



You're driving along, minding your own business, and suddenly your car starts a clunking noise, or the tire blows, or you see steam coming up from the hood. What to do? This is just one example of the scenarios you may encounter with your car. Below you will find tips going to and from your car, when you have car trouble, and how to protect your car from being stolen.

TRAVELING IN THE CAR

1. ALWAYS lock your car doors as quickly as possible after entering the car. It only takes a moment's distraction for you to forget to lock up - and that could be the difference between safety and jeopardy!
2. Be sure to have plenty of gas in the car.
3. While traveling along the roads, be alert to your surroundings. Do not use the time at a light to freshen your makeup; use this time to look around and to remain alert. NO ONE should approach your car with you unaware.
4. Place your purse on the floor, not on the car seat or in your lap (if you are a passenger).
5. Keep purchases hidden if possible in the trunk of the car.
6. Know where you are going. Use the map or GPS device BEFORE you venture out so that you can minimize the possibility of getting lost.
7. While at a stop, if possible, leave space between you and the car in front so that in case you have to maneuver your car for a quick get-away, you will have the room to do so, should someone harass you while you are waiting.
8. Should someone approach your car for information (directions, etc.) do not lower your window more than one inch. Should you begin to feel uncomfortable or frightened, drive away.
9. If you are being followed, do not go to your home. Drive to a fire station (first choice) or police station (that you know has people present). Once there, lay on the horn until you attract attention. If you do not know where these stations are, drive to a well-populated and well-lighted shop. If possible, try to get the license and make and model of the car by using your rear view mirror. If you have a cell phone, call the police and tell them what is happening. Do not get out of your car and do not approach or confront the car following you.
10. Check beneath your car as you approach it and look in the back seat before entering the car. If you can activate the power door locks as you enter, do so - configure your remote to unlock the driver's door with the first click and the passengers doors with the second click.
11. Park your car as close to the store front or mall entrance as possible and in a well-lighted area.
12. Try to avoid parking your car next to the side opening of a van (perpetrators have used the side openings of vans to quickly snatch a victim who is entering or exiting her car). If a van is parked next to you, be prepared and get into your car quickly.
13. Be sure to lock the car at the shopping mall.

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IN/OUT OF THE CAR (some information may duplicate what is written above, but it never hurts to emphasize these tips!)

1. Safety check your car frequently. Keep it in good working order.
2. Have a “Call Police” banner in your car. See “Car Trouble” below for more information.
3. Keep windows rolled up and doors locked.
4. Do not allow strangers to enter the car. No hitchhikers.
5. If someone needs help along the road, get the license number and location, then call police or #77 on your cell phone.
6. When approaching your car in a parking lot, check under the car - thieves are known to work in teams with one under the car who will grab your ankle to knock you down [or in the case of men, may cut the ankle to down the victim] while another grabs your purse or wallet].
7. Always check the inside of the car before you open the door.
8. Have your keys in your hand as you approach your car. ONLY unlock the driver door lock, if possible - this will prevent anyone from obtaining entrance to your car by using a passenger door.
9. Initiate the power door lock immediately upon entering your car. This will insure that you are secure once inside the vehicle. Do not wait to have the engine on and car in gear for the doors to lock.
10. If possible, adjust your door locks to remain locked when you turn the engine off until you manually unlock the vehicle. Many manufacturers default cars to unlock automatically when the engine is turned off. This is a bad idea. The doors of your vehicle should be locked at all times while you are in the car.
11. Be cautious when parking next to the opening side door of a van to avoid someone grabbing you into the van.
12. When walking to and from your car, look alert, observe your surroundings and have your keys in your hand. DO NOT DAYDREAM!
13. Park your car in well lit areas.
14. If possible, keep the gas tank full. Buy gas at familiar stations during daylight hours.
15. Stay alert when you are stopped at stop signs, at lights, or whenever you find yourself stopped while in your car. Notice if anyone approaches your car - check both right and left. Carjackers can access your car by breaking your windows or just reaching into open windows.
16. **MOST IMPORTANT** - Have a PLAN so you will know what you will do if a *what if* occurs.

