

Preventing car and vehicle theft

Don't let thieves get an easy ride. Follow these simple rules to protect your vehicle from thieves.

1. Lock your vehicle

Locking your vehicle, even when filling up or parked on your drive, greatly reduces the possibility of it being targeted by an opportunist thief. Even if you have locked your vehicle, check you haven't left any windows or the sunroof open.

It is actually illegal to leave your vehicle running unattended while you de-ice it or warm it up in cold weather. If someone takes it while it's left like this, your insurer won't pay out because you won't be covered.

If your vehicle has wing mirrors that fold in automatically when locked, make sure you lock it properly. Criminal gangs are looking for vehicles like these where the wing mirrors are still out because it is clear to them that the vehicle has been left unlocked.

2. Keep the keys safe

Vehicles today are by and large more difficult to steal than ever, unless the thief can access your key or fob to clone them. Keep your keys safe, out of view when at home, and away from your front door. It's not uncommon for car keys to be stolen from inside your home by thieves fishing for them with a stick and hook through the letterbox.

Keyless entry

Cars with keyless entry unlock automatically when the key comes within a short distance of the car. This can be from inside a pocket or bag. If you have to push a button on your car key to open your car, you don't have keyless entry.

Keyless car theft or 'relay theft' is when a device is used to fool the car into thinking the key is close by. This unlocks the car and starts the ignition.

Thieves only need to be within a few metres of your car key to capture the signal, even if it's inside your home. This means that even if your car and home are secure, thieves can still unlock, start, and steal your car.

How to protect your keyless entry car

- When at home keep your car key (and the spare) well away from the car.
- Put the keys in a screened or signal-blocking pouch, such as a Faraday Bag.
- Reprogramme your keys if you buy a second-hand car.
- Turn off wireless signals on your fob when it's not being used.

3. Be aware of carjackers

The fact that you're in the car isn't always a deterrent to someone trying to steal it.

In traffic, drive with the doors locked and when queuing leave enough space in front of your vehicle to enable you to get out of a tight spot. If your vehicle is bumped from behind, wait to pull over – somewhere safe and preferably where there are people. After all, you don't know the person who has collided with you; they could well be hijackers. If you're at all suspicious, consider calling the police.

If someone threatens you, it's better to hand over the keys to the vehicle than become a victim of assault. Then call [999](tel:999) as soon as possible, and ask for the police.

If your car is stolen, some modern vehicle alarm and tracker systems have the facility to isolate or shut down fuel systems, bringing the vehicle to a halt and leaving the thief high and dry.

4. Park responsibly

It's always advisable to avoid parking in dark and secluded areas. It's worth an extra five or ten-minute walk if it means your vehicle is left in a well-lit and busier street.

And if possible, always try to park in illuminated and staffed car parks or those with a Park Mark safer parking award. To find one, simply check out [Park Mark](#).

5. Watch for illegal tow trucks

Thieves often attempt to lift vehicles from the street, literally. So, if you see a towaway crew acting suspiciously – especially if their vehicle isn't branded or if they're not in uniform – then please report it immediately.

As with every report of suspicious behaviour made in good faith, we'll never blame anyone for calling us if it proves unfounded.

Car parks with height-restricted entrances help prevent illegal tow trucks and removal vehicles. And fitting a [Thatcham rated](#) category 1 or 2 alarm system with tracking, immobilisation, anti-grab and movement sensors can help protect and trace your vehicle.

