamper-resistant label, etc, or an inaccessible electronic device.
- Security marks should be placed in at least two separate locations, preferably on or in the frame. At least one of these locations should not be clearly visible.
- Give clear information via the visible mark (label, etching, etc) that will quickly allow police to identify the method of security marking or tagging (and where applicable the registration company), and through this identify the owner. Your Crime Prevention Officer or security marking companies can advise if you are not sure what information to include.

At home

More than half of all bicycle thefts take place from an owner's property. Simple crime prevention can lessen your chances of having your bicycle stolen.

- Keep your bike in a secure garage or shed and keep the door locked.
- Keep it out of public view.
- Secure it to an immovable object or consider installing a floor or wall-mounted anchor lock for extra security

Out and about

- Avoid isolated or dimly lit places. Leave your bike where a potential thief will have to perform in public!
- Park your bike safely and considerately. Make use of cycle parking stands where these are provided. Park your bike where it will not be a hazard, obstruction or inconvenience to other pedestrians – particularly the visually impaired and other disabled people. Allow space for prams and wheelchairs, other cyclists or occupants leaving motor vehicles. Never park in front of a fire exit.
- If yours is a very expensive bike, don't lock it in the same place on a regular basis – so it won't be noticed and stolen to order.

Security

- Always lock your bicycle, even if you are just leaving it for a couple of minutes.
- Lock your bike to an immovable object. Use a proper bike rack/ground anchor or robust street furniture – for example lamp posts or railings (but observe requests not to use certain items of street furniture and be sure not to cause any damage). Remember that thieves can remove drainpipes and lift bikes off signposts. If provision is inadequate, bring this to the attention of the relevant local authority or property owner.
- Lock your bike through the frame.
- Secure removable parts. Lock both wheels and the frame together. Take with you smaller parts and accessories that can be removed without tools, for example lights, pumps, computers, panniers and quick-release saddles, or fit security fasteners on items such as wheels, headsets and seat posts.
- Make the lock (and chain, if used) and bike hard to manoeuvre when parked – to stop thieves smashing the lock open.
 - Keep the lock (and/or chain) away from the ground.
 - Keep the gap between the bike and the lock small.
 - Never leave the lock lying on the pavement – a lock can be sledge hammered easily when it's resting on the ground.

It may seem like there are lots of things to think about when locking your bike, but once you get into the habit you will be able to lock your bike within seconds and it will be well worth the trouble!

* Your local Police will be offering free bike marking sessions *
* Contact your local police or look on www.essex.police.uk *
* for details and dates *
