

WHICH LOCK?

A good one. Ideally two, especially if you live in a big city where bike theft is rife. You're generally told to spend at least 10 per cent of the cost of your bike on a lock, but buying anything under £40 is a waste of money unless you're going to use it as your secondary lock (just to secure your front wheel). Several thieves have tried and failed to break my £70 Abus D-lock. The woman who sold it to me said she had never heard of anyone having their bike stolen when using it properly.

Apart from cost, the other bad news is that the best locks are also the heaviest. It is a cruel truth that in order to thwart a thief trying to pinch your featherlight carbon-framed beauty, you will have to arm yourself with a lock that weighs more than the bike. Sorry about that. While I am delivering bad tidings, I might as well warn you that no lock is tough enough to withstand a really determined attack. If a thief wants your bike and is given more than five minutes to do so then he (it's usually a he, remember) will take it. The git.

Remember when buying a lock to choose one that isn't too big for your frame if you want to attach it using a holster. You can buy holsters for most of the big-name locks if you don't have one or have lost or broken yours, though they tend to be scandalously expensive for what they are. Most bike shops will be happy to fit them for you if you struggle. Your lock should also not be so small that it won't go around your bike and an immovable object.

Once you have a lock, oil it a little every now and again to stop it sticking. If you do leave your bike outside for a prolonged period and the lock has seized up, often squirting in some WD-40 or similar and leaving for a few minutes will do the trick.

D-LOCKS [AKA U-LOCKS]

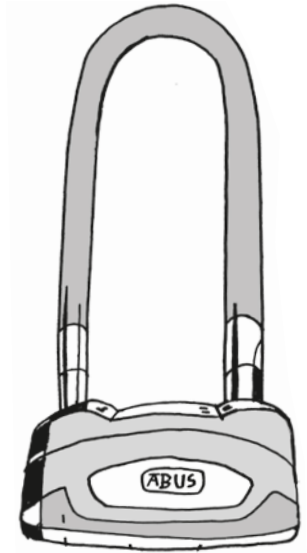
For your primary, don't-even-think-about-stealing-this-you-hoodlum lock, choose a sturdy D-lock.

Buy the most expensive one you can afford and always use it to lock the dearest bits of your bike, i.e. the frame and back wheel. You may recall the famous video showing someone picking a D-lock with a Biro. Old news. New models don't have the same flaw and, anyway, picking locks is a bit Victorian. Most modern bike thieves prefer brute force and heavy equipment to simply break or cut through locks. D-locks are

best because they are solid and have no weak links. Buy the smallest D-lock that works for you, because you want as little space as possible between the lock, the bike and whatever you are locking it to.

If you've ever wondered why you see so many D-locks hanging from bike stands with no bicycle in sight, it is not because someone has picked the lock, stolen the bike and left the lock to goad the victim. It's almost always because the lock belongs to a commuter who leaves their bike in the same spot every day and doesn't want to cart the lock to and from work. This is a silly thing to do – not only does it tell a thief that your bike will be in a predictable place for a predictable period of time every day, but it also gives them a chance to work on your lock while your bike is not there so they can steal it with ease when it is.

If you have quick-release wheels and only want to carry one lock, you could take off the front wheel and lock it to the back wheel and frame, but I find it too messy and fiddly.

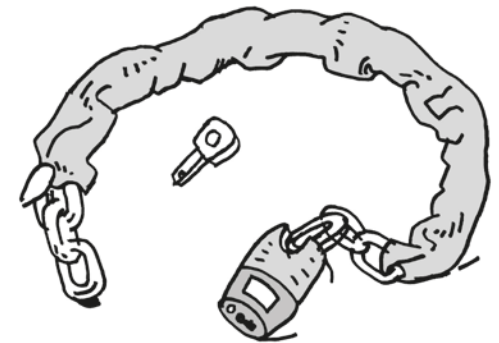


➤ D-locks

CHAIN LOCKS

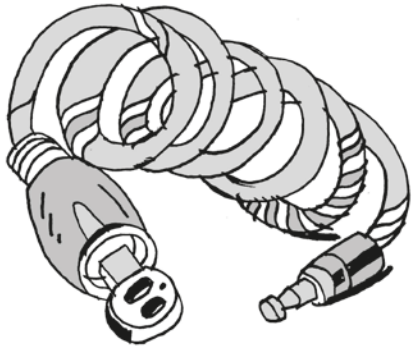
After a D-lock, your next best option is a chunky chain lock.

