



Take Stock of Your Home

How knowing what you own can help you protect yourself

Everyone can benefit from a home inventory. Whether you're an apartment renter, a high-rise condominium dweller or a homeowner, everyone is subject to theft, fire or natural disaster. Try taking a mental inventory of just one drawer, and then imagine having to do that for your entire home after a fire. You might have an elephantine memory, but trying to remember everything after it's gone is a monumental task especially under traumatic circumstances. Use these tips to make the most of your efforts.



Everything Counts

Include all valuables, not just large appliances and electronics. Don't forget to document toys, the contents of your closets and anything in your kitchen and bathroom cabinets.

Get Organized

Taking the time to record serial numbers, collect receipts and take photographs now can save you a lot of time later. Insurance claims are processed more quickly and are more likely to receive full compensation when they are supported with visual evidence of ownership. According to Insurance Research Council, only 42% of homeowners have an inventory of their home's contents.

Schedule a Photo Shoot

In addition to making a list of items, take pictures of rooms and large or important items. On the back of each photo, note its value, make and any serial numbers or special identifiers.

Round Up the Troops

Enlist the help of the entire family. Assign a room to each family member, or use a camcorder and have each person take turns describing items for the camera.

Move It!

Conduct a home inventory when you move. This way, you'll also have detailed information in the case that

something is lost or damaged during the move.

Keep Duplicates!

Make a copy of your inventory to keep in a fireproof safe at home, but most importantly, keep another copy in a safe-deposit box, at your office or any safe location away from your home.

Consider Extra Coverage

If you have special items such as expensive jewelry, fine art or rare antique collections, you may wish to purchase extra coverage—called an endorsement—to protect those items.



MAKE IT DIGITAL

A variety of personal finance software packages now include home inventory features, and a number of free or inexpensive programs are available to download online. Just make sure that you burn a copy of the file to a CD for off-site storage. Here are a few of the many programs available for download online:



EVERYTHING I OWN www.mycroftcomputing.com/eiown.html
(free trial version)

MY STUFF DELUXE www.contactplus.com/products/freestuff/mystuff
(free trial version)

HOME MANAGER www.kzsoftware.com/products/homemanager
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