



## How To Prevent Car Theft

Despite modern locking systems on vehicles some criminals do manage to overcome them by using devices bought legally and relatively cheaply on the internet. All of which work by affecting the radio frequency imitated by the key fob / device, enabling vehicles to be stolen despite owners having possession of the key(s).

Most thefts are opportunistic. Taking simple measures to protect your vehicle and belongings can greatly reduce the chances of them being stolen.

### Key and Fob

The majority of vehicles are accessed by a combination of traditional key and fob remote. The fob tending to be used more frequently than the key, due to the convenience of simply pushing a button.

However, criminals can block the radio signal between the fob and vehicle, using a signal blocker. You press your fob and walk away as normal thinking the vehicle is locked. But it isn't!

Once inside your vehicle, thieves can remove any items they like or drive it away by plugging a re-programming device into the on board diagnostics port (OBD – see photo below) and program a key, which may only take seconds.

Ports are easily accessible located in the front foot wells / dashboard areas. By law, ports must be universal, (to allow any garage to service a vehicle). However, this also means they are accessible to criminals. The photo below gives an idea what to look for, the port is circled.



### **Preventative measures:**

- Physically checking the vehicle is locked and checking ALL the doors
- Using the traditional key to lock up
- Make sure the key and any spares are stored securely and safely

### **Keyless Vehicles**

Keyless vehicles automatically lock / unlock depending on the proximity of a key device, which is usually no bigger than a bank card. The system operates via radio signals passed between vehicle and key device. These signals can be intercepted by criminals.

Keys constantly emit a signal, (at times even detectable from within a building), which can be picked up by anyone with an appropriate transmitter relay device. The signal is relayed back to the vehicle, which unlocks and allows the start button to work and once away from the scene of the crime, a new key can be programmed via the OBD port (see above).

### **Preventative measures:**

- Keep your key device in a Faraday pouch, which has a lining that prevents the items inside from receiving or transmitting radio frequency signals.



- Check vehicle doors are locked before walking away
- Do not store keys near windows or doors
- If you buy a second hand keyless car, get the key reprogrammed
- Make sure the key and any spares are stored securely and safely

## **Lock Picks**

There are several lock pick devices which are legally available and can be used to unlock various types of vehicles, though typically these are used to target vans rather than cars.

Although an awareness of lock picks is beneficial, the theft of modern cars is very much linked to possession of the true key or the ability to mimic the radio signals it uses.

## **Additional Security Devices**

In addition to the measures described above, the following can also be used to prevent crime:

### OBD Port (on-board diagnostic port) – see Key & Fob section above

These can be relocated so they are not so easily accessible to criminals. Depending on the location lock boxes can be used to secure ports, slowing thieves down.

### Trackers

These are frequently fitted to works and high value vehicles and can assist with locating the vehicle should it ever be stolen. Some companies also offer a recovery service.

Although sometimes trackers are removed or the GPS signal blocked, they remain a good crime prevention measure and continue to assist in the recovery of stolen vehicles.

### Alarms

Many vehicles will have a factory fitted alarm. However, this will be linked the central locking system and may be affected by lock pick tools, a secondary alarm could act as a backup.

### Forensic Property Marking

Several companies offer schemes, using micro dots visible only to UV light to mark many parts of a vehicle. Assisting in identification of the owner when the vehicle is recovered.

### Steering Locks

They vary greatly in design and cost and remain a very effective visible deterrent, slowing thieves down.



### Pedal Boxes

Lock boxes which secure the driving pedals, primarily used in vans but transferable.



## Catalytic Converter lock

Vehicles (mostly Hybrid cars such as Toyota and Honda) are targeted by thief's who will remove the catalytic converter, which is costly to replace. Items like CATLOC prevent and deter thieves.



## And Finally

- Always remove keys from the ignition and lock the vehicle when left unattended. Even if leaving the vehicle for a short time
- Make sure keys (inc spares) are stored securely – do not leave on hall tables, on hooks by doors, in bags or coats by doors
- Never leave valuables unattended in the car and never leave items within a vehicle overnight. Even if out of sight
- Avoid parking in dark, secluded areas, choose locations that are well lit and over looked by houses, passers-by and covered by CCTV if possible
- Park your vehicle in a garage / private space if available but make sure it is secure:
  - Windows covered over / boarded up
  - Pedestrian door should be solid core and secured by British Standard 5 lever mortice lock into solid frame
  - Main doors secured by additional locks to prevent up and over action of traditional garage doors
  - Consider linking garage doors into main house alarm system or use of an independent shed style alarm may be appropriate in some cases
  - For private parking spaces / driveways consider installing parking bollards or even wheel clamps, again these will slow thieves down

- Simple WIFI CCTV systems can be used to monitor vehicles in private spaces and in some cases on the public road – please refer to the Information Commissioners Office – [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) – search CCTV.
- Be mindful of distraction thefts, when the driver is encouraged to leave their vehicle unattended
- Make sure your insurance cover any items you may be carrying

For further assistance, please contact:

Prevention, Intervention and Partnerships

West End Police Station

3-5 Torphichen Place

Edinburgh

E-Mail: [edinburghpreventandintervent@scotland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:edinburghpreventandintervent@scotland.pnn.police.uk)

0131 221 2017 / 2080 or via 101

Police Scotland webpage:

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/home-and-personal-property/secure-your-car>

Police Scotland recommend using security products accredited by Secured By Design / Sold Secure or Thatcham