Problem is, good chain locks are incredibly heavy. Their advantage is that they are flexible, and so easier to attach to stout lampposts and to carry (you can put them around your waist or shoulders). But the links can be vulnerable to chiselling. Be vigilant if your chain lock has a cover over it, as it can disguise any pre-emptive sawing. Thieves are known to pull back the cover, saw away at the chain until it is almost broken, then put the cover back on. That way, when you arrive the following day, you won't notice anything awry, but the thieves can swipe your bike in seconds by quickly sawing away at the link they have prepared earlier.

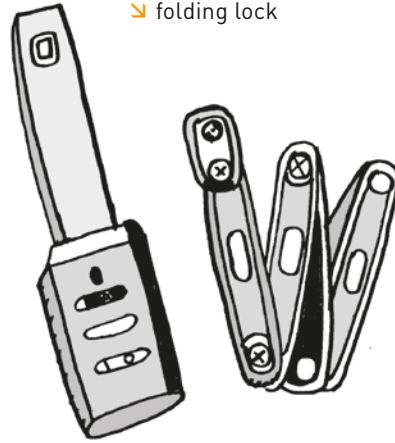


➤ chain lock

➤ cable lock



➤ folding lock



CABLE LOCKS

Cable locks are generally much lighter and more portable, but never use them for anything other than attaching your front wheel to your frame (to stop thieves opening the quick release and running off with it) and for securing other things, such as your seat and bottle cage. Two of my beloved bicycles were stolen while 'secured' with one of these.

FOLDING LOCKS

An alternative to a cable lock is a folding lock. These are very portable and can fit around awkward shaped objects. They are handy, but not really strong enough to use as your primary lock.

There is a good video called 'Lock it or lose it' on the <http://quickrelease.tv/> website

OTHER SECURITY MEASURES

IMMOBILIZERS

This is a device attached to your bike which locks the back wheel, making it impossible to ride. They are often fitted on Dutch bikes, but should not be relied on for anything more than very quick stops where your bike is in full view.

LOCKING NUTS, CODED ALLEN KEYS, CODED SECURITY SKEWERS

If you are fed up with thieves stealing bits of your bike, consider fitting these secure alternatives to quick-release or standard nuts and bolts. They can be used to clamp forks, saddle, wheels and handlebars and are a good alternative to a second lock. They are easy to install and use – just don't lose the key. For wheels, they're often more hassle than they're worth, as you'll have to carry the keys around with you in case you get a puncture and need to take the wheel off.

SOLD SECURE

When buying a lock in the UK, look for a Sold Secure rating. Sold Secure is an independent test laboratory established by Northumbria and Essex Police and the Home Office and now run by the not-for-profit Master Locksmiths Association. They test security products and award them ratings according to how effective they are. The gold-rated locking devices offer the highest level of security, and can withstand at least five minutes of attack with a full set of tools. Silver offers a compromise between security and cost, while the bronze level typically just offers defence against the opportunist thief. You can search on their website to see which products they have tested: www.soldsecure.com

It is also worth looking out for the German and Dutch standards, ART1 and 5+. Gold or high ART-rated locks can be more expensive, but it may help you get a discount on your insurance if you use one.

