



An Extended Guide · No. 2025

Locks, Trackers & Registration — Keeping an E-Bike from Being Stolen

Lock types, hiding a tracker, your
serial number, and reporting a theft

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! Read this first — lithium batteries deserve respect

E-bikes, scooters, and powered chairs run on big lithium-ion batteries. Treated well they are safe; abused or damaged they can overheat and catch fire fast. Charge only with the charger that came with your device, on a hard surface like concrete or tile — never on a bed, couch, or carpet — and not right in a doorway or stairwell that is your way out in a hurry. Don't leave a battery charging unattended or overnight, and unplug it once it's full. Stop using any battery that is swollen, very hot, hissing, leaking, or giving off a strange smell, and keep it away from anything that burns. If a battery is smoking or on fire, get everyone out and call 911 — these fires are hard to put out. A quick reminder before we talk theft: wherever you store and lock the bike, keep safe-charging habits in mind — a secure spot and a safe charging spot often go together.

Let's keep your e-bike yours

An e-bike is a valuable, desirable thing, and sadly that makes it a target for thieves. The good news is that a few sensible steps — the right lock, a hidden tracker, and a recorded serial number — make your bike far harder to steal and far easier to recover. This guide walks you through all of it.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've helped plenty of folks set up sensible security for the things they value, and e-bikes deserve the same thoughtful care.

You don't need to turn your garage into a fortress. You just need to be a harder target than the next bike, and to have done the simple homework that helps police return your bike if it ever does walk off.

★ Want help setting up security?

Picking a lock, hiding a tracker, recording your serial number — these are exactly the kind of practical things I can help with. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only these things, your bike is far safer.

- ❑ Use a strong physical lock — a hardened U-lock or heavy chain, not a thin cable.
- ❑ Lock the frame to something solid and immovable, and secure the wheels too.
- ❑ Store it out of sight when you can — a locked garage or shed beats the front yard.
- ❑ Record your serial number and keep a photo of the bike and its receipt.
- ❑ Consider a hidden tracker so a stolen bike can be located.
- ❑ Register the bike where you can, and report any theft to police right away with the serial number.

✓ The idea to hold onto

You can't make a bike impossible to steal, but you can make yours more trouble than it's worth. A good lock, out of sight, plus a recorded serial and a tracker, covers the bases.

Why e-bikes are such a target

A little understanding of the thief's thinking helps you defend against it.

E-bikes are valuable, in demand, and often left outside or in unlocked garages. A thief wants a quick, quiet grab with little risk, so they go for the easy target — the bike with a flimsy lock, or no lock, in plain view. Parts and batteries have resale value too, so even a locked bike can be stripped if left vulnerable.

Your whole strategy flows from this: slow the thief down, make noise and attention likely, and keep the bike out of easy sight and reach. Every extra minute and every extra bit of risk pushes a thief toward an easier target.

✓ Be the harder target

Most bike theft is opportunistic. You don't have to outrun the bear — you just have to not be the easiest bike on the block. A good lock and a hidden spot do most of that work.

Lock types, from weak to strong

Not all locks are equal. Knowing the types lets you spend your money where it counts.

- **Thin cable locks:** light and cheap, but a thief with cutters goes through them in seconds. Fine only as a minor deterrent or a second layer.
- **U-locks (D-locks):** a hardened steel U — much tougher, and the backbone of good bike security. Choose a solid, well-rated one.
- **Heavy chains with a good padlock:** strong and flexible for locking to awkward objects, though heavy to carry.
- **Folding locks:** a compromise — more portable than a chain, stronger than a cable, convenient for errands.
- **Wheel and component locks:** small locks for quick-release wheels and seats, used alongside a main lock.

! A thin cable is barely a lock

If you take one thing from this page: a skinny cable lock won't stop a determined thief. Spend on a quality U-lock or a heavy chain for your main lock, and treat a cable only as a backup for the wheels.

How to lock it the right way

A great lock used poorly still leaves your bike at risk. Technique matters as much as the lock.

Lock the frame — the main triangle, not just a wheel — to something solid and immovable, like a proper bike rack or a sturdy post that can't be lifted over. A bike locked only by the front wheel can lose its frame and the rest of the bike while the wheel stays behind, chained to the rack.

Secure the wheels too: either pass the lock through a wheel and the frame, or add a second lock or cable for the wheels, especially if they're quick-release. Keep the lock up off the ground (harder to smash), and fill the U so there's little room for a tool to lever it.

