Stolen bike checklist

What to do if your bike or e-bike is stolen. Work down the list in order and tick each step as you finish it. The full guide, with the reasons behind every step, is at confirmedstolen.com/stolen-bike/.

In the first hour

- [ ] **Confirm the bike was stolen, not moved or towed**
  Check with building management, campus or transit staff, or the property owner. Bikes locked to private railings or signs are sometimes removed.
- [ ] **Write down when and where it was taken**
  Note the exact address, the time you left it and the time you noticed it was gone, and how it was locked.
- [ ] **Find the serial number**
  Look in your purchase receipt, shop service records, insurance paperwork, registration emails or old photos of the underside of the frame.
- [ ] **Gather photos and identifying details**
  Collect clear photos, the make, model, color, size, and any stickers, scratches or custom parts that set your bike apart.
- [ ] **Ask nearby businesses and neighbors about cameras**
  Camera footage is often overwritten within days. Ask owners to save it for police rather than trying to collect it yourself.

Within 24 hours

- [ ] **Report the theft to local police and get a report number**
  Give the serial number, photos and theft location. Many agencies take bike theft reports online or by a non-emergency number.
- [ ] **Mark the bike stolen on Bike Index**
  Register it as stolen at bikeindex.org/stolen (bikeindex.org/stolen). It is free, and you can do it even if you never registered the bike.
- [ ] **Add the police report number and photos to the listing**
  Bike Index says a listing with the report number, clear photos and identifying marks is easier for an officer to act on.
- [ ] **Report the theft to any other registry the bike is on**
  If the bike was registered with a campus, city or manufacturer program, mark it stolen there too.

- [ ] **For an e-bike, use the app or tracker if it has one**
  If your e-bike has a manufacturer app, GPS tracker or hidden tag, check its location and give it to police. Do not go to the location yourself.

- [ ] **Share a stolen-bike alert with local cycling groups**
  Post the photos, serial number and theft location in local cycling groups, and ask people to contact you or the police rather than the seller.

This week

- [ ] **Search local resale listings every day**
  Check Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, OfferUp and similar sites. Thieves often change the color, saddle or wheels, so compare frame details.

- [ ] **Send any matching listing to police, not to the seller**
  Save screenshots and the listing link, and give them to the officer with your report number. Do not arrange a meeting yourself.

- [ ] **Alert local bike shops and pawn shops**
  Give them the serial number and photos. Shops that check serials may flag your bike if it comes in for repair or resale.

- [ ] **File an insurance claim if you have coverage**
  Check renters, homeowners or bicycle insurance. Most insurers will ask for the police report number, proof of ownership and the bike's value.

Prevent it happening again

- [ ] **Record the serial number and register the next bike now**
  Register it on Bike Index (bikeindex.org/) on the day you buy it, with photos and the receipt.

- [ ] **Lock the frame and a wheel to a fixed object with a U-lock**
  Use a hardened U-lock or heavy chain rather than a cable alone, and lock to something that cannot be lifted or cut.

- [ ] **Secure the bike at home as carefully as on the street**
  Lock it inside sheds and garages, keep garage doors closed, and avoid leaving bikes on porches or balconies overnight.

- [ ] **For an e-bike, record the battery details and remove the battery**
  Note any serial number on the battery and take the battery with you when you park, if your model allows it.

Your case record

Make, model, color and frame serial number

Police report number

Bike Index listing link

Insurance claim number

Listings checked (sites, dates)

Notes

Version November 6, 2026. General information, not legal advice. Agencies change their procedures, so confirm each step with the organization named. Confirmed Stolen is an independent reference; it is not law enforcement and does not recover property. Free to print and share with attribution.