



Tightening Up Your Home Security

There used to be a time when you knew all your neighbours, could leave your doors and windows unlocked and even leave a spare key in the garden under a flowerpot or stone. The days of not having to worry about home security are long gone. It is reported that there are an estimated ½ million forced entry burglaries in the UK every year (approx. one every minute).

Households are now starting to take home security very seriously, fitting stronger locks, installing better lighting inside and out, and not leaving valuables on show through downstairs windows. But there is much more to securing your home than locks and lighting, it also includes: [security cameras](#), door viewers, safes, personal attack alarms, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, panic buttons as well as simple things like making sure that you lock all doors and windows when leaving the house, keeping hedges and bushes trimmed, making sure fences are in good repair, not leaving tools and ladders in the garden that can be used to gain entry and so much more.

Below are some home security tips that will easily help you secure your home:

Fit key operated window locks to all your windows.

- Lock all door and windows when leaving the house or even when you're just out in the garden. Make sure that you double-lock UPVC doors (lift handle and turn the key).
- If you have to leave a spare key outside (e.g. for carers) then make sure that you use a [police accredited key safe](#).
- Have visible security devices such as a [burglar alarm](#) and make sure that you set it every time you leave the house.
- Install a [video doorbell](#).
- Change locks on doors to prevent lock snapping.
- Install a strike plate to doors if you don't already have it.
- Install exterior security lighting.
- Have internal lights and a radio or television on timer switches (or Hive or other [smart home systems](#)), making sure that the timings are random so that a pattern cannot be established easily.
- Don't leave any keys, including car keys, near the letterbox and in view (burglars are very good at using hooks through the letterbox).
- Don't leave valuables on display that can be seen through the downstairs windows (e.g. don't leave your laptop on the coffee table).
- Secure any small or high-value items in a [safe](#) (secured properly to the floor) or in a bank vault.
- Mark all your property with your postcode and house number. You can register your property for free with [Immobilise](#).
- Make sure the fences around your garden are in good condition.
- Make sure bushes and hedges are trimmed to limit hiding spaces.
- Make sure any gates to your garden are always locked and in good repair.
- Keep ladders and tools stored away so that cannot be used to gain access to your home (a lot of burglars are opportunistic and don't carry tools, they will just use what they find around your garden).
- Make sure any external buildings, such as sheds, are secure.
- Secure any bikes at home by locking them in the shed or garage (if you have one), preferably to an immovable object.
- Get a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your property.
- Consider joining or forming a [Neighbourhood Watch scheme](#).

Whilst there is no guarantee that following all the home security advice available will make your home 100% secure, it will deter any thieves and make your home a less enticing prospect.

You can do a lot to secure your home without spending a lot of money, but if you do need to purchase extra security equipment we have been trying out some different security products like a security camera, a safe and video doorbell among others. Read our Home Security reviews and see if any of items we have tried will make a difference to the security in your home and give you peace of mind.

Tightening Up Your Home Security



Supra C500 KeySafe Review

Gone are the days where you can leave your doors and windows unlocked or a spare key under the doormat, flowerpot or above the door frame. Even in the sleepy village in Yorkshire that I am writing this from (I have twice now caught the same man going through our recycling bin (its hidden out of the way) probably looking for parcels.

Sadly, the times we live in are full of crime and domestic burglaries seem to be on the increase. People are now starting to take home security more seriously and fitting stronger locks, better lighting and not leaving valuables on show in downstairs windows (check out police.uk for other some [crime prevention advice](#)). That also means no spare key left outside.

But what if you do need a spare key outside? You might want to leave one for the kids coming home from school. You may have ill elderly relatives at home that need carers and medical professionals to let themselves in to administer care. How do you leave a key outside for them to use while keeping it safe? The answer is an outside key safe

and we were sent the Supra C500 KeySafe to review from The Key Safe Company.

The Supra C500 KeySafe is a [police accredited](#) key safe tested on external walls, and only one of only two key safes to do so (Police approval through Secured by Design as a product that can help to reduce crime). Before installing and using it, please check with your home insurer that if by using one it would invalidate your insurance (some insurance companies will only allow certain outside key safes, if any).

The Supra C500 KeySafe is Police accredited and has been tested on external walls, and as long as you use the fixings supplied (self-tapping masonry screws that fix into brick or concrete without the need for rawl plugs) you will maintain the Police Accreditation. It has also achieved an independent security rating from the the LPCB (Loss Prevention Certification Board) to LPS1175. Constructed from Zinc Alloy, making it attack resistant, it has over 4,000 possible combinations and you can change the code as often as you like.

When it arrived, it was like picking up a brick as it weighs 1.7kg (I felt sorry for the postman having to lug that around, I hope we went at the end of his round). The KeySafe is a metal box with a plastic, pull down front to protect it from the elements. Behind the cover are 12 push keys (numbered 1 to 10, letters A and B) and a reset button. It has space to store up to 6 keys on an internal hook (depending on type and size of key).

Before doing anything, a code needs to be set up (it does not come with a preset one). This is straightforward. It has 4,096 possible code combinations – a mixture of numbers and letters. The code you decide to use has to be between four and seven digits (you really should use at least five for better security). Each digit can only be used once – you could have 1234 but not 1122. Caution: there is no override or reset code, so don't forget the code – make sure you test it before closing the unit and keep a note of the number somewhere safe. Once locked you will not be able to open it again without the code that you have set.

Once the code has been configured, and tested before closing it, it needs to be affixed to the wall (the correct fittings are supplied). Find a suitable place that is not too obvious to site it. Using the template on the back of the instruction leaflet drill four holes and then screw the key safe (using a T30 Torx driver) to the wall. It needs to be onto brick or dense concrete (not masonry) to be fully secure. Once fitted, you can now store a spare key(s) outside and be safe in the knowledge that they are secure.

(Continued on page 3)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 2)

Overall, this is a quality key safe. It is strong and secure, rust and weather resistant and constructed from Zinc Alloy to make it attack resistant.

It is the perfect way to securely storing a spare key for family members and carers (especially if you have different carers in and out all day, no cutting of keys or the risk of any getting lost or misplaced when a carer changes). It is Police and some home insurers approved (check with yours' first), giving great assurance that your spare key is safe.

If you do need to use a key safe for whatever reason, always use a police approved one, install it out of sight if possible and with the correct fittings and only give the code to anyone that is absolutely necessary to have it. As an extra precaution, make sure that you change the code regularly, it really isn't difficult to change it.

The only issue I found with this key safe is that when you set a code, i.e. 8391, the number doesn't have to be entered in that format, you can enter 1938 or 3981 and it will open. As long as the numbers from the

code are entered in any order, the KeySafe will open.

Before you do decide to use please check with your home insurer about its use: check with your insurer that your policy covers an external key safe and if so carefully check the wording to what would invalidate it (carers entering etc... you might be covered for an authorised carer but if they give that number to someone else you might not be covered).

This is an excellent way of storing a spare key outside. It is safe and secure and the box seems very robust. You can install it yourself if you are happy to so or The Key Safe Company offer a professional nationwide installation service for just £58.

