

HOW BURGLARS ARE USING SOCIAL MEDIA



In the past, burglars made use of obituaries to rob grieving families. Now they turn to Twitter, Facebook, and FourSquare



However, with the rise of social media, burglars now have easier access to specific information regarding homeowners than ever before.

GOOGLE STREETVIEW

is one of the most used tools of the clued-up thief, allowing them to case out likely-looking homes in complete safety.



Burglars can make use of techniques usually employed by stalkers to determine when your house and possessions are most vulnerable.

Over 75%

of convicted burglars believe that other burglars are using social media to find targets.

HOW ARE THEY DOING IT?

Social media can tell potential burglars some things that make their job much easier:



What you have.



Where you live.



How long you're likely to be away from the property.

A few advanced searches on Facebook or Twitter can be tailored to target groups of people who are likely to **be out of the country**.



Like those checking into airport lounges on foursquare.

These searches can be saved and checked periodically for new targets.

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LOCATION DATA


Social media platforms are increasingly showing where the user has posted from by tagging where a post was made with **co-ordinates**.



If they know where you live, and they know where you are, they know when your home is likely to be empty.

EXIF meta-data contained in image files can reveal an awful lot about you.

For instance, many Camera phones, such as the iPhone, automatically include gps location data as image metadata. This information can easily be used to track a users location.



Most platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) now **remove EXIF data** from uploaded photos – but not all external image hosts do.

EXAMPLE



Proud of your new shiny thing, you **publicly link to a photo** you've taken on your blog. Potential thieves can use the data to work out where you live, and check out your place on Google maps. Digitally stalking you further, they can discover when you are far away from home.

this may lead to this! →

10:00



Typically, burglars will attempt to get in and out of a property **within 10 minutes**.



Burglars who know that nobody is coming home in the next few hours are likely to **spend longer in the property**, and steal goods of a higher value than in a standard burglary of opportunity. Social media allows more of these pre-meditated burglaries to be carried out.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STOP IT?

Do not automatically share **location** information on social media services.



Do not share your **address**.



Consider sharing information **with friends** (and not "friends of friends").



Consider **taking a vacation** from social media when on vacation. Avoid announcements (even if it's tempting) that you're going to be in another country for the next few weeks.

Share vacation photos **after the vacation**. Even if your hosting service strips out EXIF data, the accompanying "view from the hotel window" remark gives it away that you aren't close to home.

Evaluate the information you share on your social media accounts, especially your profile data. If you **reverse stalked yourself**, would you be able to find out exactly where you live?



SECURING YOUR HOME AND PROPERTY

Still, even employing these methods potential burglars can never be sure of how secure your home is. The best deterrent in these cases is appearing to be too difficult a job.

Lights on timers in the evening. Nothing says 'empty home' more than the absence of lights in the evening.



Motion sensitive porch and garden lighting.



Have a neighbour or friend collect **your mail** and draw curtains.



The bathroom is the only room in the house that can be occupied for any amount of time, at any time.

Don't leave notes for delivery people alerting people that you aren't in. Invest in a **secure mailbox** which can take packages. Rearrange deliveries for when you are at home.



Improve physical barriers to entry, including **deadbolt locks**.



Most burglars will not **risk encountering a dog**, and will avoid homes that even appear to contain one.



Most burglars reported that the biggest deterrent in an empty home was the presence of a **visible security system**.

The Electronic Security Association's "Home Safety Fast Facts" report, notes that

9 out of 10 burglars

avoid homes with alarm systems and said if they did encounter an alarm, they would not attack the home.