✓ **Frame first, then the wheels**

The golden rule of locking: get the lock through the frame and around something immovable first, then worry about the wheels. A wheel-only lock is an invitation.

Where you lock and store it matters

Location is half of security. The best lock in the wrong place still tempts a thief.

At home, out of sight is best — a locked garage or shed beats leaving the bike in the yard or on the porch where it's advertised to everyone who passes. Even in the garage, lock it to something solid; a quiet garage with an open door is a common theft spot. Away from home, lock in a busy, well-lit spot where a thief would be noticed.

Think about the whole picture: a bike behind a locked door, locked to something solid, out of casual view, with a tracker aboard, is a tough nut. Each layer multiplies the others.

✓ Out of sight is out of mind for a thief

A thief can't covet what they can't see. Storing the bike where it isn't visible from the street removes the temptation before the lock ever has to do its job.

Hidden trackers — recovering a stolen bike

A tracker won't stop a theft, but it can turn a loss into a recovery. They've become a favorite tool for bike owners.

A small location tracker, hidden on the bike, lets you see where it goes if it's taken. Some e-bikes have location features built into their app (as our displays guide mentions); others use a separate little tracker you buy and tuck away. Either way, the magic is in hiding it well so a thief doesn't find and remove it.

Good hiding spots are out-of-the-way nooks a thief won't check in a hurry — but mind that a tracker still needs to work from where it's hidden and may need its own charge or battery now and then. If you ever locate a stolen bike, don't go confront the thief yourself — give the location to the police.

! Let the police recover it, not you

A tracker's job is to tell the police where your bike is — not to send you knocking on a stranger's door. Recovering stolen property can be dangerous; hand the location to the authorities and let them handle it.

Your serial number is your bike's fingerprint

This simple, free step does more for recovery than almost anything else, and most people skip it.

Every bike has a unique serial number, usually stamped into the frame — often underneath, where the pedals attach. Find it, write it down, and keep a photo. Without it, a recovered bike is hard to prove is yours and hard for police to match to a theft report. With it, your bike is identifiable.

Keep the serial number together with a few clear photos of the bike (including any distinctive marks) and your purchase receipt, somewhere safe — a folder at home and a copy on your phone. That little record is what turns 'a stolen bike' into 'my bike, serial number such-and-such.'

★ Let me help you find and record it

Finding the serial number and setting up a simple record — number, photos, receipt — takes ten minutes and I'm glad to do it with you. Call (330) 200-8042.

Registering your bike

Registering your e-bike — in the helpful sense — links your name and serial number so a found bike can come home.

This isn't the state vehicle registration of a car; as our Ohio rules guide explains, a true e-bike doesn't need state plates. This is the voluntary kind: registering the serial number with the maker's warranty system, a bike-registry service, or a program your local police may offer. It creates a record that ties the bike to you.

A registered serial number helps in two ways: police who recover a bike can trace it to you, and a registry can flag a bike as stolen if someone tries to resell it. It's usually free or cheap and worth the few minutes.

✓ Ask your local police about a registry

Some police departments run a free bike-registration program. A quick call to the non-emergency line tells you if yours does — and it's a good way to put your serial number on record locally.

Two kinds of riders, two sets of needs

Where your bike spends its time shapes the security that matters most. Two pictures help you focus your effort.

If your bike mostly stays home

You ride from home and the bike lives in your garage or shed between outings. Your main risk is a break-in or a grab from an open garage.

- Store it out of sight behind a locked door.
- Lock it to something solid even inside the garage.
- Keep the garage door closed — an open garage is a shop window.
- A tracker and recorded serial number cover the worst case.

If you lock up out in public

You ride to shops, the library, or a friend's and leave the bike locked outside. Your main risk is a quick public theft.

- Carry a quality U-lock or folding lock, not a thin cable.
- Lock the frame to a solid rack in a busy, well-lit spot.
- Secure the wheels and take the battery or display with you if you can.
- Don't leave it locked outside overnight if you can avoid it.

★ Not sure where your weak spot is?

Tell me where and how your bike spends its time and I'll help you shore up the risk that matters most for you, without overdoing it. Call (330) 200-8042.

Taking the battery or display with you

Here's a clever, low-effort deterrent many e-bike riders use.