Don't take the risk of leaving a key under the mat or flowerpot, you never know who'll go rooting around your garden. Keep you spare key safe and secure with a KeySafe.

Rating: 5/5

RRP: £59.94

For more information or to buy online visit keysafe.co.uk.

Tightening Up Your Home Security



Patlock Patio/French Door Lock Review

There are over ½ million forced entry home burglaries in the UK every year, with one occurring every 40 seconds. Most forced entry home burglaries do not happen at night under the cover of darkness but during the daylight hours, generally between 10am and 3pm while a lot of people are at work. A majority are committed by the opportunistic burglar when they see an open window or door or a house with very weak security measures.

Deciding what security measures to implement without making your house look like a prison by fitting securing gates and grills to your doors and windows can be a very taxing problem (the police offer some good prevention advice [here](#)). You can fit window locks, better door locks, add security lights and alarms and even install cameras which send alerts to your phone. Whilst these are all excellent methods that are encouraged to be used, there is still more that can be done.

There are lots of entry points into our homes, and if the doors and windows are locked the easiest entry point is the patio/conservatory or French doors. These doors are generally out of view in the back garden, giving a thief time to work to gain entry. But how much time to they really need? They don't want to spend too much time breaking in as the longer it takes, the risk of getting caught is increased.

With the increasing trend of lock snapping on patio doors, which can see a burglar enter your home within 30 seconds (this is based on patio doors with a standard euro cylinder lock), the patio doors really do need better security measures.

So how can you better secure the double doors on your conservatory or strengthen your patio or French doors to the garden. One way would be not to have any external locks or handles, with just the doors opening from the inside. The Patlock Internal French Door Lock is much simpler solution.

So what it is the Patlock? Well this is a simple, but strong, lock for double doors that slides over the handles. It requires handles on both doors to work and is for internal installation (if your set of doors only has one handle you can always fit a dummy handle to the other door to be able to use the Patlock). It is so easy to fit and remove and requires no drilling, screws or gluing or even keys or codes. The Patlock not only secures the doors making the doors harder to break and gain entry to – even if the lock is snapped, it is also a visible deterrent.

The Patlock has been awarded “[Secured by Design](#)” accreditation and is recommended by Police Forces and Crime Prevention Associations throughout the UK. Secured by Design (SBD) is the Official Police Security Initiative that improves the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to provide safe places to live, work, shop and visit. The Patlock is also endorsed by the [Neighbourhood Watch Scheme](#).

So what do you get with the Patlock? In the box is:

- 1x Patlock
 - 2x Tamper-proof Spindles
 - 2x Spring Clips
 - 2x Window Stickers
- 1x Instruction leaflet

The Patlock is very easy to fit:

- Push the buttons to release each half
- Place each half over each door handle
- Push the two pieces together

(Continued on page 5)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 4)

- Push, click, secure

If your door handles are longer than standard you can remove the rubber inserts to create more space, so it should fit all doors.

Once the Patlock is fitted, the doors are now secured, even if someone snaps the locks from outside. It works by making the handles immovable and ensuring that the multi-point locks and shoot bolts in the door locking mechanism remain engaged.

Whilst the Patlock can be used as it is straight out of the box, it also comes additional with security should you want to use it. It is supplied with 2 tamper-proof spindles and spring clips for added security. Once fitted, they maintain the integrity of the internal handles and the Patlock as they can't be removed from the outside. These are to replace the spindles already in the door handles and are easy to fit (they fit most doors, but if too long will require cutting and it is recommended a professional locksmith fit them).

Once the Patlock is installed, it is visible from the outside so that anyone trying to gain entry can see that a security device is fitted. Whilst the patio doors are generally an easy entry point, with this visible deterrent a burglar will not want to attempt entry as it could take too much time trying to get in, increasing the risk of being caught. Even if they do decide to try, the handles are secured internally, keeping the door locked.

When the Patlock is in operation, it fits in with the look of the doors and blends in with white uPVC doors. It is simple to fit and just as easy to remove, literally in seconds, and it does an excellent job of securing the doors. As it is endorsed by the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme, Secured by Design and recommend by police forces around the UK you might even be able to get a slight discount on your home insurance by using one (check with your insurer first, there is no guarantee of this).

Overall, the Patlock is an excellent simple and secure method for ensuring that your patio/French doors can't be opened from the outside. It works well and is very easy to use. It is not a replacement for locking your doors, but if you do forget and just put the Patlock on it will stop them being opened.

Whilst no home security measures can 100% guarantee that you won't be burgled, the Patlock is an excellent deterrent which will make the would-be burglar think twice. At £49.99 including delivery, it is definitely a worthwhile investment.

Deter those thieves and make sure your [home security](#) is strong. Make sure you always lock those doors and windows (no point having locks if you don't use them), don't leave small high-value items in view from the windows (most opportunistic burglars are only after small and portable items, not 50" televisions), if using timers make sure they are set for random times and if you have patio or conservatory doors, invest in a Patlock – push, click, secure.

Rating: 5/5

Available to buy from [Robert Dyas](#), [Argos](#), [Woodie's DIY](#) and [B&Q](#) from £49.99.

Tightening Up Your Home Security



Yale Value Laptop Safe

When it comes to [home security](#), it doesn't just mean securing the windows and doors with better locks or adding security lighting and alarms. It also means securing your valuables whilst inside the house and valuables isn't just expensive equipment or jewellery. We all have passports, birth certificates and other valuable pieces of identity documents in our homes that could be worth quite a bit of money in the wrong hands. We also store a lot of data on our laptops, from personal photos to work documents. So keeping all these documents secure, whether paper or digital, is a must and the best way to do that at home is with a safe.

There are lots of security products and companies around and Yale are probably the most well-known for making locks and padlocks to secure property and buildings, their products are available in over 125 countries. Yale have been making locks for 175 years! They now make a lot more than locks with their range of products now including smart locks, intruder alarms, safes, security cameras as well as their different types of locks, window hinges and padlocks.

For this review I received a Yale Value Laptop Safe.

The Yale Value Laptop Safe is a relatively inexpensive safe with a steel constructed body designed to fit laptops with up to a 14.5" screen (my Dell laptop with a 15" screen does fit in if I put it in at an angle and then it lays flat). It measures 20H x 43W x 35D cm (externally) and is finished in black. It is operated with a digital keypad that has 10,000 possible combinations, using a 3-8 digit programmable code (requires 4x AA batteries, supplied) and it can also be opened via the supplied backup key if you forget the code or the keypad runs out of battery power.

The Yale Value Laptop Safe seems well made and sturdy and doesn't take up too much room in the bottom of a wardrobe or cupboard (although it is good practice not to have a safe in the bedroom or kitchen as these are the rooms burglars will usually check for one). It can be floor or wall mounted (or both), the fittings are included, it is very DIY friendly and easy to secure (I personally have it bolted to the floor). There is a fabric "carpet" that is supplied to go inside on the base to protect your belongings (especially as the inside base with have the bolt heads).

