

Apartment Security

Suggestions and information provided by Erik Hulse, KCAI's Director for Safety and Security

Door Locks

Replacing your locks reduces the risk of unwanted persons being able to access your new place. Many landlords say they've replaced the locks, but sometimes apartment managers will just rotate the old locks between apartments, and extra keys are not always returned. When you move into new housing, you never know how many keys have gone missing or how many previous tenants may still have keys. Ask your landlord about having your locks replaced with brand new locks, not redistributed old ones. Don't risk somebody being able to return to your apartment with an old key.

For added safety, consider installing a **deadbolt** and chain lock if your door doesn't already have them. A deadbolt is more secure and difficult to pick than a standard doorknob lock because the deadbolt only opens by rotating the lock cylinder, whereas a spring bolt lock can be retracted by applying force to the bolt itself. Additionally, a chain lock provides an extra layer of security when opening your door, allowing you to open your door a crack to talk to a stranger or ask for identification, before opening up completely. **Do not rely only a chain lock, they add little value when it comes to security.**

Strike Plates: Take a look at the strike plate on your door locks. This is the metal plate on your door frame. If you're renting, chances are it's old and worn and probably not that secure to begin with. Consider replacing the screws with longer ones to secure it better.

Peephole

If your door does not have a peephole, inquire about having one installed before you move in. Installing a smart doorbell camera is another option, depending on the type of apartment complex you live in. Smart doorbells allow you to see who is visiting your apartment through your smartphone, so you don't even need to get up if you discover it's a solicitor.

Window Locks

Good window locks keep intruders from gaining easy access to your residence. This is especially true for windows on the ground level, but all windows should be properly checked—you'd be surprised how determined burglars can be. Treat all windows as potential entry points, and make sure all window locks are working properly and cannot be manipulated from the outside.

Bolster Sliding Doors

An unsecured sliding door can provide an intruder with a relatively untraceable and quiet entrance to your place. While it's important to always lock your balcony door when it's not in use, many sliding doors have inadequate locks and come off their tracks with just a nudge. For optimal security, make sure to arm your sliding door with an inside bar lock or a pole on the track. You can also install a secondary locking mechanism with a metal pin inserted through the

door frame and into the sliding door. Your balcony is not a safe storage area. If you keep valuables like your bicycle on the balcony, be sure to lock it up.

Invest in Good Blinds

Good blinds may prevent burglars from looking inside your home. Install blinds that completely block the view from outside, and make sure to close them when you go out.

Use a Safe

A safe can be a last line of defense to protect your most valuable and irreplaceable possessions. Items such as jewelry, cash, and sensitive documents can be locked away in a fireproof case. Safes come in all sizes and range in price from under \$100. Find a safe that fits your budget and needs and talk to your landlord about bolting it to a floor or wall, so a burglar can't pick it up and take it. While a safe can't guarantee the absolute protection of your property, it can be effective at hiding items from thieves who are just looking to take what's lying around.

Make your apartment look occupied by keeping the lights on when you are gone or by automating them to a schedule. **Lamp timers** are very inexpensive and easy to program.

Install a **window alarm** on your windows. It's an alarm that sounds off if your windows are broken. You keep it turned on, and it detects vibrations. It has an adhesive backing so it's ideal for a rental. Bonus: the adhesive is also a security sticker, which can be surprisingly effective in deterring thieves.

If you don't already have **renter's insurance**, look into it. Compared to other types of insurance, it's a great value. Most policies not only cover home burglaries, but also water damage, vandalism, and fire damage. Depending on the type of insurance you have, you may also be covered for liabilities if someone is injured in your home.

Protect your car as much as you protect your apartment. Never leave your valuables inside of your car, especially in places where people can take a quick glimpse from the window to see what's inside. Always lock all doors, even if you forgot something inside your apartment. If you're defrosting your car during the winter, stay with it at all times while it's running. The best opportunity for a thief is when they see an unattended car with the engine on.