

Property marking

If your valuables get stolen, you may be able to replace your TV and DVD player, but what about your things that have sentimental value?

If you were burgled, would you be able to describe the valuables you have lost accurately to police?

Every year, property worth hundreds of pounds is recovered by police but because it can't be identified, it is not returned to its rightful owners. This also means that police officers can not prove that they were stolen and may mean thieves will keep your valuables.

Thieves find identifiable property difficult to sell on.

Mark your property and advertise it with a sign or sticker near your front door.

How to mark your property

Use your postcode and your house or flat number (or the first two letters of your house name). E.g. Someone living at 9 Corn Street, MW1 8TP would use MW1 8TP 9.

If you don't know your postcode, ask at your local post office or visit www.royalmail.com and click on 'postcode finder'.

Ultra-violet invisible marking

You can buy property marking kits from stationary or DIY stores. An ultra-violet (UV) pen can put an invisible mark on your property which can only be seen under UV light. UV marking is the best method when other types of marking would reduce the value of your property. The mark can fade in time, especially if it is regularly in sunlight. It can also be washed off, so you need to renew it regularly.

Ceramic marking

These pens mark china, glass and glazed surfaces. They do not cut or scratch and the mark will be permanent.

Engraving or etching

This leaves a visible and permanent mark. You will need an engraving tool or a hand engraver.

Punching

For heavier items, e.g. a lawnmower, you can use a hammer and a set of punches.

Electronic marking

Some items will allow you to record your details electronically, e.g. TVs. Your details can then only be changed using a security code.

Items that can't be marked

Items such as jewellery can't be marked. Instead take a photograph of your property, particularly if it has identifiable marks such as initials. Take the photograph against a plain background and include a ruler to give an idea of size.

Whichever method you use, the mark should be so secure that removing it would damage the property or affect how the item performs.

