

3: WHERE TO PARK YOUR BIKE

PARKING & LOCKING BASICS

The first rule: Always lock it. Never, never leave your bike unlocked—even if you're leaving it for only half a minute. A thief can grab your bike in seconds. Some parking basics:

Security: Lock your bike to something that's permanent and not easy for a thief to take. Lock to a bicycle rack, a parking meter, a metal fence post, or a large tree. Don't lock to another bike, a door handle, or small tree. And if you keep your bike in a garage, basement, or on a porch, lock it.

Visibility: Park in open areas where many people pass by and your bicycle can be seen easily. Thieves usually don't like an audience. ❶

Keep It Close By: Put your bike where you can get to it fast. ❷ Thieves like to steal bikes whose owners are far away.

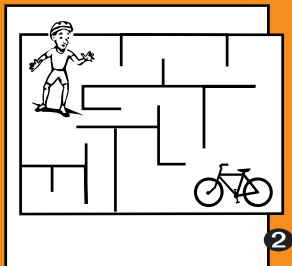
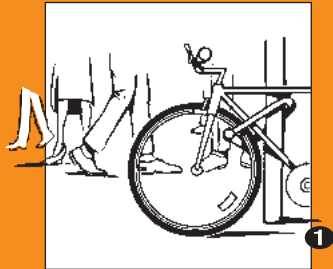
WHAT LOCKING HARDWARE SHOULD YOU USE?

U Locks: ❸ Some U locks are stronger than others; make sure you buy a strong steel-alloy lock. If the manufacturer offers a warranty or insurance, register the lock and write down the lock's serial number and when you bought it. For added protection, get one or more U-lock cuffs (such as Bad Bones); they can keep thieves from using a lever to pry open your lock. One drawback to U locks: you can't lock up to thick objects such as street lights; for these, carry a thick cable.

Padlocks & Chains: The thicker, the better; chain links and lock clasps should be at least 3/8 of an inch thick. Look for locks and chains that are case-hardened—a process that makes them harder to cut.

Cables: Some cables are actually harder to cut than chains, because they don't snap and thieves can't pry them open. ❹ Use a cable at least 3/8 of an inch thick with a lock as thick, or thicker.

Ugly Bikes: In busy commercial areas, where thieves have lots of bikes to choose from, your bike is less likely to be stolen if it looks old or just ugly.



HOW TO LOCK UP

A thief with enough time and the right tools can break any lock. But you can discourage many thieves if you follow these tips about locking your bike:

Lock the Whole Bike: You should put your chain, cable, or U locks through your frame and both wheels—taking the front wheel off if you have a quick-release hub. **5** Never lock through your wheel without locking the frame, because thieves can remove your wheel and steal the rest of the bike.

Cross Locking: A good way to foil thieves is to use more than one kind of lock. **6** For example, put a U lock through your frame and rear tire, and put a cable or chain through your frame and front tire.

Placing the Lock: Thieves may break a lock by putting it against a wall or sidewalk and smashing it with a hammer. If you use a padlock, try to put it where it's not close to the ground or against a wall or another solid surface—leaving little or no slack in your cable or chain. When using a U lock, leave little or no space in the lock's middle to prevent prying.

Removable Items: When you leave your bike, remove any parts you can't lock and a thief could steal easily: a quick-release seat, horn, bike bag, pump, cycle computer, or lights. If removing quick-release parts is a hassle, replace them with permanent ones.

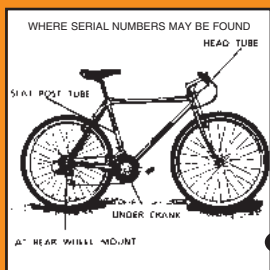
WHERE TO PARK

Parking Meters: Lock your bike to a parking meter if you're using a U lock. **5** Never lock to a meter with only a chain or cable—a thief will slide your bike over the top.

Bike Racks: Look for thick, immovable bicycle racks installed outside of many buildings. Some building owners and local governments have provided ribbon-shaped racks **7** and inverted-U-shaped racks, **6** which are very secure places to park your bike.

Sign Poles: Sign poles aren't the best places to lock your bike. Before locking to a pole, check whether you can pull it out of the ground. Also check how easily a thief could remove the sign and slide your bike over the top of the pole.





Parking Lots: Some public-parking operators will let you park your bike in their lots. If you forget your lock, look for an attended parking lot.

Indoors: A good way to avoid theft: Park your bike indoors. Some stores and buildings allow bikes inside, if only for a short time. When parking indoors, lock your bike securely.

CUTTING YOUR THEFT LOSSES

What's the first thing to do when you get a new bike? Write down the serial number and keep the number in a safe place. ❶ (Look for the serial number stamped on your bike's head tube, seat post tube, under the crank, or on the frame's rear wheel mount.)

Identifying Marks: You can discourage thieves by engraving your name or phone number in an obvious place on your bike frame. ❷ Or put a card with your name and phone number inside the handlebar tube—so if you find your stolen bike at an auction, junk shop, or flea market, you can prove it's yours.

If Your Bike Is Stolen: First, find your bike's serial number if you have it. Then call your local police and tell them where your bike was stolen. Try to get a police report number that you can use for an insurance claim. Also find out how police will contact you if they find your bike.

Looking for Your Bike: Sometimes you can find your bicycle at places like pawn shops, auctions, or resale shops that might deal in stolen merchandise. But if you find your stolen bike among other property that someone's selling, remember that they won't just give it to you; you must prove it's yours. Keep your serial number or use identifying marks as described above.

Call your local police to learn whether they auction off recovered, unclaimed property.