

How to Prevent Anyone from Stealing Your Portable Computer

This article shows you how to:

- Avoid notebook or tablet theft when travelling
- Leave your device briefly without worrying about it
- Protect your data by requiring your Windows password to be typed

You probably use your notebook or tablet PC when you're out and about and not just in the comfort of your own home – after all, that's one of the reasons for choosing a mobile device! The drawback to these devices is that they're a common target for thieves: it takes no time to grab one of these lightweight devices and hotfoot it away.



So what can you do if the device won't fit into your hotel room's safe, or you want to use it in a busy café, but you're worried it could disappear the moment you turn your back? The solution is simple and effective – just 'tie it up'! Find out how in this article.

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Quick Protection for Your Mobile Devices

Too risky to leave it on a table Let's say you're on holiday, sitting in a café, working on your notebook or surfing the Internet on your tablet. What can you do if you want to nip up to the counter to get another coffee, or you need to answer a call of nature? Do you just leave the device sitting on the table and hope for the best? Take it with you? Ask someone sitting nearby to keep an eye on it while you're gone?

None of these options are very appealing, and even generally-honest people may find such an easy target hard to resist.

Most portable PCs offer a solution Fortunately, most mobile devices have a solution to this dilemma: a slot to prevent your computer from being stolen. Perhaps you've noticed an odd-looking slot on one edge of your computer's case and wondered what it's for? It's quite likely to be a Kensington security slot (otherwise known as a 'K-slot'), usually marked with a 'K'.



Secure the PC with a special lock You use this slot to affix a so-called 'Kensington lock'. The lock is at one end of a cable, with a loop at the other end, and you wrap the cable securely around a table leg (as in the photo on the previous page) or some other heavy or immovable object, ensuring that your PC can't be taken away.

Here's how to secure your notebook or tablet:

1. Visit a computer store to buy a Kensington lock and keep it in your notebook or tablet bag so that you always have it with you.
2. Loop the cable around a heavy or (preferably) fixed object such as a radiator, fence post or table leg and pass the lock through the loop at the end of the cable.
3. Connect the lock to the slot on your PC and lock it up. You can then be sure that no-one can grab your PC and make off with it while you're away.
4. When you finish using the PC, unlock the Kensington lock, roll it up and put it back in your bag.



Lock the PC to a solid object



Choosing a Notebook Lock

The original 'Kensington lock' was developed by the Kensington company (www.kensington.com). On the company's own website you can find various types of lock which vary in price between about £25 and £70 (although you can usually save a few pounds by buying elsewhere). Other manufacturers offer compatible locks at much lower prices – some as little as £5 – but bear in mind that relying on a cheap lock may be a false economy!

Various types and prices

Some locks use keys while others use numeric combinations. In general, the keyed locks are the more secure. You can also find electronic locks that sound an alarm if removed, and others that attach to the computer's monitor socket if your portable PC doesn't have a Kensington slot.

Key or combination lock?



Be sure to choose a lock with a strong cable. Even then, be aware that a determined thief who goes equipped with wire cutters may not find a Kensington lock much of a deterrent! It's also possible to wrench the lock and computer apart by brute force – although only by doing significant damage to the PC's case in the process.

Why Your Windows Password is So Important

Your data is still accessible!

Preventing your notebook or tablet from being stolen is important, of course, but there's a second risk in leaving your computer unattended: someone might read, copy or delete your personal files or meddle with your settings while you're away.

Lock Windows to keep your files safe

Fortunately, that's easily fixed. When you leave your machine, press the key combination **Win+L**. This 'locks' your PC by displaying the Windows lock screen (or, in Windows 7, the log-on screen), covering up the work you were doing and preventing access to Windows. The only way past this screen is to type your password, so your files are safe from curious passers-by.

When you return, flip the lock screen out of the way if necessary (by pressing a key or swiping it upwards with a finger), and type your Windows password to unlock the PC and get back to what you were doing.