



*The Definitive  
Guide to*



# **PREVENTING MOTORCYCLE THEFT**

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# THE SCOURGE of MOTORCYCLE THEFT

*Could preventing this crime be as simple  
as a new lock and a good parking spot?*

In their 2015 Forecast Report “2015 Motorcycle Theft & Recovery,” the National Insurance Crime Bureau painted a picture of motorcycle theft that, while increasing only 6% nationally, is on the rise in many American cities. New York City experienced a 30% increase in crime over 2014. Los Angeles County led California, a state that led the nation in thefts, with over 7,000.

The report notes a few key data points that are interesting to note

- **Most thefts occur in the summer months.**
- **Honda Motorcycles are most likely to be stolen**
- **25 counties accounted for 32% of motorcycle thefts, showing this crime moving to more urban, densely populated areas.**





# 3 TYPES OF THEFT

## Types of Theft (and How to Obstruct Them)

Motorcycle thieves target bikes in a few different ways and for a couple of reasons as well. In order to better protect your property, you should know what types of theft you need to watch out for and how to hinder each one. And the keyword here is *hinder*. Remember this: you can't completely prevent any type of theft, but you can inhibit a hasty heist. If you can slow down the thief enough, you stand a better chance of making it back to your bike before they can steal it.



**Ride away theft** is one of the more common methods of stealing a motorcycle because it only takes one ambitious criminal. They walk on over to your bike, disable any locks and prevention tools, jump start the engine, and ride away. Some thieves will work with a partner anyhow, as a lookout, to avoid complications. For the most part, however, well-trained individuals can remove security devices quickly enough that it doesn't look much different than it would if you were doing it properly.

Because this method can draw so little attention, you'll want to employ multiple preventative tools. We'll discuss those in depth later, but a couple of choices can help improve your odds without the need to purchase anything:

- **Park in view of a security camera.** This won't prevent all thefts, as ride away theft tends to look fairly normal (as previously noted). A hat and sunglasses can disguise a face well enough to avoid identification on a security camera without looking suspicious to others on the street, so you only get so much safety out of this choice. That said, not all thieves are smart ones and you still improve your odds—especially if the camera is readily visible.
- **Park in visible areas.** If you can park where you have a line of sight to your bike, that's ideal. If someone tries to steal it, you won't have far to go in order to catch them. That said, most parking options don't offer such a convenience. Nevertheless, parking in an area visible to many people helps as well. While criminals may utilize exceptional discretion, if another person witnesses a theft in progress you might just gain the help of a fellow citizen and avoid losing your property.

- **Park behind an obstruction.** Whether it's a car in a garage or posts on the street, thieves will struggle to steal a bike if it rests in an enclosed space or simply requires effort to access it. This may be inconvenient for you, but it's much more inconvenient for the thief. Like everything else, this method's added security is surmountable, but at worst it will slow down anyone trying to access your bike. Every security measure adds a little more time to the clock and time matters greatly when committing a crime. The more work stealing your motorcycle requires, the less likely a thief will bother trying to steal it. Furthermore, if they do, you'll have a greater chance of catching them in the act.
- **Utilize your motorcycle's (hidden) kill switch** to render the engine inoperable. Most bikes include one, and nowadays many are hidden due to thieves learning how to deactivate them. Of course, these same thieves can simply look up your bike's hidden kill switch location so that only offers so much protection. If you're handy, however, you can [install one of your own](#) and make it very unlikely that anyone but you can find it.

**Grab 'n' go theft** takes more than just one criminal to get the job done, and it expedites the process greatly making it one of the more dangerous methods to watch out for. As a group effort, one person drives a van and at least one other loads the motorcycle in for a quick drive-off. Certain locks will slow this process down, but very little has to be disabled in the moment in order to move your motorcycle from its parked location into the van. As a result, you can only do so much to avoid this.



