

Don't Let Your Vehicle Get Taken for a Ride

The Arizona Automobile Theft Authority and National Insurance Crime Bureau recommend a "layered approach" to keep thieves from stealing your vehicle.

Layer 1: Common Sense Tips

1. Lock your car. Half of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
2. Take your keys. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen have the keys in them.
3. Park in busy, well-lighted areas. Car thefts occur at night more than half the time.
4. Park in attended lots. Car thieves don't like witnesses. Leave just the ignition key with the attendant. Make sure no personal information is attached.
5. Don't leave your car running, even for a minute. Convenience stores, gas stations and ATMs are common hunting grounds for thieves.
6. Completely close car windows.
7. Do not leave valuables in plain view. Put them in the trunk or out of sight.
8. Do not hide a spare set of keys in the car. Pros know where to look.
9. Park with your wheels turned toward the curb.
10. Always use your emergency brake when parking.
11. If you have a garage, use it. When you do, lock both the vehicle and the garage door.

Layer 2: Alert Thieves That Your Car Is Protected

Use one or more of the following items:

1. Audible alarms.
2. Steering wheel locks
3. Steering column collars
4. Tire locks
5. Etching. Etch the vehicle identification number (VIN) on vehicle windows, doors, fenders and trunk lid.
6. Theft deterrent decals such as those provided by AATA's Watch Your Car Program (www.watchyourcar.com)

Layer 3: Use Vehicle Immobilizers to Prevent Thieves from Bypassing Your Ignition and Hot-Wiring Your Vehicle

1. Smart keys
2. Fuse cutoffs
3. Kill switches
4. Starter, ignition and fuel disablers
5. High-security locks and keys

Layer 4: Tracking Systems

A vehicle tracking system is a high-tech device that is hidden in your vehicle and emits a signal the police can monitor if you report a theft.

Protect Against Carjacking

1. Approach your car with your keys in hand. Look around the vehicle and inside before getting in.
2. Keep your doors locked and windows rolled up at all times while driving.
3. Be especially alert at intersections, gas stations, ATMs, shopping malls, convenience and grocery stores. Park in well-lighted areas with good visibility and close proximity to walkways, stores and people.
4. If the carjacker has a weapon, give up the car with no questions asked.

Beware of "Bump and Rob" Tactics

The "Bump and Rob" occurs when a car with a driver and at least one passenger rear-ends or bumps you in traffic. When you stop and get out to check the damage, the driver or one of the passengers jumps into your car and drives off.

If you are bumped by another car, look around before you get out. Make sure there are other cars around. Check out the car that hit you to see who's in it. If the situation makes you uneasy, stay in the car and insist on moving to a police station or busy, well-lighted area to exchange information.

If your car is stolen, call police immediately.