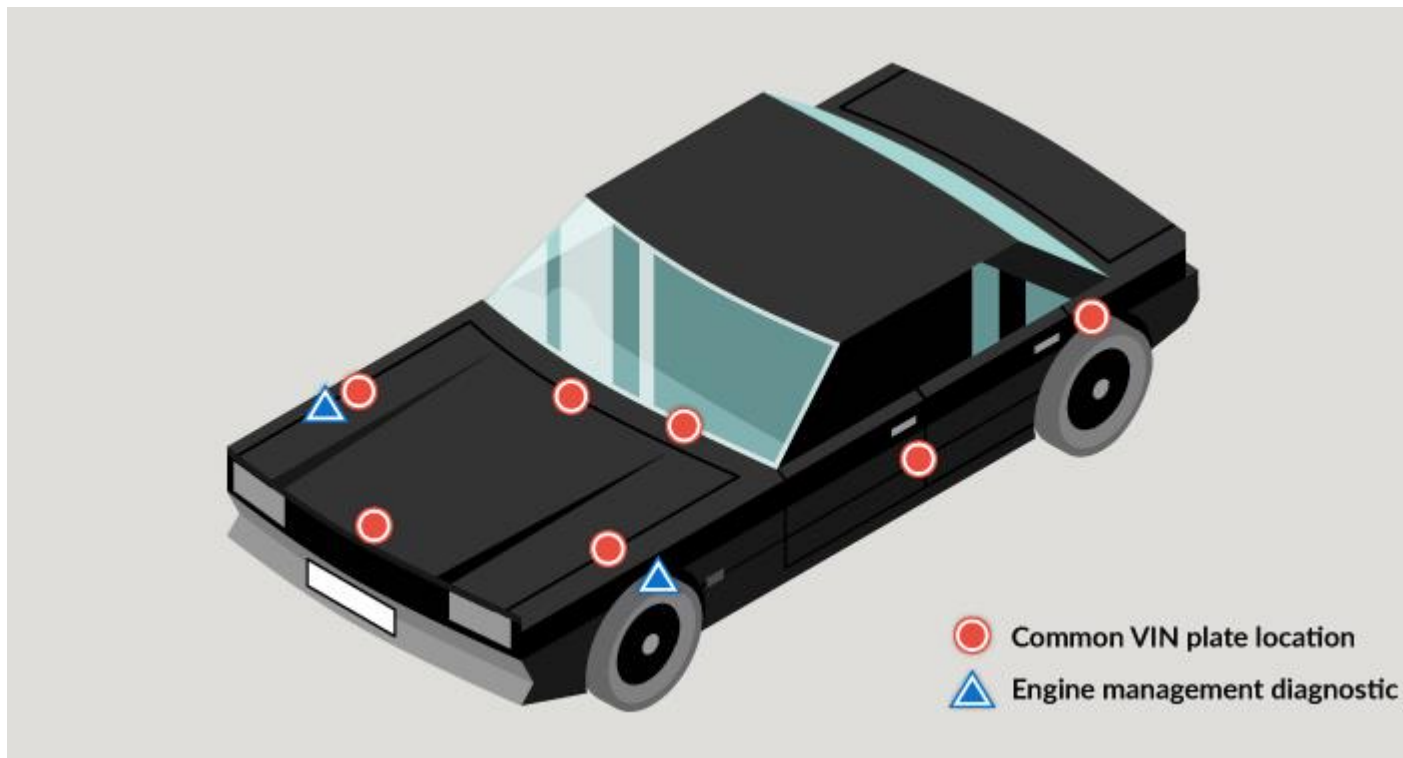
6. Fit good in-car security locks

Bear in mind that built-in steering locks aren't necessarily thief-proof. Many can be forced and broken. Fitting a [Sold Secure](#) steering wheel, gear lever or clutch pedal security device can give your vehicle added protection.

7. Double-check electronic locking

Electronic devices can be used to jam the electronic signal from your key fob to lock your vehicle. Always manually check your vehicle has locked before walking away.

If unsure, lock it manually, then scan the immediate area for anyone hanging around. If a potential thief who's watching feels they've been spotted, they'll probably move off.



8. Before owning, check for cloning

Changing the identity of a vehicle, known as vehicle cloning, can be as simple as adding stolen number plates. When buying a vehicle, always check the DVLA V5 document and make sure the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on the vehicle is the same as on the document.

Make sure you check more than one of the VINs as well as the engine numbers on the vehicle (see diagram).

[Check a used vehicle you're buying.](#)

9. Secure your port

Many modern vehicles are fitted with engine management diagnostic ports, which can unlock and start your vehicle.

If your vehicle has this type of port, consider fitting a lockable cover.