



*Thieves steal approximately 1.2 million vehicles a year in the United States – one every 26 seconds.*

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# AUTO THEFT

**Tips for reducing the chances your car will be targeted**



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Professional auto thieves commit the majority of auto thefts, with “joy-riders” accounting for most of the rest. Joy-riders favor high-performance or luxury cars; these cars are usually recovered but often suffer significant damage. Professionals prefer less exotic, more popular models because their parts are interchangeable. These thieves usually turn the cars they steal over to “chop shops,” which dismantle them and sell the parts. They also steal cars for export to other countries, often “stealing to order” to fulfill requests for certain types of vehicles.

Most thieves steal unattended cars, often finding unlocked doors, open windows and, occasionally, keys in the ignition. A dangerous few, however, confront drivers and take their cars by threatening — and sometimes actually committing — violence. Although the sensational nature of these crimes makes them attractive to the media, carjacking accounts for less than 2 percent of all auto theft.

Although thieves favor certain types of vehicles over others, no car is immune to auto theft. But you don't have to be a helpless victim. If you're shopping for a new vehicle, check with GEICO to see if your choice also appeals to thieves. Whatever you're driving, you can minimize the chances of your vehicle becoming a thief's target by following these guidelines.

- 1. Keep your vehicle locked** at all times, even while driving.
- 2. Never leave your keys** in the car.
- 3. If possible, park in busy, well-lit areas;** thieves prefer to work in the dark. Leave your car in park or in gear with the wheels turned toward the curb or some other obstruction, so thieves won't be able to tow it easily. Close all windows and sunroofs, no matter how hot it is.
- 4. Avoid leaving valuables inside your vehicle** where passersby can see them.
- 5. Install an anti-theft system** in your vehicle if it doesn't have one. A mechanism that locks onto the steering wheel can be a very visible sign that you've taken steps to protect your vehicle. Ignition cut-off systems prevent a car from being started. Some new cars come with passive alarms that activate automatically when the key is removed from the ignition. One system emits a signal that can be tracked by the police. Thieves are reluctant to steal vehicles if they know the cars can be recovered quickly. Many insurers offer discounts for these types of systems.

- 6. Beware of the “bump-and-rob” technique** carjackers sometimes use; they bump your car from the rear, then steal it when you get out to look for damage. When stopped at a traffic light, leave room to maneuver around the ve-

hicle ahead if you need to. If another car bumps yours and you feel threatened, drive to a populated area or, if you have a cellular phone, call the police for assistance.

- 7. Do not leave registration or title in the car.** Too often a car thief is pulled over and gets away from the police because he or she can produce the auto registration. If multiple drivers use the vehicle, the best suggestion would be to hide the registration in a secret location in the car that only the owners know.
- 8. Look around.** Be aware of your surroundings, especially in garages, parking lots and gas stations.
- 9. Know where you're going.** Avoid known high-crime areas even if the alternate route takes a little longer.
- 10. If confronted by a carjacker, do not resist.** Cars can be replaced; you can't.
- 11. Have your car's vehicle identification number (VIN) etched on each of the windows.** Car thieves want to get off cheap. They don't want to go to the expense of replacing all the glass.

If thieves want your car badly enough, they will probably get it. In most cases, however, they want to spend as little time stealing your car as possible. Follow these suggestions, and most thieves will look elsewhere for an easier target.