Once the safe has been situated and securely fixed to the wall or floor, you need to set up the digital combination for the keypad. 4x AA batteries are required for the keypad to work. On first use, the code needs to be programmed and this is very easy to do. The code can be between 3 and 8 digits (this gives a possible 10,000 combinations). The safe also comes with backup keys, so DO NOT lock these in the safe as they will be required if the batteries for the keypad run out or you forgot the code. There is a time lock feature on the safe which comes into operation after 3 incorrect code entries where you will then be locked out for 20 seconds. After 6 incorrect entries you will be locked out for 6 minutes.

The Yale safe features solid steel internal hinges as well as two solid steel 15mm locking bolts that retract when the correct code has been entered (or the key used) and the handle is turned. The LED light indicators are used as follows: Green to open, red for error and low battery warning.

It is quite spacious inside (23I – 19H x 42W x 30D cm) and does fit my laptop as well as A4 documents and various other pieces. It is not a fireproof safe, so if storing cash, documents, hard drive backups and flash drives then I would recommend using a fireproof wallet to put these items in within the safe.

Overall, this is a very good safe. It feels strong and sturdy, has plenty of room and the keypad works well. It is the basic value version of the safe so is not fireproof and does not have an audible alarm (Yale do a version of this safe with a 130db alarm) but does keep everything secure.

(Continued on page 7)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 6)

If you are looking for a safe to hold a large amount of cash or jewellery then this won't be the safe for you as it has no insurance rating, but for securing your laptop, passports and other documents then it does a fine job. If you want a [certified laptop safe](#) that is insurance rated for cash and other valuables you will be looking at one at least 3 times the cost (rated for £2,000 and valuables £20,000).

So before you purchase a safe, there are some things that you need to consider:

- **Size of Safe** – make a list of what you want to store in it and where you are going to put it, that should make it easier to decide what size safe you need.
- **Cash Rating** – safes come with various cash ratings, or none at all. You need to decide what you are storing and for what reason. If storing cash and jewellery your insurance company may require you install a safe with a cash rating of a certain level. Check your insurance policy, but these safes generally need to be professional installed.
- **Entry Method** – do you want a key lock or digital code entry? If you can't remember pin codes then you might need one with a key lock, if you are always losing keys a pin entry one might suit you better. Or better still, get one with both.
- **Fireproof or Not** – not all safes are fireproof. Again it depends on what you are storing and for what reason, you need to make a decision on whether you go for a value safe or a better fireproof one (they generally offer 30 to 60 minutes of fire protection).

For my uses, the Yale Value Laptop Safe is enough for my needs. It secures the things I need very well and the price of the safe is very good. If you do need something better, then Yale also offer premium, certified and fireproof safes.

For a basic value safe it performs very well.

Rating: 4.5/5

RRP: £59.99

For more information or to buy, visit www.yalestore.co.uk.

Tightening Up Your Home Security



SimpliSafe Home Security System Review

We live in a world where crime is a part of everyday life and just hope that it won't touch us. With domestic (forced entry) burglaries on the rise in the UK, with over ½ million reported each year (that means there is one approx. every 40 seconds), we have to start taking our [home security](#) much more seriously. Long gone are the days of just popping to the shops or to visit a neighbour leaving windows open and doors unlocked. It doesn't matter if you live in big cities or small sleepy villages, anyone can be a victim of a burglary – especially as a lot are just committed by opportunistic thieves.

With police resources stretched to their limits and seemingly becoming a more reactive, rather than proactive force, we have to do everything we can to secure our homes, and in the event of a break-in hopefully be able to supply the police with some video evidence to enable them to catch the thief.

There are plenty of preventative measures that we can all take to secure our homes, and some don't even cost any money (see below):

- Lock and secure all doors and windows before leaving the house.
- Double lock UPVC doors (lift handle and turn the key).
- Make sure any gates to the rear of the property are locked.
- Make sure fencing is in good repair.
- Make sure hedges, bushes and trees are kept trimmed (less hiding places).
- Don't leave any keys, including car keys, near the letterbox and in view (burglars are very good at using hooks through the letterbox).
- Don't leave valuables on display that can be seen through the downstairs windows (e.g. don't leave your laptop on the coffee table).
- Mark all your property with your postcode and house number. You can register your property for free with Immobilise.
- Keep ladders and tools stored away so that cannot be used to gain access to your home (a lot of burglars are opportunistic and don't carry tools, they will just use what they find around your garden).
- Make sure any external buildings, such as sheds, are secure.
- Secure any bikes at home by locking them in the shed or garage (if you have one), preferably to an immovable object.
- Leave a radio on television on when you are not at home.
- Get a trusted neighbour to keep an eye on your property.
- Consider joining or forming a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

All the above is very good advice but there are also plenty of products to buy to make your home much more secure (see below):

- Fit better locks to your doors.
- Fit key operated window locks on all windows.
- Install a visible security alarm and camera.

(Continued on page 9)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 8)

- Install outside security lighting with PIR sensors.
- Use timers that turn on lights at random times when you are away.
- Install a home safe and make sure that is secured to the wall or floor.
- If you have to leave a spare key outside (e.g. for carers) then make sure that you use a police accredited key safe.

Installing a security system in your home is a very good idea and with a variety of different ones on the market, some that even connect to your Hive system or even Alexa, we were delighted to try out the SimpliSafe system – especially as it is a modular system and doesn't even require screws!

We were sent a home security system from SimpliSafe. SimpliSafe, founded in Boston, Massachusetts, USA in 2006, aim to make every home safe by offering a professional-grade monitored home security with no long-term contracts. Their system is available in several configurations, as well as offering a build your own system option, depending on your requirements. It is a modular system, so even after you have bought it you can add/remove modules as and when you need.

There are 6 systems available to buy:

[The Starter](#) – designed for small homes and flats (RRP: £279)

[The Essentials](#) – designed for bigger house (RRP: £309)

[The Warwick](#) – designed for homes of all sizes (RRP: £364)

[The Windsor](#) – designed for larger homes (RRP: £454)

[The Bamburgh](#) – designed for whole home protection (RRP: £504)

[Build My System](#) – designed so you can build the system to your needs (price varies)

We were sent The Essentials, SimpliSafe's most popular system. It came with entry sensors to cover main entry points, a motion sensor to cover a main passageway and a SimpliCam camera, as well as they base station and keypad. It is a wireless system that is easy to setup, install and if doesn't even require screws. This system is nearly perfect for our house – we have 3 entry doors and a set of double patio doors. As it is a modular system, we can just buy another sensor module for the patio doors and add it onto the system.

In the box:

- 1x Base Station
- 1x Keypad
- 3x Entry Sensors
- 1 Motion Sensor
- 1x SimpiCam
- 1x Yard Sign Stake
- 1x Yard Sign
- 2x Window Decals (SimpliSafe Protected)
- 6x Adhesive Pads (Spares)
- 1x Setup Guide

(Continued on page 10)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 9)

The SimpliSafe system is wireless so there are no cables to try and install and it doesn't need to be fitted by a professional alarm installer. Nothing needs to be screwed into walls or woodwork as everything goes up with extremely strong removable sticky pads.