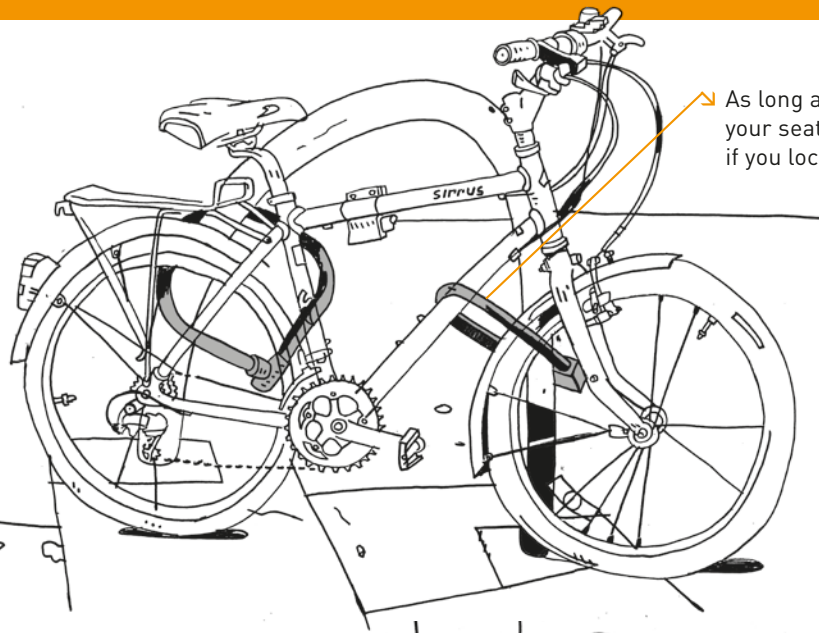
ANTI-THEFT GUARANTEE

Some locks come with a guarantee promising to buy you a new bike if a thief cracks your lock. It is often difficult to claim this, however, as you have to prove the lock was broken by sending them the remains, and often bike thieves leave no trace.

