

### Step 1: Register Your Bike

Registering your bicycle takes just a few minutes at the Merced Police Department Main Station. Having registration info on file means that you will be able to make a police report if your bicycle is stolen and the police department has the information to enter the serial number that goes nationwide.

- Write down your bicycle's serial number, make, model, color, and other distinguishing characteristics, and keep this info in a safe location.
- Take photos of your bicycle. This will come in handy if you have to describe your bicycle to the authorities and spread the word about a theft.
- Etch your driver's license/ID number into your frame, or write your contact info on a rolled up piece of paper inside the handlebar or seat tube where a thief is unlikely to look. This can help police link your bicycle back to you

### Step 2: Use a Quality Lock (NOT A CABLE LOCK ONLY!!!)



(Photo by sacbike.org)

Use a high-quality U-lock designed for bicycles or motorcycles. Used a keyed, not combination, lock. You will end up paying \$50 or more, which seems expensive but is a worthwhile investment to avoid replacing your whole bike due to theft.

In addition, we recommend

- A second U-lock, chain, or cable to secure both wheels and the frame.
- Locking skewers to secure the wheels to the frame.
- An additional chain or cable locks to secure the bike seat to the frame.
- Keeping your U-lock clean and working smoothly by applying some bike chain lubricant into the keyhole and lock mechanism once every couple of months, or anytime your lock has been left out in the rain.

Anything that you don't want stolen should be secured, or taken with you. This includes bike lights, bags, bottles, your helmet, etc. Talk to an employee at your local bike shop about these and other bike security options.

Step 3: Know Where to Lock Safely (NOT OUTSIDE OVERNIGHT!!!)

- Lock your bike to a solid, metal object (not a chain-link fence, tree, or wooden railing).
- Use a bike rack. If none are available then permanent metal poles or parking meters work, if they have a top that your bike and lock and just not be lifted over, and bolts that cannot be easily removed.
- Shake the bike rack, pole, or parking meter to ensure that it is secured to the ground.

Do not lock your bike so that it blocks a sidewalk, curb ramp, or railing. In some areas locking to a parking meter is also not allowed and can result in a confiscated bike. If a rack is available, use it, and if there is not enough bike parking talk to the business owner or contact the city to request additional racks.

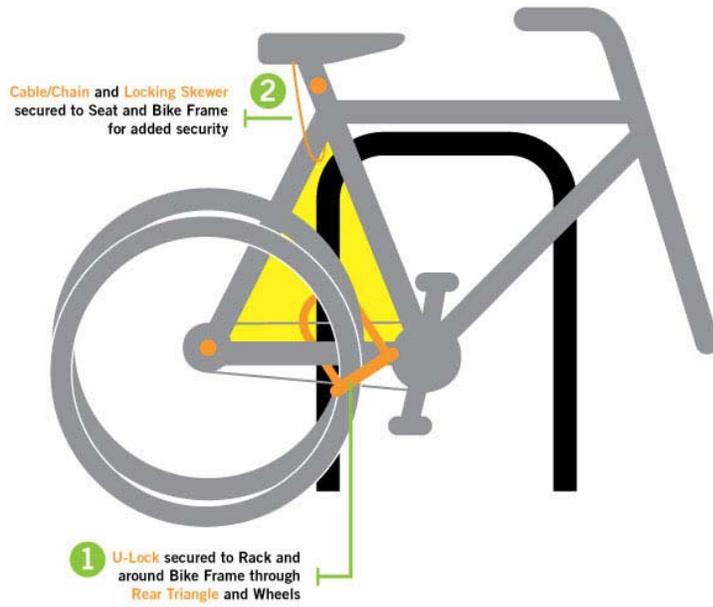
Even though it might seem safer, many bikes are stolen right out of people's own homes and yards. We recommend that you:

- Lock securely to no moveable metal fixtures if storing your bikes in a garage or shed.
- Do not store your bike in an outside yard or commons space.
- Check to see if theft is covered in your home owner's or renter's insurance policy, for bikes stored indoors.
- Ask your property owner to provide a secure bike room, if you live in an apartment. If there is one then uses it, but still U-lock your bike.