To start with, we fitted the entry sensors to the 3 doors and placed the motion sensor in the room with the patio doors as haven't purchased the 4th sensor yet. Each sensor is fitted with a battery that can easily be replaced when needed.

The brains and siren of the SimpliSafe system is the base station and needs to be placed somewhere quite central in the house. It looks quite stylish and doesn't look out of place wherever you decide to place it. It

certainly doesn't look like an alarm system. This talks to all the sensors and the keypad and features a loud 95dB siren. I have mentioned that it is a wireless system but it also features a cellular connection as well so there are no issues if the power failed to your router. If the alarm is triggered a signal will be sent to the monitoring station (subscription required). In the event of a power failure the base has a built-in backup battery so won't affect the operation of the system.

The base station has a blue light around the base to show it is working and in operation (this light can be turned off should you wish) and in case of a power cut or the alarm being triggered will change to red.

Once the base station is situated and up and running you can control the system from the keypad. This fixes to the wall with the removable adhesive pads (I have knocked the keypad several times and it has stayed where it is, so the pads really are very secure). It is best situated near your main entry point. It requires 4x AA batteries (these are supplied). It is a portable unit as it lifts off its cradle and has a touch-to-wake screen, so you can take it up to bed with you at night and still be able to control the system. As it is a separate unit from the base station, if damaged during a robbery the alarm system will still work.

The keypad is extremely easy to use with 3 modes:

- OFF, for when you do not want it to be armed at all
- HOME, which arms only the door sensors
- AWAY, for when you are leaving the house and want to fully enable the alarm

The screen itself is actually a multi-directional button, allowing you to navigate the menus by pressing on different edges. To enable or disable the system you need to use a pin code that you set, you can even have different pin codes for each member of the family so that they can turn on/off the alarm but have no access to the settings. By using the app or the SimpliSafe website you can see who turned on/off the alarm at what times.

The keypad also has an additional feature in case of an emergency. It has a panic button on top. If pressed for 2 seconds it will set off the alarm (extra panic alarm modules can also be purchased and added to the system if you wanted them in any other rooms).

The SimpliSafe system also comes with a camera that is used with the app on your phone if you are subscribed to the monitoring system. Once the alarm is enabled you can check in on the app for a live view and in the case of an alarm going off you can even record video. The SimpliCam incorporates its own movement sensor, so it can trigger the alarm if it detects movement whilst the system is armed.

If you are subscribed to the monitoring station, they can even use the video to determine whether an alarm trigger is a genuine intruder or just the one of the kids setting it off.

(Continued on page 11)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 10)

The SimpliCam records superb quality high definition footage, and we were also really impressed with the quality of the night-time record videos too – although most home burglaries apparently take place during the day, between the hours of 10am and 3pm. With the app you can even hear people talking.

Lots of people have a dog or cat wandering about in their homes and you don't want an alarm system to keep going off when your pet walks in front of the motion sensor. The SimpliSafe system is set to detect the unique heat signatures of humans, not pets. There is also a physical stainless-steel privacy shutter on the camera, so you can rest assured that you are not being recorded unless you have armed the system!

In the event of a break-in, if an intruder comes through a door or window fitted with an entry sensor the audible alarm is triggered and if you are subscribed to the monitoring centre a signal will be sent to them. If they come in by another entry point the motion sensor or camera will pick them up and again sound the alarm and send the signal. Once the alarm has been triggered you have 30 seconds to disarm it before the siren is triggered. The siren will then sound for four minutes (you can change the duration of the alarm if you wanted longer) and the monitoring centre is alerted.

Once the monitoring centre has been alerted, their first response will be to try to contact you on the phone numbers that you have registered with them when setting up the app. If they are unable to reach you and verify that there isn't a problem, they then go on to inform the police.

The system also has some other excellent features with the door beep and duress pin.

When the system is disabled, if one of the doors with a door entry module installed is opened, a beep will sound to let you know that the door has been opened. I think this is a great function to let you know if someone has come in or even gone out.

But my favourite function has to be the Duress PIN, which hopefully will never have to be used. If for any reason you are being forced to disable the alarm, you can enter the duress pin. This turns off the alarm but automatically notifies the monitoring centre to alert the police. This is a great safety feature.

As the SimpliSafe is a modular system it means that you can add and remove other [modules](#) at any time to extend the functionality of the system. As well as extra keypads you can add extra motion sensors, extra door entry sensors, glassbreak sensors that "listen" for the specific noise frequency of breaking glass, extra panic buttons, extra sirens (would be particularly useful in a larger house). You can also purchase smoke and CO detectors, water sensors to detector a leak or flood and a freeze sensor to alert about a pipe freezing. It really is an excellent alarm system with excellent functions monitoring more than forced entry.

To use the system to the fullest and best protection, you really do need to take out a monitoring plan. Without taking out a plan, obviously there is no monitoring so you will only get the siren in the house and the door beeps. If you take out the Pro Plan (£12.99 per month), your system will be monitored 24/7 and in the event of a break-in the monitoring centre will call you and designated contacts to let you know the alarm has triggered. For the best protection, and I would recommend, it is the Pro Premium plan (£19.99) which gives you the benefits of the Pro Plan with the added benefits of police dispatch, arming the alarm from anywhere, alerts on your phone, secret alerts (duress pin) and unlimited camera recording.

The [monitoring plans](#) have no contract, so you are not tied in for 12, 18 or 24 months, and you can cancel at any time.

(Continued on page 12)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 11)

The SimpliSafe system is available in black or white (Keypad and Base Station only). It can also be integrated with Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant and other Smart Home devices (although check functionality first as the Alexa skill is not available in the UK, but hopefully will be soon).

Overall, I think this is a fantastic whole home security system. Alarms themselves are great but a lot of people do ignore alarms going off, so why bother installing one? Firstly, the 95dB will scare any intruder. Secondly, the monitoring centre can dispatch the police. Thirdly, the intruder's actions can be recorded, which will hopefully aid the police gather evidence and identify the suspect(s).

It is very easy to customise the system to individual requires, the modules are easy to install and add on to the system and keypad. As there is no drilling or screws required, anyone can fit each module and all with no damage to the walls or woodwork.

The app for the SimpliCam is easy to use. It doesn't seem to require a password/code to gain access to the app so anyone who has possession of your phone can turn off the alarm remotely, so if using the app on your phone ensure that your phone is password/pin protected. The quality of the video is excellent and there is only a couple of seconds delay between the real time and displaying on the app. You even get notifications every time the alarm is enabled/disabled, and if using different PIN codes you will know who by.

I love the functionality, ease of use and the monitoring of this system. It definitely brings a sense of security into the house and the ability to add or remove a module when needs change is fantastic. It's a safe and secure system, easy to use and looks good.

Once we add in a couple more extra modules, we will have the complete home protection system.

Rating: 5/5

Price start from £279

For more information or to buy a SimpliSafe system visit [simplisafe.co.uk](https://www.simplisafe.co.uk).