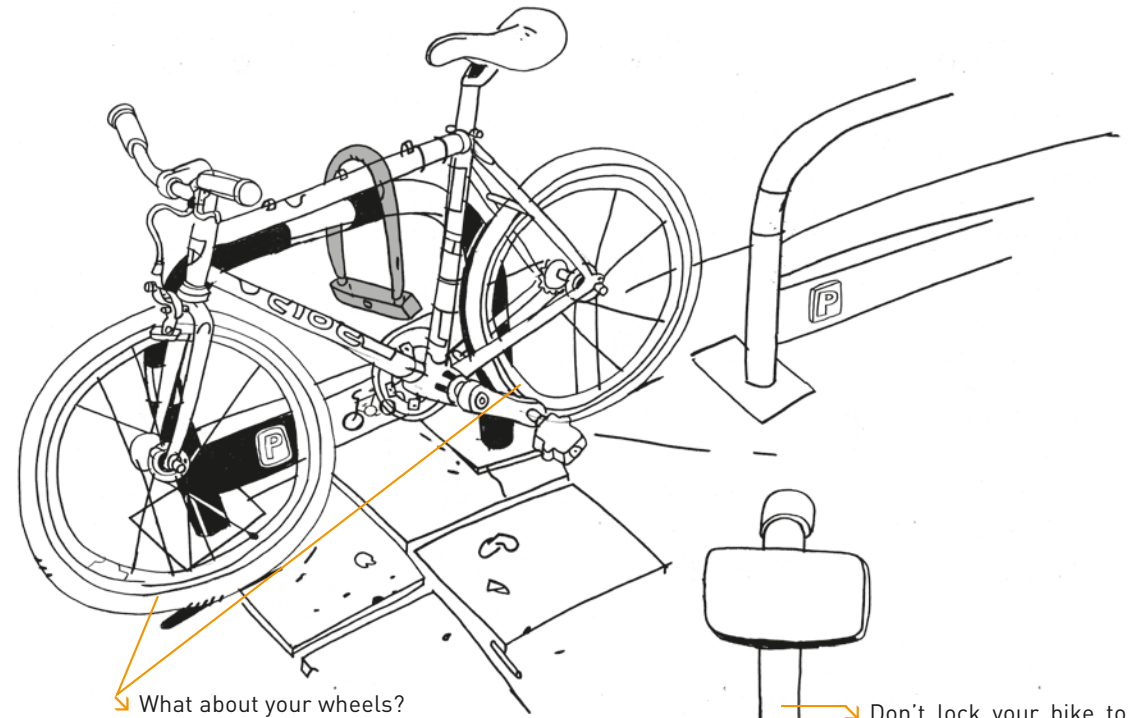
WARRANTY

Some lock manufacturers offer warranties to replace the lock if your cycle is stolen while locked with their product. You may have to register and/or pay for the service and, again, you will likely have to prove the lock was broken.

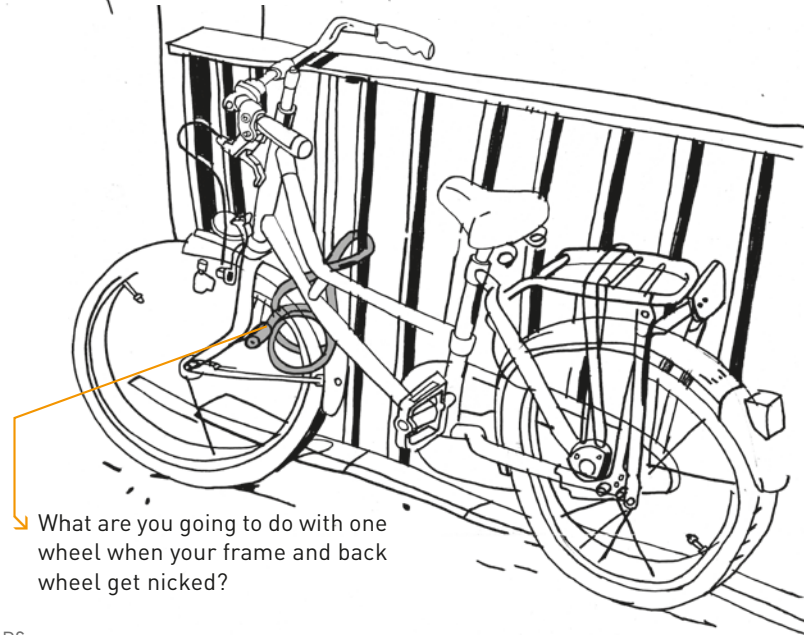
THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF LOCKING YOUR BIKE



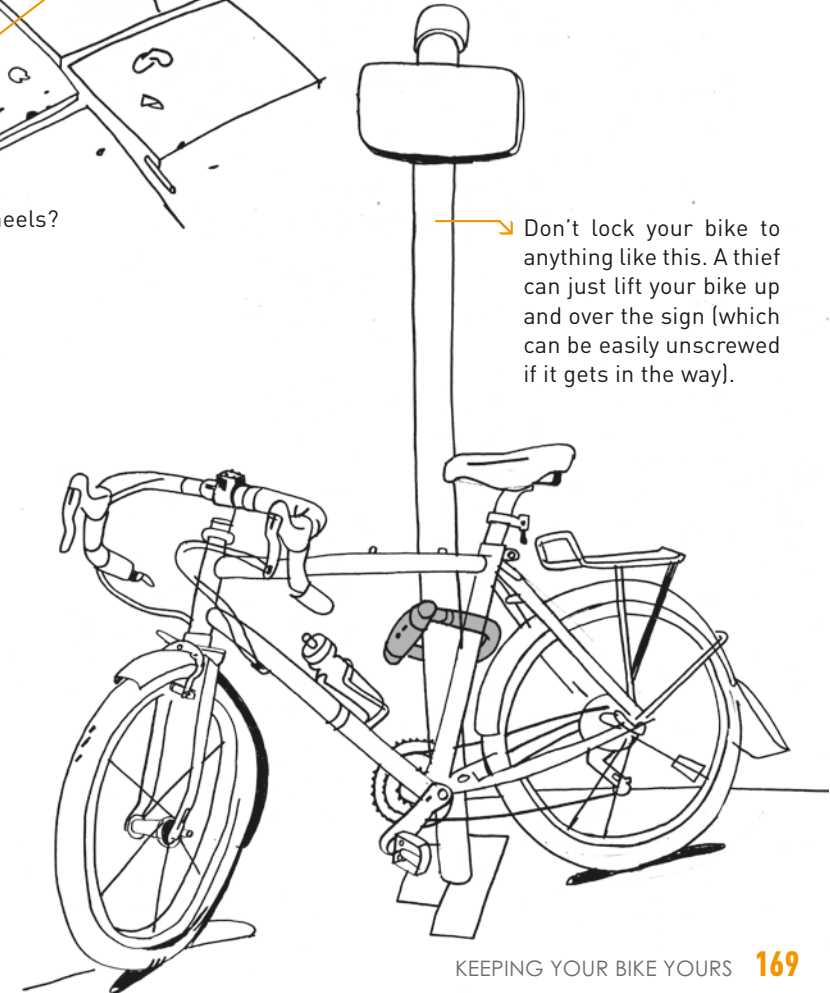
As long as no one nicks your seat, you're laughing if you lock up like this.