Step 4: Know How to Lock Safely

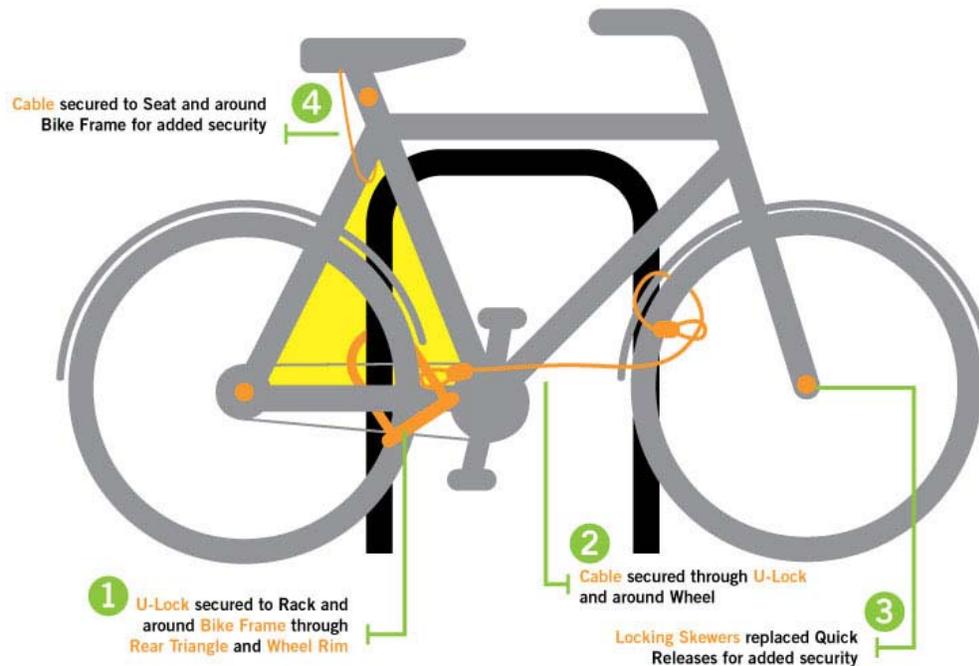
Every locking strategy should at the very least secure the frame and rear wheel directly to the rack, with the front wheel secured to the frame or rack. Here are a couple options for doing so:

# Removing the Front Wheel



(images from sfbike.org)

## Using the Rear Triangle



Alternately, you can use two U-locks: one for the front wheel and one through the rear triangle of your frame that also secures your rear wheel. The lock should encircle the rim and not just the spokes of the wheel.

While no lock can offer 100% security, employ a good locking strategy that has “layers of security”. Thieves will try to steal the bike that offers the least resistance and attracts minimal attention in the process. So if you have a U-lock securing the frame and wheels, locking skewers on the wheels, and a cable securing the seat, a thief will probably go after another bicycle that is poorly secured by comparison.

### Step 5: Your Bike Was Stolen Anyway

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, a thief still makes off with a bike. Well don't give up, as a little determination can greatly increase the chances of you getting your bike back. Here's a quick checklist you can follow:

- **CRUCIAL FIRST STEP:** File a police report. You might think that a police report is pointless but stolen bicycles are recovered quite often, and without proper documentation they can't be returned to their owners. Also, theft reports help police know where and how to allocate their

resources, making it more likely for them to crack down on the issue. It's often better to file the report in person (which expedites the process to 1-2 days) via phone/online (up to 10 days).

- Visit local flea markets to look for your bike right away.
- Spread the word to your friends, coworkers, as well as to local bike clubs and shops. Post recent photos of your bike and info about the theft to social media and news outlets.
- Scan local Craigslist and eBay listings to find your bike, using Google alerts or some other automated search tool. This can yield results even months after the theft.
- Register your stolen bike at [StolenBicycleRegistry.com](http://StolenBicycleRegistry.com). This is an excellent, free searchable online database that also auto-posts to Twitter

If you find your bike we do not recommend confronting the seller yourself as they might react violently. Instead, ask the police for assistance, and bring a photo of your bike and your police report as proof of ownership to reclaim your property. Even if the seller is not the person who stole your bike originally, they still have no claim to the property and do not require compensation.