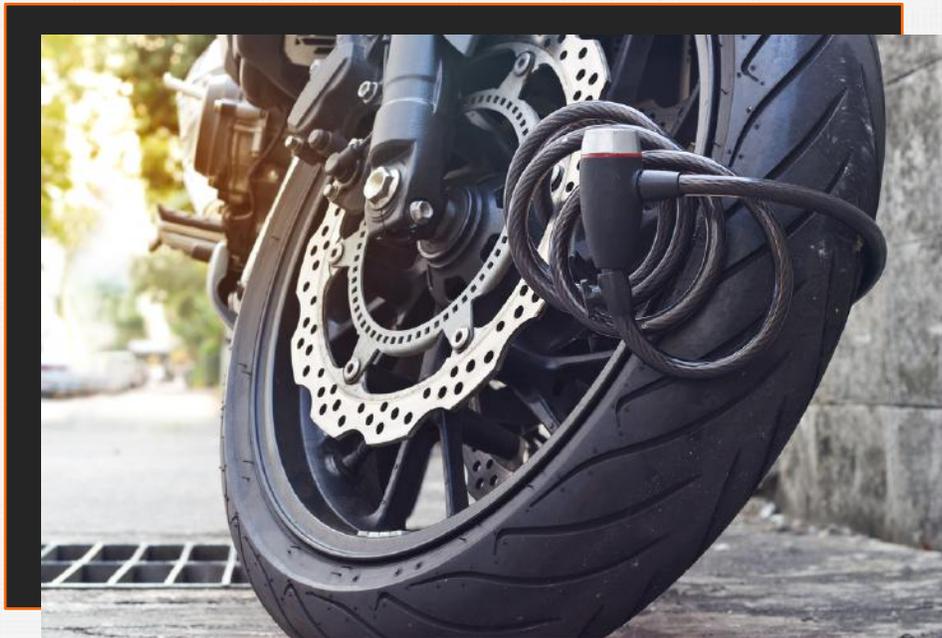


Three tools can help you avoid a grab 'n' go: a heavy duty cable lock, disc brake lock with alarm, and a bike cover. We'll discuss what those are and how they work later, in the Theft Prevention Tools section, but essentially they work to slow thieves down and make your bike a less-desirable target. The prevention methods mentioned earlier can help as well. It's a good rule of thumb to think of motorcycle security as a stack of methods you build for greater efficacy rather than a process of choosing just one or two options.

**Break ins** account for a fair number of motorcycle thefts as well. Since those happen on private property, you'll most likely open yourself up to more risk by assuming your bike is safe because it's stored inside. While motorcycle thieves won't go after a bike they don't know exists, it isn't all that hard to figure out where you store yours. Once they know where you park your bike, the thief only needs to surveil your location and wait until you're gone to break in to remove your property.

What can you do about this? Any garage and home security systems can help, but don't forget about all the aforementioned methods for parking in public areas as well. Any deterrents that help in a public space can, at the very least, slow a thief down. For example, if you also own a car you have a built-in obstruction in your garage. Park your bike behind it. Don't avoid using locks either. The best way to set yourself up for a break-in theft is to assume you're safe enough.





## THEFT PREVENTION TOOLS

You need to secure your bike to protect, and you have a variety of options when accomplishing that task. First, let's talk about theft-prevention tools and bear this in mind: you can use just one method, but there's no reason you can't employ several to better your odds.

- Cable Locks:** Much like with bicycles, you can use cable locks to attach your motorcycle to a post (or other accommodating stationary object). Popular options, like the [Trimax TDL815](#), won't break the bank but can only provide so much protection. Motivated thieves will have tools to cut through cable locks, so you should additional security measures as well.