On many e-bikes the battery lifts out, and sometimes the display pops off too. Taking the battery with you when you lock up outside does two things: it removes the most valuable, most stealable part, and it makes the bike far less appealing and useful to a thief. A battery is also easier to carry into a shop than to leave exposed.

It's not always practical — a battery has some heft — but for a longer stop, or anywhere you feel uneasy, pocketing the key part is a simple, strong move. Just don't leave it somewhere it'll bake in a hot car.

✓ The missing battery discourages a thief

A bike with no battery is worth far less and is a nuisance to ride off. Taking the battery when you lock up in a risky spot is one of the easiest deterrents there is.

Insurance and theft

Security and insurance work together — one prevents loss, the other softens it. A quick word on the overlap.

If your bike is stolen despite your precautions, insurance may help replace it — but only if you're covered and can prove ownership. That's where the serial number, photos, and receipt earn their keep again. Our e-bike insurance guide covers what to ask your insurer about theft coverage; the headline is to check before you need it, not after.

Some insurers also want to see that you used a proper lock, so good security isn't just prevention — it can matter to a claim. Keep a note of the lock you use alongside your other records.

✓ Your records serve double duty

The serial number, photos, and receipt you keep for recovery are exactly what an insurer wants for a theft claim. Set them up once and they cover you both ways.

If your bike is stolen — act fast

The first hours matter. Here's the calm, quick sequence to follow.

- ❑ Report it to the police right away, with your serial number, photos, and a description.
- ❑ Check any tracker or app location — and give that to police, don't chase it yourself.
- ❑ Mark the bike as stolen in any registry you used.
- ❑ Tell your insurer promptly if you have coverage, with your records.
- ❑ Alert local shops and online marketplaces in case it's offered for resale.
- ❑ Share the serial number and photos with local riding groups online.

! Report with the serial number, and don't confront anyone

A police report with your serial number is what makes recovery possible and a claim valid. And if a tracker shows where the bike is, that's information for the police — never a reason to go confront a thief yourself.

Layers beat any single lock

The strongest security isn't one heroic lock — it's several modest barriers that add up.

Picture the layers: the bike is out of sight, behind a locked door, locked by the frame to something immovable, with the wheels secured, the battery removed, a hidden tracker aboard, and the serial number on record. No single layer is unbeatable, but together they turn your bike from an easy grab into a project no casual thief will attempt.

You don't need every layer every time — match the effort to the risk. A quick stop in a busy spot needs less than leaving the bike overnight. But knowing the layers lets you choose wisely each time.

✓ Stack the odds in your favor

Each layer you add doesn't just help a little — it multiplies with the others. Out of sight plus a good lock plus a tracker is far more than the sum of its parts.

Choosing a lock without overspending

Locks range widely in price and strength. Here's how to spend sensibly for your situation.

Match the lock to the bike's value and the risk it faces. A quality U-lock or a good folding lock suits most riders for errands and daily use. If you'll leave a valuable bike in a higher-risk area, step up to a heavier chain or add a second lock. Many lock makers publish a security rating — a higher rating means more resistance to cutting and prying.

A reasonable rule of thumb is to spend enough on the lock that it's a real barrier relative to the bike — a token lock on a valuable bike is false economy. But you needn't buy the heaviest lock made for a bike that lives in a locked garage.

★ I'll help you pick the right lock

Tell me your bike and where it spends its time and I'll help you choose a lock that's strong enough without being overkill. Call (330) 200-8042.

Securing the bike at home

Since many e-bikes are stolen from home, a little setup in the garage or shed pays off.

Install a solid anchor point — a proper floor or wall anchor bolted securely — so you can lock the bike to something immovable inside, not just lean it against a wall. Keep the garage door closed and consider a light or camera that makes a would-be thief think twice. The same locked, out-of-sight spot is often a fine place to charge safely, too.

If you live where garage break-ins happen, treat the bike like any valuable: out of sight, locked down, and recorded. A determined burglar is rare, but an open garage with a bike by the door is an easy temptation to remove.

✓ An anchor point turns a garage into real security

A bolted-down anchor to lock the frame to is the difference between a bike that's merely indoors and one that's actually secured. It's a small, one-time job with lasting payoff.

Locking up in public with confidence

Errands and outings mean leaving the bike in public sometimes. A simple routine keeps it safe.

