

Christmas Crime Menu

Starter

Your car and all its trimmings

Car thief's classic: car left unlocked, with windows open - Always lock doors and windows and use a steering lock.

Starters orders: keys left in ignition - Never leave keys in the ignition and the car unattended.

Santa's surprise: presents on passenger seats - Keep presents out of sight. If they can be seen, they can be stolen.

Hot wired saloon: parked in dark car park - Leave your vehicle in a well-lit location or your car could make someone else's Christmas.

Chef's treasure chest: served with valuables - Thieves look in glove compartments first for mobile phones and other valuables – take them with you.



Main Course

Your house on a plate

House hotpot: doors and windows insecure - Make sure all windows and doors are locked.

Santa's parcels: presents displayed under the Christmas tree - Keep presents out of sight.

Tasty takeaways: car keys and handbags left in handy places - Hall tables are the first places thieves look for valuables.

Holiday haven for thieves: it's obvious no-one's home - Going on holiday? Leave lights and a radio on timer switches; ask a neighbour to go in and collect mail.

Open sesame: opening your door to strangers - Use a door chain and viewer, only open the door to visitors when you are happy with their identity.

Dessert

Your portable property

Pedal power: bicycles not secure and marked - Lock bikes and get them marked with your postcode and house number.

Shed surprise: valuable tools for the discerning thief - Secure your shed with a bolt and padlock and consider fitting an alarm.

Devil's drink: don't leave your drink unattended – Leave your drink alone and it could get spiked.

Coffee and mints

Surprisingly sour: cheap goods passed on could be stolen - If you are offered a quality product for a bargain, ensure the source is genuine.





Reduce the chance of Christmas crime

With the Christmas holiday season almost upon us, now is a good time to remind people to take steps to make sure Christmas isn't spoiled by criminals.

Criminals take the opportunities afforded them by the extra shopping we do, the hustle and bustle of town centres as we rush around, and the value of the goods we buy as presents and store in our homes until the big day. We might also be more trusting and generous at Christmas when requests for charity are made, giving the unscrupulous a chance to collect for their own causes.

So what can we do?

The advice below is often common sense, but you might overlook it in your haste to get everything ready.

Out Shopping

When the shops are crowded, the pickpocket has more chance to steal from you. If you can't arrange to shop during less busy times, make sure you stay alert and be extra careful with your wallet or purse. If you have too many bags you will be too busy trying to hold on to these to be aware of anyone stealing from you. You could try to make smaller shopping trips rather than do it all at once and carry too much. Always shield your PIN when paying with debit/credit cards. Have your purse/wallet close to your body and don't carry too much cash. The same applies to travelling on crowded buses or trains. If you travel by car, make sure you park in a well-lit area, lock all doors and windows and do not leave presents in view. Try not to return to your car to leave purchases in the boot before continuing with your shopping trip as thieves may well watch car parks for just such a chance. Arrange to collect heavy items from stores when you have finished all your shopping.

At Home

Having bought all those wonderful presents, don't make it easy for someone to steal from your home. Keep them out of sight until last thing on Christmas Eve and if you 'hide' or store larger items such as bicycles in the shed or outbuildings, make sure they are very secure. Now is a good time to check that you know what you have both normally (TV, Video etc) and with the extra presents you have bought. You may well find you need to check your insurance to make sure you are covered for the value of goods in your home. Take the frame numbers of new cycles and the serial numbers of new electrical equipment for future reference. Remember, empty boxes left outside advertise that you have new goods inside - dispose of packing carefully.

If you go out for the evening - make it look like someone is at home by turning on lights and the radio. Don't leave curtains open so people can see your decorations as potential thieves can see in. Be extra careful about locking doors and windows. As a fire precaution, don't leave Christmas lights on in the house whilst you are out.

If you go away for the holiday period - use an automatic timer for lights and ask a trusted neighbour to watch your home. Don't forget to cancel newspapers and milk if you have them delivered and either redirect your mail through the Post Office or have your neighbour take mail into the house - unopened Christmas cards and mail is a sure sign that a house is empty.

Strangers at the door - genuine delivery personnel usually have uniforms and liveried vehicles and should not need to come into your home. Charity collectors will have identification and will not be offended if you ask to see it. If you are not sure but want to make a donation, ask whether these can be made in other ways, perhaps through a bank.

Out on the town

With office parties and general Christmas celebrations, pubs, restaurants and other venues are often crowded. Don't leave bags over the back of your chair and keep wallets and purses close to your body to make it more difficult for the pickpocket. Busy places make it easier for the sneak thief, so be alert at all times. Make prior arrangements as to how you will get home. Avoid any potential disturbances on the street. Stay with friends if you can. Avoid the temptation to take a minicab on the street even if you are having difficulty getting a cab - it is illegal for minicabs to take passengers who have not pre-booked. Make sure someone knows where you are going and what time you will be back. Don't drink too much - you could become a target for thieves.

Finally if you have information about any criminal activity you can contact Crimestoppers free on **0800 555 111**.

Have a happy and crime-free Christmas holiday....