Tightening Up Your Home Security



Smart Home Security with Hive Review

[Home security](#) is something that should be taken very seriously, after all our homes are our castles and filled with all our precious possessions. With the UK seeing a forced entry burglary approx. every minute, making your home less of an attractive target for thieves is a must!

You have secured your doors and windows, fitted alarms and cameras and leave a light on or two when you're out, so you are secure right? No, light timers need to be on a random pattern because if the lights come on at the same time every day the pattern can be established and burglars will know that it is a timer and you are probably not at home. There are plenty of timers on the market that offer programmable timings. But technology has advanced so much that we can now integrate our home security devices with our phones; not only being able to program times to what we want but also use them to turn on and off devices at will, even when not at home.

Lots of us have Hive heating systems at home. It is a great system for being able to control the heat settings in our homes from the comfort of our chairs or even from the office so that the house warms up before we get home. We can now add security devices to the system and I was sent a [Hive Active Plug](#) (RRP: £39) and [Hive Dimmable Light Bulb](#) (RRP: £19) to try out. Both these devices are excellent for making it look like you're in when you are out.

Up until now we have only had the Hive heating system and control it, for the most part, with the app on the phone. It is so easy to use and responds quickly. The Hive Active Plug and Dimmable Light Bulb also fully integrate with the same app and can all be controlled from the same place. They need to be added to the app, but this is a simple task and only took a couple of minutes.

To add a new device to the system, make sure the device is installed in a plug socket, light fitting etc. open the app and click "add" to install a new device on to your dashboard. Select the type of device you want to install and the app will search and install it. Once found, you can give it a name – we fitted the light bulb on the landing so called in "Landing Light". Once the devices are installed you can add the devices to your home screen in the app.

Once all installed, you use the app the same way as you would for your heating except now you need to select what device you want to control. You can choose whether you want the device to be permanently on, switched off or run to a schedule. You can now turn on or off devices at will, so in the case of the light bulb you could turn on the landing light from your phone before getting out of bed (or turn it off once in bed if you forgot to do so on the way past). You can also set schedules for every day of the week and for whatever time you choose so that you can have a light turning on/off at different times every day.

Hive Active Plug

The Hive Active Plug is an excellent little device for turning on and off devices plugged in to it – maybe you want to turn on your kettle a couple of minutes before you get home so you can make a nice hot cuppa as soon as you get in (you can even integrate with Alexa and just shout out "Alexa, turn on my plug!" and turn on the kettle), or maybe you want to turn on your electric blanket so that your bed is warmed up by the time you get in to it. We used it for a hallway lamp.

The Active Plug is a device that plugs into a three-pin plug socket and has another three-pin socket on it to plug your device into. Once you have your device plugged in and set up on your app you can control it via the app manually or set up an automatic schedule (we tend to use a mixture of both). For home security measures you could plug in a lamp or even a radio so that it looks or sounds like someone is home.

(Continued on page 14)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 13)

Hive Dimmable Light Bulb

The Hive Dimmable Light Bulb looks just like an ordinary LED bulb and is available in bayonet or screw fittings (it just feels a bit heavier). Once installed you just leave the wall switch on and then control the light from the app on your phone. It is really easy to use and again can be controlled manually from the phone turning on and off whenever required or even dimming or brightening the light to make it much more pleasant or a brighter light. It can also be scheduled to turn on and off at specific times and each day can have its own unique timings, so that the light doesn't come on at the same time every night. As part of the scheduling not only can you have the light automatically turning on at say 4pm (during the darker winter months), you can also set it to dim to 40% at 11pm, a fantastic feature if you are using as a night light in the hallway for the kids.

With both of these devices (and any other that you may add) you don't have to be home to use and control them. As long as you have your phone connected to the internet, you can control them from anywhere. So if you are at work and it gets darker earlier than expected, you can just log on to the app and turn on your light, lamp, radio or whatever device you have connected.

Overall, I have been very impressed with both of these devices. They are extremely easy to install and work brilliantly. They are easy to use and control and the app responds very fast. They make an excellent addition to any [home security measures](#) that you already have in the home for use while you are out and are also great for everyday use while you are at home as well (turn the kettle on while upstairs so that it is already boiled when you get down – provided you remembered to put water in before you went out of course, it is not clever enough to fill the kettle for you!).

If you are considering adding security devices that make it look like you are home when you are not and already a Hive system, then the active plug and light bulbs are perfect additions to the system. I will be looking at adding more to the system like an outdoor security camera and the motion, door or window sensors.

Rating: 5/5

RRP: £39 (Hive Active Plug) / £19 (Hive Dimmable Light Bulb)

For more information or to buy, visit www.hivehome.com.



Tightening Up Your Home Security



SIMPLE CYBER LIFE.com

SimpleCyberLife.com Review

Home security is a massive issue. That doesn't just mean securing the doors and windows, fitting security lights and cameras and remembering to turn on lights and setting the burglar alarm before leaving home. Home security also covers being safe online, which can be more of a minefield to get your head around.

With more and more of us having phones, laptops and tablets and various social media accounts the settings need to be secure (which means changing the default settings). If giving devices to children, devices should be monitored and downloadable apps vetted and approved by the parent or carer. Also, children should never be allowed to take their devices to bed with them (too much temptation for them to use them during the night).

With it being reported in the past few days that half of children aged 10 now have their own smart phones, making sure that they are safe online is of paramount importance. Whilst children having a phone is great for when they are going off to high school and travelling independently it does need to be safe to use but without being so locked down that it becomes unusable.

In this digital age, information is worth a fortune and data harvesting is big business that could cost you a fortune. Add in hacking, cyber bullying, identity theft, fraud, explicit content, sexual predators and more how do you ensure that your devices are safe for use?

Well everything has security and privacy settings, don't they? Yes, most things do but trying to work out where they are, what they do, how to set them up etc. can be mind boggling. Trying to find the right answers can be very time consuming and often conflicting advice is given. With an abundance of social media sites, anti-virus, malware and parental control programs out there, where do you turn to for advice? What extra software or hardware do you need? Where do you begin and how do you keep your children and their devices secure? Well now there is an answer to help parents, carers and you find out the answers, all in one very useful resource website – Simple Cyber Life.

SimpleCyberLife.com, founded by Jonny Pelter, is an internet safety resource website, paid membership required, designed to help us get the answers towards online security advice in the form of convenient, educational and practical advice video tutorials, that are in plain English and simple to understand. The videos are designed to help even the most technophobic among us (and even the ones that think we know it all) secure our devices and use the internet much more safely, whether that is setting up your router correctly, checking emails or using social media sites.

SimpleCyberLife.com is a resource website to help work out what internet protection you need for your family, and how to use it. It uses step-by-step video tutorials to show you how to set up relevant security settings on your computer and phone (Android and iOS) with support options via email, phone, home visits and an online discussion forum. It covers more than just simple things like strong passwords and stranger danger but things like turning of geotagging on photos (did you know with it turned on someone would be able to download the photo and get the GPS information from it to potentially get the location of your home or kids school?).

