

Car Theft/Prowls– *How They Get In*



A Crime Prevention Alliance member shows how easily and quietly thieves can break into a car and steal a purse.

80-85% of car thieves are amateurs looking for an easy crime of opportunity. They look for cars that they think will be easy to enter and start quickly. They do not want to get caught, so they will not invest a lot of time to get into the car. Also, since they do not want to get caught, they want to be as quiet as possible and they do not want to be observed.

According to interviews with actual car thieves, their favorite methods of entering cars includes entering/taking unlocked cars (or cars already running), punching locks, breaking windows, jimmying locks (with skeleton keys, slim jims, etc.). Amazingly, many cars are stolen simply by towing them away (turning your wheels sharply after parking discourages this).

20% of all stolen cars are a result of people leaving their keys in the ignition. People “run into a convenience store on a quick errand” or warm up their cars on a cold morning! Some car thieves hang out in parking lots looking for people to leave their keys in the car.

Older cars (early 1980’s to mid 1990’s) are more popular to steal. They have fewer built-in theft deterrents.

Car prowlers are not always picky about what they take. Drug users commonly look for anything they can trade for drugs. This includes food and used clothing. Car prowlers will often pass up expensive stereos in cars that are well protected for cheaper stereos that they can steal easily. Anything visible in your car is fair game. If a car prowler sees it, he is liable to take it!

So, a typical car thief is looking for a car that he can easily enter because he knows that it is unlocked, or it is running, or he can quickly break a window or break a lock in a place that no one can see or hear him.

A typical car prowler is looking for a car that he can see has something of value that he can easily reach by opening the door or breaking a window where he will not be observed.