Traditionally, renters face a higher risk for break-ins. During a 30-year period beginning in 1973, the burglary rate for rental properties was 56 percent higher than the rate for owner-occupied homes (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

Even though the national burglary rate has been on an overall decline the past two decades, the question remains: How does a group at greater risk for break-ins go about minimizing that risk?

To help provide an answer, ADTsecurity.com has devised the Renter’s Guide to Safety and Security.
Security and Safety Tips from the Renter's Guide

BEFORE YOU MOVE IN

01 Search The Internet
Sites like SpotCrime.com can supply you with information on crime in the area. Also, some municipal websites (one example is townofchapelhill.org) provide statistics on burglaries and other crimes at local apartment complexes.

02 Consult The Cops
Get a scouting report from the police department. Larger cities may have divisions assigned to specific areas, so you may get a fairly detailed picture of your prospective neighborhood.

03 Do a Hardware Check
Look at the fundamental security elements of the rental unit. Do you see stout locks on doors and windows, a security peephole in the front door, blinds or drapes, adequate exterior lighting?
ONCE YOU’VE FOUND YOUR HOME

01  Reach Out
See if the neighborhood has a community watch association - it could be a valuable source of information and support.

02  Get Dialed in for Emergencies
Ask for the emergency phone number for late-night or weekend maintenance problems. Add this number to your phone contacts and write it down on paper as a backup.

03  Consider Insurance
Renter’s insurance is a cost-effective way to help protect your belongings. You can probably get a bundle deal by purchasing a policy from your auto insurance provider.
Security and Safety Tips from the Renter's Guide

EASY HACKS AND TRICKS

01 Upgrade or Get New Locks
Get a bar lock or loop lock for sliding doors, because these entrances can be vulnerable to break-ins. Locks are easy to find online and in hardware stores.

02 Safe Parking
Park in well-lit areas and away from shrubs and trees or anything else that could provide cover for a smash-and-grab thief. Avoid leaving valuable items like laptops in your car.

03 Neighbors as Friends
Make friends with your neighbors – and then make a pact to look out for each other, such as watching out for suspicious activity in the area. Don’t forget that there’s strength in numbers.
Am I protected by renter’s rights?

Around 40 states have adopted all or part of the Uniform Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, which addresses a landlord’s obligations in the areas of health and safety. However, the legal landscape is still something of a patchwork of federal, state and local regulations, as well as court decisions.

What if your landlord fails to provide minimum safety equipment such as deadbolts and window locks? The Renter’s Guide to Safety and Security recommends learning about the laws in your state to see what degree of legal responsibility applies. A good place to start is this state-by-state rental guide to tenant’s rights.
Stay Safe at Home with the Renter's Guide to Safety & Security

What items are popular targets for burglars?

Whether they’re in your home or in your car, never leave the following items in plain sight:

01 Cash
Nothing makes a criminal’s day quite like untraceable found money.

02 Personal Electronics
Cellphones, laptops and tablets are lightweight, portable and easy for burglars to re-sell. The Renter's Guide to Safety and Security recommends having them engraved with your name or simply writing on them with an indelible marker.

03 Firearms
The black market for stolen firearms is a gold mine for criminals, in addition to being a major public safety concern. Keep your weapons locked up.

04 Medications
Prescription drugs are another big-ticket item on the black market. The bathroom cabinet is the first place a burglar will look, so keep them somewhere else.
Stay Safe at Home
with the Renter's Guide to Safety & Security

People who live in rental properties represent about one-third of the U.S. population, according to U.S. Census data. You’re part of a sizable group that, unfortunately, has an outsized risk for burglary.

Do your part to keep safety and security threats at bay by using common sense, community teamwork and the information provided in the ADTsecurity.com Renter’s Guide to Safety and Security.

What about buying a security system?

The good news is that advances in wireless technology have made security equipment less invasive to install and easier to move from place to place. More good news: you could get a discount on your renter’s insurance with a security system. Some but not all home security companies sell alarm systems for rental properties. You can also find DIY systems online and at retail stores, but remember that self-monitored systems don’t offer the added protection of professional monitoring service.