CAR TROUBLE

1. Pull the car well off the road to avoid an accident.
2. Purchase or make your own **CALL POLICE** banner for the rear window. Check with your local police department’s crime prevention unit, YWCA, or Commission for Women in your country, or the Internet for information on purchasing this banner. The purposes is to let oncoming drivers see that you are in trouble. This can also prevent someone stopping to cause you trouble as that person would not know if the police have been summoned and are on the way.
3. Be aware of the community into which you are driving. Some areas may be more prone to carjackings than others. If you have one of the more popular cars to carjack or break into, take precaution - stay alert, keep doors locked, be ready to move if feeling threatened, use a steering wheel lock, arm your car alarm.
4. Avoid stopping along the side of a road because another driver indicates that something is wrong with your car. Drive to a populated, busy area to check your car. **NEVER GET INTO ANOTHER DRIVER’S CAR!!!** - instead, ask the driver to call the police, AAA, or someone you know for you. Better yet, have your own cell phone.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR CAR FROM BEING STOLEN

- What kind of car do thieves look for most? Thieves look for cars that are easy to steal; cars, regardless of age, that can be resold quickly or stripped for resale parts. Some new sports cars have high tech alarm systems and high profile looks that actually make them harder to steal and even more difficult for the bad guy to resell. When parallel parking your car, leave the car with the wheels turned into the curb and when parking in other locations, turn the wheels sideways - both techniques make a car more difficult to tow from the parked position.
- Remove the keys - according to crime statistic sources, most cars stolen have their keys in the ignition. So be sure to remove your car keys whenever you exit the car, even if you are just getting gas! Never leave your car running and unlocked.
- How long does it take an experienced car thief to break into a car?
It can take as little as 7 seconds and one screwdriver to break in and less than a minute to start and drive away a previously locked vehicle. The National Auto Theft Bureau reports that one vehicle in America is stolen every 26 seconds.
- Where and when do vehicle thefts most often occur?
The crimes most often take place at night and are largely committed by young males. The top spots for auto theft include malls, apartments, stores, churches, and office buildings.
- My car is 10 years old. Why would anybody steal it?
Many cars are taken for the parts (to chop shops where they are quickly dismantled); no car is too old, too rusty, or too ugly. Typically, an automobile in parts is worth three times its value as a whole.
- What's the story on anti-theft devices?
Check with your vehicle manufacturer or dealer for anti-theft features already installed on your vehicle. Anti-theft devices are not foolproof; however, they can stop the amateur and slow the professional. For more information, contact your local law enforcement officials and see www.lojack.com/vehicle_theft.html or www.nicb.org/cps/rde/xbcr/nicb/anti_theft_devices.pdf.

ALARM SYSTEMS - activate a horn or siren when triggered by motion, sound, or contact; two types: active (require you to set the alarm yourself) and passive (switch on automatically after the key is removed or the doors are locked).

VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER - number etched on car window and/or major parts make it easier to trace parts of a stolen car.

VEHICLE TRACKING - transmitter hidden in car enables police to track car (may not available in all areas). Example: LoJack

BRAKE AND STEERING WHEEL LOCK - locks steering wheel to the brake pedal to immobilize the controls.

STEERING WHEEL LOCK - steel rod locks to steering wheel and prevents wheels from turning.

IGNITION AND STEERING COLUMN LOCK - lockable steel cover encases steering

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column, preventing access to ignition.

TAPERED DOOR LOCKS - hinder quick break-in through car windows.

- Are there any other things I can do to make my car harder to steal?
 1. Never leave your car unlocked, windows rolled down, or keys in the ignition.
 2. Keep contents and valuables (car phones, GPS devices, purses, packages, etc.) out of sight. Lock them in the trunk or store them in glove compartment, under the seat, or inside other storage areas within the vehicle or remove completely when you leave your car.
 3. Do not leave spare keys in the car or in hiding places. An experienced thief knows all the hiding places.
 4. Park in well-lit areas.
 5. If parallel parking, turning wheels sharply to the right or left toward the curb makes it harder for a thief to tow the vehicle.
 6. Put emergency brake on and leave the transmission in park. Standard transmissions should be left in gear.
 7. No matter how quick the errand, never leave your car running unattended, not even in your driveway.
 8. If you have a garage, use it and lock it. Close the garage door before exiting your vehicle.
- What if my car is stolen? Any tips on how to help get it back?

Car thieves will usually alter vehicle identification numbers (VIN) on stolen cars; etch the vehicle ID number on a hard-to-spot place. Or drop a business card or piece of paper with your driver's license number and state down inside the door. Never keep your registration, title, or license in your car, unless the law requires you to do so (these items only make it easier for the thief to sell your car).
- When you pull up to the front of a store to load your groceries, never leave your keys in the ignition when you go to the back of the car to load the groceries - thieves have jumped into cars and taken off. The same is true if you take the grocery cart to your car - do not leave your purse and keys on the front seat while you are at the back of the vehicle loading the groceries into the trunk.
- At an intersection light, leave get-away room between your car and the car in front of you in case someone approaches your car and hassles you.
- Lock your car immediately after dropping off or picking up passengers.

See Safety for Seniors for more tips.