What about your wheels?



What are you going to do with one wheel when your frame and back wheel get nicked?



Don't lock your bike to anything like this. A thief can just lift your bike up and over the sign (which can be easily unscrewed if it gets in the way).

OTHER THIEF- THWARTING TACTICS

- Never leave your bike unlocked. So many people get caught out just nipping into the corner shop to buy a paper.
- Lock your bike somewhere public, but remember that a busy place doesn't necessarily equal a safe place. Once, I had to saw off a frozen lock right outside a bustling tube station and not one person stopped and asked what I was up to.
- Never lock your bike up somewhere quiet and out of the way where a thief can work undisturbed. Five minutes is the maximum a thief will generally spend on a job, unless you make it easy for them.
- Don't lock your bike somewhere that makes it obvious you won't be back for some time (outside a cinema is the classic example). Even just going fifty yards down the road and locking it outside a restaurant is a far safer option.
- Make the lock mechanism hard to reach.
- Never lock your bike to something easier to break than a lock – don't use a young tree or wooden fence as an anchor.
- Don't leave a commuting lock on railings or bike racks – thieves can practise on it when you're not around and break it when your bike's in it.
- Use your bike and stand to fill the space within your lock, as any slack can be exploited.
- Lock low down to make rotational leverage harder, but keep your lock off the ground so thieves have nothing to strike against. If your chain is on the floor, a thief can easily chisel it until it cracks open.
- Don't lock close to a wall or other hard object which will help thieves by giving them something to lean against when they put the crowbar in.
- If you can only lock one wheel, make it the rear one. It is far cheaper to replace the front one.
- Lock your bike next to a nicer-looking model, or at least one with a flimsier lock.
- Never leave any tools on your bike. My beloved left a set of Allen keys in his saddlebag while he went swimming, and when he came out a thief had helped himself to both his saddle and that belonging to the neighbouring bike. The owner of the other bike was not amused.
- If you're using two locks, choose two different kinds. Thieves often only carry one tool for a particular kind of lock.
- If you have a fancy saddle, or any quick-release one that can be undone without tools, loop a cable lock through it.
- Remove all the bits and bobs – lights, bike computers, panniers, bottles, etc.

- Make sure you know where the spare keys to the locks are.
- When you get a new bike, write down the frame number (it's usually either underneath the bottom bracket by the pedals or on the rear fork ends where the back wheel slots in) and register it with the police via a site such as www.bikeregister.com or www.immobilise.com. Also consider photographing your bike with a note of the model number and any other significant details that might help the police recover your bike.

The world's most prolific bike thief?

