

# Protect against holiday car prowlers



Don't let a car prowler become your personal Grinch this holiday season. These tips can help reduce your risk:

- Put all valuables and gifts in your trunk. If that's not possible, conceal gifts and other valuables with a blanket. Prowlers almost always look inside cars for valuables before risking a break-in, and keeping valuables out of sight reduces your risk.
- Try not to unload gifts in your car and then leave it unattended in the same parking spot. Car prowlers might be on the lookout for shoppers traveling back and forth from stores to unload gifts.
- If you don't park in a secure garage at home, don't leave gifts in cars overnight to keep them secret.

And any time of year:

- Park in a well-lit area, and use parking lots frequented by others. Avoid parking behind fences or hedges. Prowlers are more likely to lurk in darkened or secluded areas.
- Avoid parking in attended lots. They're a major source of copied keys, which can be used later to steal your vehicle.
- If you must park in an attended lot, leave only a concierge key with the attendant. Keep valuables and all materials that could be used for identity theft, vehicle theft, or burglarizing your residence in a locked area that cannot be opened with the concierge key. Hide valuables in your trunk.

- After opening an automatic gate to a secured parking area, wait for the gate to close before you park. Watch for thieves waiting to slip in behind you.
- Never leave your car running unattended. Vehicles are commonly stolen at ATMs, convenience stores, and gas stations.

If your car is broken into:

- Inventory missing articles for later use with the police or an insurance claim.
- If credit cards are stolen, notify the card company immediately.
- Call the police and file a report. Consider whether surveillance cameras are present that could identify the people involved. Even if there's little chance of catching the suspect, alerting the police can help prevent somebody else's car from being prowled.

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