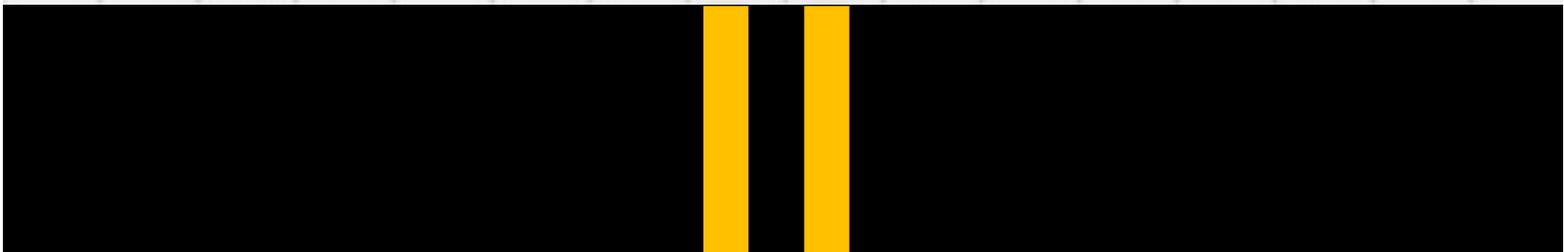


•**Disc Lock:** Disc locks, such as the [Trimax T665LY](#), attach to the front [disc brake](#) of your motorcycle to immobilize it. Many come with reminder straps so you don't try to ride off before removing them. Bikers often combine disc locks with cable locks for added security. With both lock types active, the bike can't move and will remain tethered to its location. Do beware: some lower-quality disc locks are susceptible to a [Bic pen picking method](#). [You can prevent this with a repair clamp](#), but a little research can reveal whether or not you'll need to make the effort. (For example, [answered questions about the Trimax T665LY](#) indicate it will *not* open under the pressure of a plastic pen.)

•**Steering Lock:** Steering locks disable the steering wheel, but [they aren't very hard for thieves to disable](#). Use them if you want a little added security, but certainly not as a sole means of protection.

•**Bike Covers:** While a [bike cover](#) might not seem like a theft prevention device, it manages to succeed as one because it works as a deterrent. Thieves will look for a motorcycle in plain view with locks they can disable. A covered bike not only won't register visually as fast as an uncovered bike will, but thieves won't be able to see what other security measures you have in place. When looking for a good target, a covered bike will rarely be the first choice. If you grab a [heavy duty disc lock with alarm](#), too, you can double up on the surprises to make stealing your bike an even riskier proposition.

While we've offered a few suggestions, any quality bike locks and covers will do. If you need help determining what's good to buy and what isn't, check out [BikeBandit's quality chart](#).





## RECOVERY TOOLS

Locking your bike down is plan A, but no method will ever prove 100% effective against theft. You need a plan B to recover your bike if it gets stolen. You have a couple of options, but should consider utilizing both.

**GPS Trackers:** When a thief steals your bike, you'll have a far easier time recovering it if you know where it went. GPS trackers can help you track your motorcycle's whereabouts in real time. Many cost around \$100, like the [SPOT Trace Anti-Theft Device](#), but you can find others, like the [TrackmateGPS MINI](#), for under \$30. Nevertheless, you'll pay a monthly or annual subscription fee with GPS trackers in order to actually use their tracking abilities. They work well, so think of them as an insurance cost if it helps. Of course, GPS trackers only work perfectly when they're connected. Smart thieves will disable them if they know where to look.





•**Discrete (and Indiscrete) Markings:** If the police, or anyone else, recovers your stolen motorcycle you'll need to identify it. Aside from keeping your registration documents on hand (rather than in the bike), you can add markings for fast identification. Obvious markings can serve as a theft deterrent because it'll make your bike uniquely identifiable. This won't matter much once the bike makes it to a [chop shop](#), but just like a suitcase at the airport baggage claim this will help your vehicle stand out. Discrete markings can help as well. Say you drew a little goldfish on the backside of the parking brake. Mentioning that will make it much easier to prove you're at least very familiar with the bike. If you don't want to mark it up in any way that people can see, however, you can use an [ultraviolet marker](#) instead. You'll need a [corresponding flashlight](#) to view your markings, but that's also a small investment.

While you can't prevent motorcycle theft entirely, you can greatly decrease your chances. If you employ many of these security method, you'll make your bike look like it'll take too long to steal and that's what successfully prevents most theft.





## PREVENTING LOST KEYS

When you purchase a new motorcycle you have a relationship with the dealer and will receive a few copies of your keys. Used bikes may come with just one key. If you lose that, you lose access to your bike. You'll be better off if you have a backup method.

You'll likely want to make another copy of your keys and store them somewhere safe. If you happen to lose both, however, you'll be in trouble. [KeyMe](#) can copy your motorcycle keys using a couple of photos you take with your smartphone. If you ever lose your keys, you can have a new set made from those images so you'll always have a backup available.





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