The website also comes with a discussion forum where members can chat, share their own hints and tips and ask questions.

As well as giving help in securing your devices and apps, the website also gives advice on filling in registration forms – this is very informative and some of the things mentioned are simple small details that you would never have thought of, but can make a huge difference.

So why pay to join? Surely all this information is available on the web? Well, yes the information is out there but you have to do lots of searching and hope that the information is correct or the site you are using it is secure. By becoming a member of

(Continued on page 16)



Tightening Up Your Home Security



SIMPLE CYBER LIFE.com

(Continued from page 15)

SimpleCyberLife.com all the information is in one place and if you can't find the answer to something, you have the ability to ask other members or Jonny himself.

SimpleCyberLife.com is a wonderful resource website designed to take parents, carers and internet users through the minefield of internet security and staying safe online. All the information you need can be found in one very accessible place on an easy to use website and the videos are very straightforward and easy to understand. While a lot of the information given is things that you can yourself without extra cost, there are some things that require extra software or hardware but you are told what you would to complete the task.

An excellent resource website that anyone who wants to make sure that their, or their children's, phones and computers are as secure as they can be on the internet should take a look at.

Rating: 5/5

A Premium Membership costs £3.99 per month / £44.99 per year. A VIP membership costs £14.99 per month / £179.99 per year.

For more information or to buy a membership, visit simplecyberlife.com.

Tightening Up Your Home Security



Hive View Outdoor Security Camera Review

We love our Hive system. Over the winter it has been excellent for being able to control our heating remotely, turning it on before we get home or even giving it a boost from the comfort of the sofa. Until recently we had been massively underusing the capabilities of the system, that is until we added the [Hive Active Smart Plug and the Hive Smart Dimmable Light Bulb](#).

We have been looking at improving our home security with a security camera as there have been a spate of opportunistic home burglaries and car break-ins close to where we live recently. As we were so impressed with the plug and light bulb from a home security perspective, we were excited to see that Hive offer security cameras than can be added to the system.

As we already have a Hive Hub (one is required to attach any of the Hive products) adding a camera wasn't going to be a problem and we opted for the Hive Outdoor View security camera (we may look at adding the Hive View (indoor camera) at a later date).

The Hive Hub is the brain of the system for any Hive products and allows you to connect them all up in one place so that you have control over them from a smartphone, tablet or laptop. You can control any of the devices independently, manually or set schedules. The schedules are great for setting things like turning on lights at a specific point in the day, setting the heating to come on just before you get home etc. But the really cool thing that makes the Hive system really smart is that it supports IFTTT (IF This Then That) commands. With IFTTT, you are able to carry out a range of commands, for example if you have a door sensor installed and a light on an active plug you can set a schedule that says if the door sensor detects the door opening the light will turn on – how cool is that?

Anyway, back to the security camera.

The Hive View Outdoor Security Camera comes with:

- Hive Outdoor View Camera
- Magnetic Mount
- 5m Power Cable
- USB Plug
- Screws
- Grommets
- Rawl Plugs
- Cable Clips
- Size 0 Screwdriver

With the weather being terrible lately and us itching to install the camera and try it out, we kept checking the weather app on the phone for a spot where it showed a couple of hours of calmer weather so that we could get outside and fit the security camera.

Before starting, we spent some time deciding where best to site the camera. As it is a security camera that requires permanent mains power (it is not battery operated), it needs to be sited near a power socket (doesn't need to be too close as it does come with a very generous 7.5 metre power cable). As it is cabled, it requires a hole drilling thorough the wall or door/window frame. So before starting to drill, we spent the time beforehand seeing where best to site it to give the best view of

(Continued on page 18)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 17)

the garden whilst at the same time being close to a power source that made the tidying of the cable easier and neater. If you are not competent at DIY then you can opt for Hive's installation service (costs £89) and they will do it all for you. We had decided to do it ourselves. We were quite fortunate that where we wanted the camera and where the power outlet was situated inside that there was already an existing hole in the wall from an old aerial cable (and it was just the right diameter), so rather than drilling more holes we used that. If you do need to drill through the wall of your house, you will need an SDS power drill with a 12mm masonry drill bit long enough to drill through an external wall.

If fitting the camera yourself, as we did, you will need some basic tools (other than mentioned above):

- Phillips screwdriver
- Stepladder
- Power drill with a 6mm drill bit

Once we were comfortable with where we were going to site the camera (ideally it has to be at a height of 2 metres plus) and already had a hole in the wall where it was needed, installation was simple. Threading the power cable through the wall was probably the hardest part. We were siting the camera on the wooden pergola on the back of the house so didn't need to drill more holes into the stonework of the house for the mounting screw. Once we had fixed the screw to the woodwork and slid the magnetic mount over the top, the camera just attaches on with a powerful magnet. I was very dubious at first that the magnetic mount wouldn't be strong enough, especially outside open to the elements, but it survived Storm Dennis without any issues. As the camera is on a magnetic mount it is really easy to position the camera for the best viewing angle. Once the camera was up, all we had to do was screw the cable to wall using the clips provided (you will need a drill and 6mm bit). This is all really simple and the whole installation process took around 15 minutes (this will be slightly longer if you need to drill through the wall into the house). If you are drilling a new hole into the house, it is best practice to drill just below the camera and feed the cable through there, there are two wall grommets included to tidy up the hole.

Now that the camera was installed, cable all neat and tidy and plugged in, we had to pair it to the Hive Hub and add it to the dashboard on the Hive app. This is really simple, just go into the Hive app and add new device, this process took no longer than five minutes.

Once installed, you can use the app to view a live feed (open the camera in the Hive app and press 'Go Live'). You can also view stored recorded clips here. The camera doesn't have any onboard storage for clips, so you have an option of either going subscription-free and keeping a rolling 24 hours of clips available, or subscribing at £3.99 per month for access to 30 days of clips. Whichever option you pick, you always have the ability to download a clip from the cloud to your phone where you can store it safely, should you need to use it in future.

You can change the camera settings from within the app. We found it best to change the motion type to 'people' rather than 'all motion' as we have lots of trees and shrubs in the garden and the strong wind blowing these was triggering the motion sensors, giving false notifications on the phone. You can also set up to four 'activity zones' so that it only triggers the camera for anything in that area (we could see the footpath at the end of the garden and didn't want motion triggers every time someone walked past the house).

(Continued on page 19)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 18)

We also turned off the sound detection for now as again the strong winds were triggering it, so we will probably turn this back when the weather is calmer. As well as using sound as a trigger to detect and record an incident, it is also equipped with 2-way communication. If the camera is triggered then you can not only hear what is happening if an intruder is in sight of the camera, but can speak to them too (you could tell them to get off your property or the police would be called or tell the delivery person to leave the parcel by the door).

