

How to buy the best security screen door

Let the breeze in, not unwanted guests.



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We've all been there. It's hot and stuffy and you want to leave the front door open to get a breeze going. But that's just an invitation for crooks to come on in and help themselves to all your things. So what can you do? If the ads on TV are to be believed, you could install a fancy security door and let in all the air and light you want while still preventing (or at least delaying) someone from sneaking in.

The thing is, while they do provide some level of protection, given enough time and the right equipment, security doors are still penetrable – some more so than others. Then there's the

installation – attaching it to a weak door frame or allowing enough space to get good jimmying leverage reduces effectiveness. So if you feel like you need one, whether it be a standard cheapie or a pricey Crimsafe, read on for information on how to make sure you get security, and not just a door.

On this page:

What kind of security door do I need?

It all depends on how much security you need and the look that you're after for your home. If you live in a neighbourhood prone to break-ins, you might want to consider a steel door with a steel grille. If you just want to give the appearance of security while still keeping out bugs, a sturdy aluminium door could be enough. For those who just want an insect screen, a cheap aluminium number might suffice.

What to look for in a security door

There are lots of different types of doors out there with different combinations of features.

Meeting the Standard

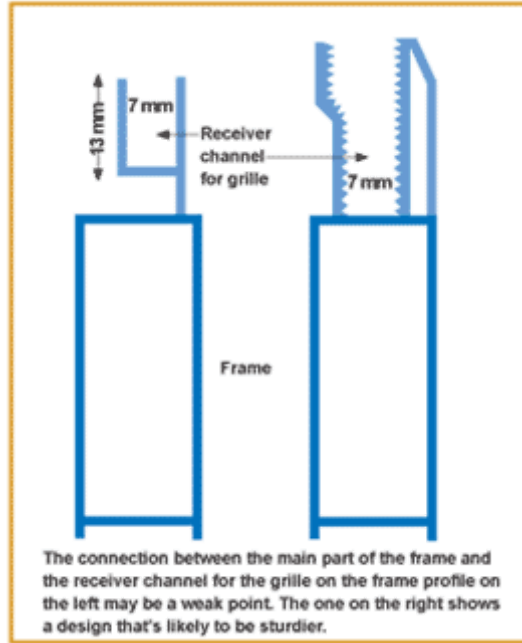
Unfortunately, in most states, a product advertised as a "security screen door" may only secure you against flies: the term is meaningless unless the door can be shown to meet Australian Standard AS5039-2008. There's also a standard for installation (AS5040), and you should ask the installation company for a written guarantee that its work complies.

You might encounter claims that a door is equivalent to a better-known brand, such as Crimsafe. This can be hard to verify; if in doubt, check with the company being used as the comparison.

Frame

The frame can be **steel** or **aluminium**.

- Industry experts say a **steel door** (if properly constructed and installed) is regarded as the **most effective** security screen door. If a steel door meets the Australian Standard it'll be protected against corrosion.



- **Aluminium** is less prone to corrosion than steel.
- The frame should have a **deep receiver channel** for the grille, so the edge can't be pushed out of the frame easily. Make sure the connection between the main part of the frame and the receiver channel is sturdy.
- It should also be reinforced at the corners. Doors may have internal corner stakes, which you won't be able to see, but fully welded corner joints are likely to be stronger.

Infill

The infill can be made from steel (in the form of bars or a decorative motif), aluminium grille, structural grade aluminium perforated sheet, or stainless steel mesh.

- **Steel bars, motifs or grilles** are considered the most secure option.
- **Aluminium grilles** are generally little more than flyscreens. You can get heavy-duty ones which at least look secure.
- **Stainless steel mesh** doors are made with aluminium or steel frames that are in-filled with woven stainless steel mesh.

These doors promise security without spoiling your view with bars and grilles – it's much like looking through a flyscreen.

- **Structural grade aluminium perforated sheets** are new to the market. They look very similar to the stainless steel mesh, but aren't as expensive. According to industry insiders, they are as secure as stainless steel mesh.