Pick a busy, well-lit spot with a solid bike rack — thieves avoid an audience. Lock the frame to the rack, secure the wheels, keep the lock off the ground, and take the battery with you for a longer stop. Avoid locking to something a bike can be lifted over, like a short post or a flimsy sign.

If a place feels sketchy or has no good anchor, trust that instinct — park somewhere better or shorten your stop. And try not to leave the bike locked outside overnight in public, which gives a thief all the time and cover they want.

! Overnight public parking is the riskiest

A bike left locked outside all night, unwatched, is the easiest serious theft going. When you can, bring it in overnight — a few minutes of effort beats losing the bike.

Securing scooters and power chairs

Mobility scooters and power chairs are valuable too, and the same thinking protects them.

Store a mobility scooter or power chair out of sight and secured when you can, record its serial number and keep photos and the receipt, and consider a tracker for a device you'd struggle to replace. When you leave one parked outside a shop, a simple lock and a visible, busy spot help, just as with a bike.

Because these devices are often essential to getting around, a theft is more than a financial blow — so the prevention is well worth it, and insurance (see our insurance guide) matters even more here.

✓ Essential devices deserve extra care

Losing a mobility scooter can mean losing your independence for a while. That makes a lock, a recorded serial number, and good insurance especially worthwhile for a device you rely on daily.

Security that lets you relax

The goal of all this isn't worry — it's the opposite. Good security lets you stop thinking about theft and just enjoy riding.

Once you've got a good lock, a habit of locking the frame to something solid, the bike stored out of sight, a tracker aboard, and your serial number on record, you've done the sensible work. You can park with confidence and ride without that nagging worry in the back of your mind.

That peace of mind is the real prize. A few one-time setup steps and a simple locking habit buy you the freedom to use your bike without fear.

★ Let me help you set it and forget it

A single visit to set up your anchor, lock routine, tracker, and records means you can stop worrying about theft for good. Call or text (330) 200-8042.

Common security mistakes

A few avoidable slip-ups account for most bike thefts. Now you'll sidestep them.

- **A thin cable lock** as the only lock — cut in seconds.
- **Locking only the wheel**, so the frame rides away.
- **Leaving it in plain sight** at home, in the yard or an open garage.
- **No recorded serial number**, making recovery nearly impossible.
- **Locking to something liftable**, like a short post a bike slides over.
- **Overnight in public**, giving a thief all night to work.

✓ Avoid these six and you've won most of the battle

Bike theft overwhelmingly preys on these simple mistakes. Dodge them with a good lock, the right technique, a hidden spot, and a recorded serial number, and you're a hard target.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about keeping an e-bike safe, answered plainly.

Q: What's the best kind of lock?

A quality hardened U-lock or a heavy chain with a good padlock is the backbone of bike security. Skip thin cable locks as a main lock — use one only as a backup for the wheels. Match the lock's strength to your bike's value and the risk.

Q: How should I lock it so a thief can't grab the frame?

Lock the frame — the main triangle — to something solid and immovable, then secure the wheels too. A bike locked only by a wheel can lose its frame while the wheel stays chained to the rack.

Q: Are trackers worth it?

They can be — a hidden tracker won't prevent a theft but can help police recover the bike. Hide it well, keep it powered, and if you locate a stolen bike, give the location to police rather than going yourself.

Q: What should I do the moment my bike is stolen?

Report it to police right away with your serial number, photos, and description; check any tracker and pass the location to police; flag it in any registry; and tell your insurer if you're covered. The serial number is key to all of it.

★ Want to lock down your bike's security?

From picking a lock to recording your serial number to hiding a tracker, I'm glad to set it all up with you. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made keeping your e-bike from being stolen feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I'm a tech helper, not the police — for a theft, report it to law enforcement right away, and I'll gladly help you set up locks, a tracker, and the records that make recovery and a claim possible.