The Hive View Outdoor security camera is a rounded cube shape and looks very good. It attaches to the house with a magnetic mount and can be angled for the best views extremely easily. The build quality seems very high and as already mentioned, it has stood up to Storm Dennis and its driving wind and rain – it hasn't moved at all. If it even did need to be repositioned for any reason, the magnetic mount means that this can be achieved without the need for any tools. One concern with the magnetic

mount was that anyone could come along and knock it off or even steal it! The camera needs to be at a height of 2 metres plus so cannot easily be reached and any thief would need something to stand on to reach it (this would give a very good recording of their face as clips are not stored on the camera). The power cable can not be just pulled out either as it is screwed in place and uses a very tiny screwdriver to tighten/untighten.

So the camera is situated well, connected to the Hive hub and monitoring the garden and delivering notifications to the phone, what is the quality of the recordings like? I would have to say that the video quality is excellent. It livestreams in 1080p HD (can also be set at 720p if your internet is not up to scratch) with a 130° wide angle lens, person detection, two-way audio and is just as good at night as it is during the day. We can see most of our large quite clearly with no significant glare from any street or passing car lights.

With the IFTTT functions of the Hive system, if you have a Hive smart bulb or active plug you can use the schedule in the app to turn on the light, television or radio if the camera detects motion. This function can add another level of security to the house.

Overall, we have been really impressed with the Hive View Outdoor. It is simple and straightforward to install and monitor. Notifications are reliably sent to our phone or tablet whenever motion is detected outside, and having it set to 'people' works very well. The quality of the video recordings is excellent and faces can clearly be detected.

Integrating the Hive View Outdoor with our other Hive products is really improving our home security and giving that bit more peace of mind.

Rating: 5/5

RRP: £179

For more information or to buy, visit www.hivehome.com.

Tightening Up Your Home Security



Ring Video Doorbell

With home security being something that is in most people's consciousness these days, it is being taken much more seriously. There are lots of home security products hitting the market, from security cameras to burglar alarms, smart door sensors to smart alarms, patio door locks to safes.

We have had a spate of opportunistic home and car burglaries in our area recently so have improved our home security with security cameras, door and window sensors and better locks. Whilst all that is well and good to try and deter those up to no good out of plain sight, you never know who is going to be knocking at your front door.

Fortunately, technology has the answer with smart home tech in the form of the Ring Video Doorbell.

The Ring Video Doorbell is a smart wireless doorbell that is connected to your internet router, enabling you to see who is at the door and even converse with them (from your smartphone or tablet) before having to answer the door.

In a security conscious age, being able to speak and see someone at your door is brilliant and not just for the elderly or vulnerable people living on their own. From my desk I can tell delivery people where to leave parcels.

You will need a compatible Android or iOS smartphone or tablet as well as an internet connection with wifi in your home or office. There are a few different versions of the Ring Doorbell and we received the standard Ring in bronze (silver is also available). The bronze version, I feel, looks much better and is in keeping with the dark woodwork of our door.

With the Ring standard, in the box is:

- Main doorbell unit
- Backing plate
- Charging cable (micro USB)
- 5 x screws and rawl plugs
- Double-ended security screwdriver
- Drill bit
- Spirit level
- Diode (for use with wired set up)
- Security stickers
- Instructions / quick start guide

On opening the box, the Ring is bigger than I expected, it measures 4.98 x 2.43 x 0.87 inches (12.65 x 6.17 x 2.21cm). A quite large unit, bigger than a standard doorbell but not so big that it won't fit on your door or in the surrounding space. It does however feel really solid and sturdy.

The Ring works from a rechargeable battery. The battery needs recharging every six months or so depending on what options you set up (motion detection on or off) and how much recording it does etc. It needs to be removed from the door to do this (the Ring 2 has a quick release battery). If you do have an existing doorbell, The Ring can also be hardwired to it and take its power from that. We didn't have an existing doorbell so have gone for the battery option and put it on to charge straightaway (takes around 5 hours to fully charge). Whilst waiting for it to charge we decided to fit the mounting outside.

(Continued on page 21)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 20)

Installation is simple. We didn't want the Ring on the door itself and the frame of the door wasn't wide enough to house it so we decided to mount it on the wall next to door (which then also enables us to see up the drive). The mounting plate has 4 pre-drilled holes that you can use to mark the wall for where you need to drill. It even comes with its own tiny spirit level so that you can ensure you get it straight. Once we had decided exactly where to site the Ring (we have a stone wall rather than smooth brick so had to find the best spot to fit flat and see who is at the door) and marked where to drill it was time to start. We were happy to see that Ring have thought of everything and even supply the correct drill bit to do this. We drilled out four holes, inserted the supplied rawl plugs and screwed the mounting plate to the wall.

Once completed, we just had to wait for the Ring to finish charging. When fully charged, the Ring slides down the mounting plate onto the clips either side and then is secured at the bottom by tightening two small security screws (security screwdriver is supplied).

With the Ring mounted securely in place we were now ready to connect it to the wifi and our phones.

Pairing the Ring to the app and phone is simple. Just scan the QR code that is included in the box (it can also be found on the back of the doorbell). The app then takes you through setting it: connecting to wifi, motion detection (180 degrees with infrared heat detection), activity areas (there are five selectable zones and customisable sensitivity scale) and optimising for the area you live in (facing the street, lots of cars going past, quiet road etc.). You can even set schedules for motion detection should you only want that function at a specific time of day (overnight).

When the app is installed and set up, the doorbell is ready to function. When someone presses the bell you will be notified on your phone and can answer it within the app. Once the app is open the image is very good and you can clearly see who is at the door in 720p HD (has a 180 degrees horizontal viewing angle). You can then speak to them and hear what they are saying so you can then decide whether to go and answer the door or not. There is no chime unit supplied with the Ring, but one can be [purchased separately for a cost of £29](#). You can connect the Ring to any Echo smart speakers that you have in the house so that when someone presses the doorbell they will announce that someone is at the door.

I don't always have my phone with me (I am always leaving it in a different room). On my desk I have an Echo Show and can connect the Ring to that. This means that I can answer the doorbell from that – I can see who is at the door and still have the audio (the Echo dot just gives the audio).

The Ring is just not a doorbell though. As you can use it to view a live stream you can use it as a security camera as well. Just tap Go Live in the app and you have a live view of the front of your house.

The quality of the video image is very good (day or night). It records in 720p HD although at certain times of the day ours does look a little overexposed on the image up the driveway (we haven't sited it in direct sunlight). With the wide-angle view of 180 degrees it can clearly see who is at the door and across our driveway.

The two-way audio is brilliant. It is clear and you can speak to your caller easily, telling them you will be there shortly, to hang on, to leave the parcel on the step or safe place or to go away. It works really well.

Overall, I am very pleased with the Ring Video Doorbell. It adds another level of security to the house and makes answering the door much easier (I can see how it would be excellent for vulnerable people who don't like answering the door). With the motion detection on, you can even see (and be notified of) anybody approaching the house – even if they don't press the

(Continued on page 22)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 21)

doorbell.

The Ring Video Doorbell is an excellent device, whether you are just using to see who is at your door, or as part of a full home security system.

Rating: 5/5

RRP: £89

Available to buy from Amazon [here](#).