When Canadian police arrested bike-shop owner Igor Kenk in July 2008, they discovered 2,865 stolen bicycles squirrelled away in various garages across Toronto.

Kenk, a 49-year-old former judo champion from Latvia who ran a small bike shop in Toronto city centre, was accused of either personally stealing or arranging to have stolen this astonishing haul. He was caught when police saw him allegedly instructing a mentally ill man to cut the locks on two bicycles.

Rounding up his ill-gotten gains took an enormous police operation. They raided fourteen lock-ups, as well as his bike shop, all of which were packed to the rafters with bicycles of unknown provenance.

It took days for police to sort through the tangled mountain of bikes. They eventually lined them up, wheels in the air, in an unused factory and police garage, and invited members of the public to come along and search for their long-lost machines. By Christmas 2008, police had returned 573 of the seized bikes to their owners, some of whom wept at the reunion.

Kenk's arrest was a long time coming. He was well known to police, and for years his shop was the first port of call for many cyclists after their bikes had been stolen. Often, these victims were able to recover them, either through vigorous argument or a payment of CAN\$30 or CAN \$40 (£17 or £23).

In court, Kenk never showed remorse for the pain he had caused his victims, nor gave any indication what on earth he was planning to do with his 2,865-strong collection. But according to one of his former acquaintances, Kenk got into bike theft when his own treasured mountain bike was stolen. He reported it to the police, but it was never recovered, one of his former friends told the *Toronto Star* newspaper. 'He was devastated,' said Polly, owner of another Toronto bike shop. 'That kind of really messed him up.' After striking a plea bargaining deal with prosecutors in December 2009, Kenk eventually pleaded guilty to just ten counts of theft and was sentenced to thirty months in jail – roughly one day behind bars for every three bikes he was alleged to have stolen.

SAFE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

ANCHORS

These extra-strong, hardened braces are anchored on to the floor or wall with long, sturdy fastening elements you lock your bike to. Ideally, fit these in a shed or a garage with solid walls or floors.

LOCKERS

You can buy metal lockers such as the Bike Bunker (www.cycle-works.com) or Protect-A-Cycle (www.protectacycle.co.uk), which are designed to hold a small number of bicycles outside your house.

CYCLOC

This nifty little wall-mounted device is perfect if you have a small flat and need to get your bike out of the hallway. At the time of writing, the Cycloc only fitted bikes with a top tube (crossbar), but the designer promised a model for ladies' bikes would soon be available: www.cycloc.com

PULLEY SYSTEM

If your hallway has dead space above head height, you could try to install a pulley system of the type used to dry washing in the olden days. You can buy a bicycle-specific hoist for around £20.

PLANTLOCK

If you can't keep your bike indoors, these rather beautiful flower tubs offer something secure to lock your bike to. Once you've filled it with soil and plants, the PlantLock weighs 75+kg and provides safe and tidy bike storage. You can install them wherever you like – in your garden, on your balcony or patio. Each PlantLock accommodates two bicycles and is available in a range of colours. Made by www.frontyardcompany.co.uk

SHELTERS

If you have the space, you could install a covered bicycle store for use outdoors. These are generally made from a metal frame covered with canvas, and should usually be used in conjunction with a wall or floor anchor. Examples include the BikePort (www.frontyardcompany.co.uk) and the Bike Cave (www.tidytent.com)

IMPROVISED SOLUTIONS

If you live in a block of flats and the management company or freeholder is too pig-headed to sort you out with secure bike storage, improvise. Some time ago, everyone in my building received a snotty letter warning that if we didn't move bikes from communal corridors they would be removed without notice, as they were a fire hazard. We were outraged, especially as we had all written to the company on many occasions asking for them to make provisions for bicycles. There was nothing for it but to take matters into our own hands and my enterprising neighbour Toby hauled a concrete block up to our floor, with two heavy-duty chains bolted to each end. One was for me, one for him and his family. If the overlords have attempted to remove our bikes at any point since, they certainly haven't managed it.