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Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

Lock Types, Weak to Strong

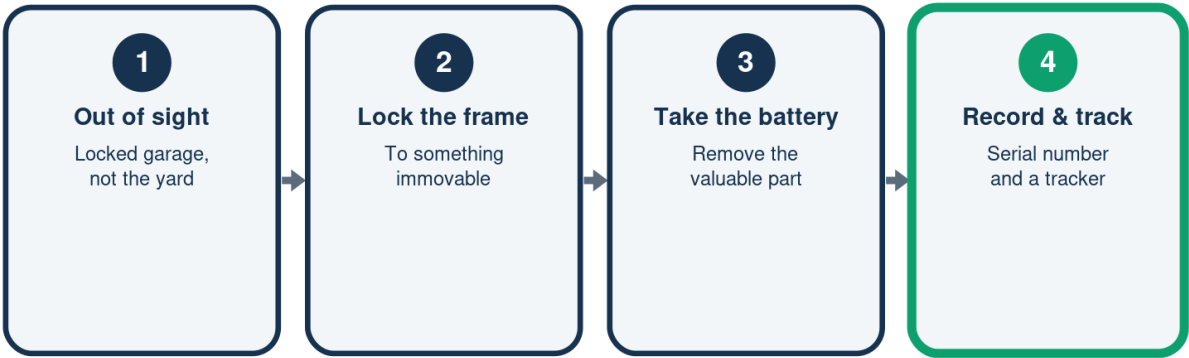
Spend where it counts

	Lock type	How it holds up
Thin cable	Cut in seconds	Backup only
U-lock	Hardened, strong	A solid main lock
Heavy chain	Strong, flexible	Heavy to carry
Folding lock	Portable, decent	Good for errands

A thin cable is barely a lock -- make your main lock a real one.

Layers That Add Up

No single step is unbeatable -- together they win



Each layer multiplies the others. Match effort to the risk.

Locking It Right

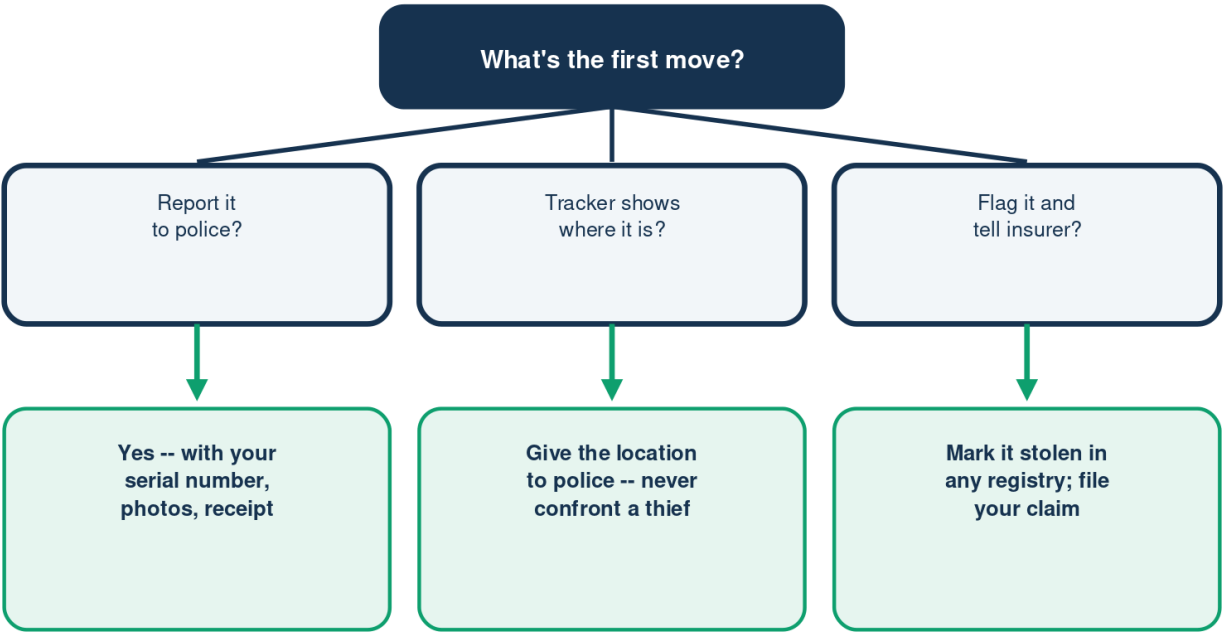
Technique matters as much as the lock

	Do	Don't
What to lock	The frame	Just a wheel
Lock it to	Solid, immovable	A liftable post
The wheels	Secure them too	Leave them loose
Lock height	Up off the ground	Down where it's smashed

Frame first, to something immovable, then the wheels.

If Your Bike Is Stolen

Act fast, and let police do the recovering



Your recorded serial number is what makes recovery and a claim possible.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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