Tightening Up Your Home Security



F-Secure SENSE Security Router

Home security is a big issue these days and we can do lots to secure our homes and belongings. But what about security on our connected devices? It should be just as an important part of any home security considerations, but it is often overlooked.

More and more households these days have an internet connection. Most of us couldn't manage without one. For households that do have an active broadband connection, a lot of those are now becoming connected homes, or even better, smart homes. A "connected home" is not one that has joined some kind of criminal community but one that has lots of smart devices accessing the internet, whereas a "smart home" takes those connected devices and seamlessly joins them up to work together – for example, when our front door is

opened (connected to a Hive Door Sensor) it turns on the hallway lamp (connected to a Hive Active Plug).

All these connected devices are brilliant and can make life simpler. We have lots of connected and smart devices in the house, from door senses to security cameras and of course phones and tablets. Although we have passwords and pin numbers on things that require them, what about security at point of entry itself? We have changed the default passwords on our router, but that is as far as router security has got.

When anyone signs up with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) for a broadband service they are usually supplied with a new router. A lot of these are ok for getting on the internet, but not so good with the security and more times than not, when adding all the connected devices are just not able to cope. At some point, unless we are using our broadband for just a basic internet connection for our laptop, phone and possibly a smart speaker, a lot of us will change our router. We changed our router not so long ago and our focus was on getting one that could handle more devices, we didn't really consider the security side too much.

With home and cyber security coming much more into focus, we were delighted when we received the F-Secure SENSE Security Router and app to review. F-Secure have over 30 years of experience in cyber security. The SENSE comes as part of TOTAL premium cyber security package, which also includes internet security, VPN and password manager for all your devices. It is described as a combination of a smart security router, an advanced security app and industry-leading cloud protection.

The SENSE router is a very aesthetically pleasing router, it certainly doesn't look like anything your ISP would supply. It really doesn't look like a router at all. Now, it doesn't replace your broadband router but works in conjunction with it to create a secure network and extends your wifi connection. The SENSE is a dual-band router, 2.4GHz (longer reach) or 5GHz (faster speed) frequencies, with four internal antennas and gives a fast and secure wifi connection to everything connected to it. It blocks malicious websites and other threats whilst securing all your connected and smart devices against cyber-attacks, using artificial intelligence and machine learning to do so.

When set up and running, the SENSE security router creates a secure wifi network. You can also use it on ethernet should you prefer a cabled connection. It protects you against fake websites, protects your identity and privacy, and keeps your passwords in a safe but easily accessible place.

With the TOTAL software package, its antivirus protects your devices and files from malicious harm whilst the VPN (Virtual Private Network) ensures your privacy on the internet by making your devices invisible. You can protect your children's devices and set internet use boundaries by blocking and approving websites, setting usage times or even blocking the internet connection on a device completely or just a specific time (you can block the internet completely on your children's phones

(Continued on page 24)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



connected home

(Continued from page 23)

when they go to bed for example). You can even connect and secure televisions and smart appliances with its IoT (Internet of Things) security, which are generally the weakest parts of your home network.

For review, we received the SENSE TOTAL Package which includes the following:

- **SAFE** – an easy-to-use antivirus & internet security solution
- **KEY** – a password manager
- **FREEDOME VPN** – a privacy app to make your devices invisible online
- **SENSE** – a wireless router that protects every device in your

It all sounds quite impressive, therefore complicated to install and configure. Not really, it couldn't be any easier. Installation and configuring the SENSE router is simple. To install you first need to download the SENSE router app to your phone or tablet. Once installed, just follow the instructions within the app and the router will be installed, connected to your broadband modem/router and ready to protect any devices that you want to connect to it.

Now that the router is up and running you can disconnect devices from your old router and connect to the SENSE. This is done in the same way as you would to any other router. Once connected to the SENSE you are now protected making browsing safer and safeguarding your identity online. You can also enable tracking protection to ensure that your privacy is protected against hackers, advertisers and data collection companies. If any sites you use do get blocked and you know that they are safe, it is very easy to add them to the exemptions list so that you have access.

The SENSE also protects against harmful apps by using cloud technology to check every app against a virus database in the cloud (network connection required).

The SENSE router gets you online and securely browsing, banking and protecting your identity. The TOTAL package adds even more protection as it is a collection of software packages to add even more security to your computers. It features an antivirus program, password manager and a VPN.

- SAFE is an antivirus and internet security package. It protects your device not only from viruses but ransomware, spyware but even has protection for online banking (when you log your computer into your online bank with Banking Protection on, SAFE detects and shuts down all connections and programs it does not consider secure).
- KEY is a password keeper and manager. It stores all your passwords and pin numbers securely and makes in quicker and easier to login to your favourite services and makes paying online much more secure.
- FREEDOME is an easy to use VPN (Virtual Private Network). This helps to keep you anonymous online, encrypts your data so it's impossible for anyone else to read, prevents third parties (like your internet provider) from tracking you and seeing what you do online and also hides your IP address for an extra layer of privacy. Plus, choosing an IP location in another country lets you bypass geo-restrictions you might otherwise encounter.

Overall, the SENSE TOTAL package has been providing me with a secure, fast and stable internet connection. The router is extremely easy to set up. It looks fantastic – I love that it displays the time in digital format and that it looks nothing like a router or wifi extender. And it is easy to use (once set up, for the most part it is just left alone). It protects all my devices in real time. Monitoring any threats is easy, with just a quick glance on the app you can see how many devices are being

(Continued on page 25)

Tightening Up Your Home Security



(Continued from page 24)

protected and how many threats have been blocked. With two clicks you can block an internet connection to any connected device. You can install the software packages you need from one central place on the F-Secure website. You only need to install the ones you need rather than all of them. They are easy use with an uncluttered layout and they are fast and responsive.

SAFE (antivirus program) even comes with some impressive FAMILY RULES to make online use for children much safer. You can set time limits on internet and app use, monitor apps and decide which ones can and can't be used, block and manage different types of website content and a Finder to locate lost devices when the children inevitably lose them (and even view it on a map).

The SENSE is a fantastic router. It doesn't look out of place in any room with its white tall body and digital clock display. Unlike standard routers, it is continuously and automatically updated with new features and protection ensuring that you are always protected against all latest online threats.

For anyone taking their online security seriously, the SENSE security router and TOTAL software packages are an excellent way to help keep your online devices and information protected.

Rating: 5/5

RRP: from £164.99 (SENSE Router with 12 months TOTAL subscription)

For more information or to buy, visit www.f-secure.com.



Tightening Up Your Home Security

We hope that some of the reviews featured in this guide will help you improve your home security, whether it is with the products featured or something similar. All these reviews can be found on my [website](#),

Home security is something that cannot be taken lightly and anything you can do to improve yours will hopefully deter those opportunistic burglars and make your home less appealing to them.

Thank you for reading.

Please do visit my website www.davidsavage.co.uk for other reviews, articles and competitions.

Disclosure: *I was supplied with the products featured free of charge for the purpose of testing and writing an honest review. All thoughts and opinions are mine own.*