



Older people are less likely than any other age group to be victims of crime. But there is one type of criminal that target older people: bogus callers.

Also known as distraction burglars, they trick their way into people's homes to steal money and valuables while the householder's attention is elsewhere.

Most callers are genuine and mean you no harm but bogus callers can often seem very plausible and will try to fool you.

Follow our advice and keep yourself safe and secure at your door.

## Password scheme

All electricity, gas and water companies have a doorstep password scheme.

If you haven't already done so set up a password with each of them, choosing passwords that are unique and that you will remember. When a representative calls they will give you this unique password to confirm they are legitimate.

Keep the passwords out of sight but where you can easily find it. If you need to fetch it close the door first.

## Safety and security in your home

Use a door chain and if you can, a spy hole. This makes it easier for you to identify who is at the door without fully opening it.

If you do not currently have a chain or spy hole, arrange to have them fitted. Our [Bobby Van scheme](#) will fit them free of charge if you qualify, or your local Age UK group may be able to help you find a handyperson who can do this for you.

## Valuables and money

Do not keep large amounts of money in the house. It is safer in a bank or building society account.

Do not leave money lying around where it is visible from outside or where it can be easily found.

Do not leave valuable items in view or where they can be easily found. Items of sentimental value such as jewellery may also be those that most appeal to burglars. It may be worth getting a small safe for your home.

## What to do when someone calls

### Before you go to the door

Close and lock the back door and any accessible windows before you go to the front door.

Bogus callers often work in pairs. One of them will try to keep you talking at the front door while the other tries to get in through the back door or a window.

## **Look through your spy hole or window**

Try to check who a caller is before opening the door. Don't let any caller pressure you into making a quick decision - if you are unsure do not open the door.

## **Put your door chain on**

Before you answer the door, put your door chain on and keep it on while you check the caller's identity.

If you want to check with their company, keep the door chain on, tell the caller you are going to call their company and close the door.

## **Check the caller is who they say they are**

A genuine caller will not object to you leaving them on the doorstep and closing the door while you confirm their identity even if it is raining.

If the caller says they represent an electricity, gas or water company or another organization, such as the council or a charity, follow the checklist below to check that a caller is who they say they are.

## **Ask for the password**

If you have set one up with the company, use it.

## **Does the caller have an identification card?**

If the caller does not have any identification card ask the caller to go away and close the door. If the caller persists dial 999 and ask for the police.

If the caller does have an identification card, ask to see it:

- Examine the card to see if it looks genuine
- Check the expiry date - is it still valid?
- Does the photograph on the card match the person at the door?
- Check the photograph is the original or has anything been stuck over it?
- If you want to call their company, do not use the telephone number on the caller's identification card - if the identification card is not genuine then the telephone number on the card will not be genuine either
- Find the telephone number in your phone book, on a bill or call directory enquiries
- Ask the company to confirm they have sent someone out to you. They will ask you for information about the identification card, what the caller looks like and may also ask for the date of birth or password of the caller.
- If you need to get more information from the caller, leave the door chain on at all times.

If the company does not know the caller, dial 999 and ask for the Police, who will tell you what to do.

## **Put your safety first**

Sometimes bogus callers pose as someone needing help asking perhaps for a glass of water or access to a telephone. Put yourself first. Do not feel you are rude or uncaring by saying no. Your own safety is more important.

## **Remember it is your home**

If you are unsure do not open the door and do not let the caller in.

## **Rogue traders**

Some cold callers will offer to do roofing, building or driveway resurfacing. Some will vastly overcharge for unnecessary, shoddy or non-existent work.

Do not agree to any cold caller doing any work for you.

## **Never accept an offer to drive you to withdraw money**

There have been instances where older people have been driven to their bank or building society to withdraw money to pay the cold callers charges.

Do not accept an offer to be driven from anyone you do not know or do not trust. If you feel pressured to hand over money keep your door closed, dial 999 and ask for the police.

## **Need some work done?**

If you think you may need to have work done on your house or drive-way, ask for quotes from two or three reputable companies. Friends and relatives may be able to recommend companies or trades people they have been pleased with.

Your local Age UK group may also be able to provide lists of companies and trades people to help you.

## **Your passwords**

If you print out this page, write the contact details and passwords for your electricity gas and water companies below.

**My water supplier:**

**Contact number:**

**Doorstep password:**

**My gas supplier:**

**Contact number:**

**Doorstep password:**

**My electricity supplier:**

**Contact number:**

**Doorstep password:**

---