

PROPERTY MARKING

Marking your property is one of the most simple and effective ways of protecting your possessions.

- For a start, property marking puts burglars off because it lets others know that the item has been stolen, making it much more difficult to sell. The other big advantage is that it makes tracing and returning your stolen property a lot easier for police.
- The Metropolitan police say that there are two main types of property marking: the first is known as permanent marking, when you engrave or "punch" your property with your street number and postcode. Inexpensive permanent marketing kits can be bought from most DIY stores.
- Make sure you engrave with a fine drill or sharp-pointed tool, and use a template or stencil to keep it neat and tidy. Punching is a form of permanent marking that is done with a hammer and a set of punches bearing numbers and letters. This method is good for bicycles, mowers, engines or other sturdy metal objects, but don't use this on aluminum as it's easily damaged. Of course, you could just improvise and scratch your postcode on it with a sharp object, depending on how happy you expect to be with the final appearance.

Invisible Protection

- Invisible marking is the other method of property marking. This is best for antiques or valuable property that would lose value if spoiled by permanent marking. Police usually check stolen property with a special ultra-violet lamp, so an ultra-violet (UV) marker pen should be used. Just as for permanent marking, use your postcode and mark again if you move. The police also say that it is important to remember that UV marking fades and will need to be renewed every so often.
- Most police forces run schemes that let you borrow an UV or ceramic marker, and you can buy them at most DIY stores. However, in some cases, chemicals can be used to remove invisible marking, and as it fades quickly, you should remember to regularly update your markings.
- Although you can't see it with the naked eye, invisible marking can still be a deterrent to burglars, but you must let them know you've done it by using stickers from the police saying, "property in this home has been marked". Contact your local police for more details about this.
- When it comes to deciding which items to mark, the answer is "up to you". Think about what you value most and what might be attractive to thieves. The truth is almost anything can be a target for theft, so why not mark everything?
- It's worth keeping a property list or inventory of all your household possessions, and be sure to mark the things that you own as you compile your list, including items kept in your shed or garage.
- Finally, where your property is marked is important, especially if engraving or punching. The chances are you'll want to keep the mark out of site, so try marking underneath or around the back of the item. The most important thing to remember is to choose a surface that can't be removed without spoiling the basic appearance or performance of the item. If thieves can't remove your mark without breaking your property, then it's worthless and they probably won't want it.