



Caldwell Police Department / Crime Preventions

How to Prevent Car Break-ins:

It's one of the most infuriating things that can happen to a car owner – and it's one of the most common forms of larceny in the U.S. The “smash-and-grab” car break-in. They don't even steal your whole car, just the valuable items in it – which you then have to painstakingly replace while dealing with the arduous and costly car-repair process.

While there's no way to 100% deter these kinds of thieves, there are some common-sense steps you can take to make your vehicle a much less appealing target. Above all, thieves look for opportunities. Make them “work” for their pilfered prizes, and they'll most likely just forget it and move on to an easier target.

Out of sight, out of mind

Smash-and-grab thieves typically aren't criminal masterminds who craft clever schemes to swipe your stuff. Most are casual opportunists. They see something they like, so they break in and take it. So keep your valuables out of sight. Never leave these things lying out on your seats, dashboard or floor:

- Phone
- Purse or wallet
- Laptop (or its bag)
- A briefcase or backpack
- Shopping bags
- Small electronics
- CDs
- Cash – yes, even loose change/coins

- Your keys – it actually happens!

Make them uncomfortable

Most thieves go solo. The last thing they want is a crowd of onlookers with cell phones and pepper spray ready. So try to keep your car highly visible:

- Park near other people. Go for busy lots where there's plenty of pedestrian and vehicle traffic.
- If you'll be away from your car after dark, park in a well-lit area or near a lamppost.
- Choose a lot with an attendant over one without.

Make them “work” for it

Thieves are also lazy. With car break-ins, they're usually not looking for a huge payoff. What this type of thief wants is a quick thrill – or maybe a little extra revenue – for as little work as possible. By making your car a harder target for these people, you make it less desirable. So:

- Always lock your doors and roll up your windows when you park.
- Activate your security system if you have one.
- Consider window tinting (if permitted by local laws), since it makes casing your car more difficult.
- Don't use the console or glove box as mobile lock boxes. These are obvious to thieves, too.

Don't hand them the keys

Like we said, car smash-and-grabbers don't normally take the vehicle itself. But these are criminals, after all. A key on the dash or in the ignition may motivate the more daring into outright auto theft. And remember, if you have a great hiding place for a key – say, in your wheel well or above the sun visor – a thief has also thought of it. So if you're away from your car, keep your keys away from it too.

Make things disappear first

While your trunk is better than the passenger compartment for shopping bags and laptops, an experienced thief will often stake out a parking lot and watch you transfer your things there.

Be alert

See suspicious activity? Trust your instincts and don't park there. And never confront anyone yourself. If you're concerned, report your suspicions to an attendant or the police.

Car break in Tips provided by [Nationwide.com](https://www.nationwide.com)