Grilles

The cords of the grille should be thick. However, even the strongest grille isn't worth much if it isn't fixed to the door frame properly.

- On many doors the grille is **riveted** to the frame. Make sure the door doesn't have aluminium rivets in accessible positions. Look for rivets that are clinched at the back of the frame, and that aren't too far apart: at least one every 25cm, and ideally every second connection point should be riveted. However, rivets may be badly aligned and therefore won't fully connect with the grille.
- Doors that use **screw clamps** claim the screws hold the mesh in place better than those that use plastic; doors that use **plastic clamps** claim there's reduced risk of galvanic corrosion from an aluminium frame coming into contact with stainless steel mesh. We haven't seen independent evidence to support either claim.
- A grille that's **welded** to the frame may be more reliable; again, no more than 25cm between welding spots and ideally at every connection point.

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Locks

Key locks should be five-pin cylinder or equivalent. Wafer locks are more vulnerable. A three-point lock may prevent the bottom or top of the door being wrenched back by an intruder, and should also spread the force of an attack. Some locks on the market now offer a 25-year warranty.

Hinges

The door should have at least three hinges with fixed hinge pins that can't be removed. A fixed steel pin ('dog bolt') that's welded into the hinge leaf, rather than just pressed into it, gives additional protection. The bigger the pin, the better. Ideally the hinges should be recessed or the door should have a hinge filling between the door and the frame that doesn't allow access for jimmying, say. A single hinge that runs along the full length of the frame does the same job.

Custom design

Security doors should almost always be custom-made, because installing them so they meet the standard can be a matter of mere millimetres.

Protection from corrosion

Doors that meet the Australian Standard, whether the frame is aluminium or steel, have non-corrosive properties. To prevent rust in steel doors that don't meet the Australian Standard, especially if you live near the sea, consider getting one that's been hot-dip galvanised and powder-coated.

Company reputation

Try to find out the reputation of the companies you're dealing with: start with researching how long they've been in business and whether there

A placeholder for a video review, indicated by a small video icon and the text "Smart video doorbell reviews".

have been any complaints against them. For example, you can call your state's crime prevention or fair trading departments. If the company is a member of the Australian Security Industry Association Limited ([ASIAL](#)) or the National Security Screen Association ([NSSA](#)), you know it has to meet certain quality requirements, and you can lodge a complaint with the association if you're not happy.

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Fire safety

Check how easy it will be to get out of your home in case of fire or other emergency.

What do security screens cost?

Aluminium

You can buy an aluminium screen door for around \$250–\$350, but it's likely to be little more than a flyscreen. For a custom-made aluminium security door that meets the Australian Standard you're looking at a minimum of \$450.

Steel

A really cheap steel door can be had from \$250, but these tend to be made from very thin steel and won't be particularly good. Quality custom-made steel doors start from about \$650, but they get significantly more expensive.

Stainless steel mesh

These start from \$800, but some of the more well-known brands (including Crimsafe) will charge well over \$1000.

Structural grade aluminium perforated sheet

One of these will set you back from \$650.



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How to clean your security screen door

When mesh is incorporated into a security door design, cleaning becomes something you'll need to take into account every few weeks or months or so, depending on where you live. If you live next to a busy highway or near to the ocean, probably more often. They cost a chunk of change to install so you don't want to damage them while cleaning them.

The mesh doesn't allow large fragments of dust and soil through, which builds up and becomes unsightly after a while. If you live near the ocean, salt will build up in the mesh and oxidise the metal.

There is a simple way to address this **after checking in with your installers recommendations for cleaning.**

Some security installers will sell their own cleaning products, but if you are doing it regularly enough, you won't need to purchase it.

- hose the screen down with town supply water - from the inside out
- gently rub the screen with a clean cloth with warm water and light detergent
- hose down the screen again to get rid of the detergent

It's tempting to use a pressure cleaner, broom or vacuum brush, but some security door installers will advise against these as they may damage the screen. Always check your installers recommendations for cleaning first.

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Dirty screen mesh on a security door



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