



Advice guide

45

HOWDEN

Your home is often the most expensive purchase you'll make, so it's essential you're correctly insured. Here are some things you should consider.

Buildings insurance – fully protecting your home

When you insure your home, you're not just covering its market value. You're insuring the cost to completely rebuild it, should the worst happen. Many factors impact how to calculate the sum insured, including the property's age, construction, size, location, and building type.

According to Hiscox, 65 per cent of the buildings they appraise are underinsured by an average of 45 per cent. We recommend using a chartered surveyor to calculate the sum, rather than relying on online calculators, as these can undervalue the cost of rebuilding your home – particularly if the building is old, listed, or a non-standard construction.

We can put you in touch with an independent surveyor if you need us to, and in some cases, your insurer will fund the appraisals.

Fixtures and fittings

This is often a forgotten aspect of cover, especially if you live in a flat. The building is probably insured under a block policy. As this usually offers very basic cover, you'll need to consider insurance for your fixtures and fittings, including your fitted kitchen, bathrooms, wardrobes, specialist flooring, carpet, and curtains.

Insure these in your name, and you'll have control of the claim as well as the repairs that will be done in your home.

Contents insurance – protecting your personal belongings

The sum insured for your contents should include just about everything you would take with you if you moved home. You should calculate how much it would cost to replace these items as new, taking into consideration where you usually purchase them – especially if you have bespoke furniture and other expensive items.

Choosing the correct sum insured

Establishing the replacement value of all the items in your home is easy to get wrong. Just the contents of your wardrobes alone may cost more to replace than you think. Go through your home room by room and take the time to consider everything you own.

Don't forget to include:

- clothing, shoes, and handbags
- curtains, carpets, soft furnishings, lighting, and linen
- kitchen equipment
- (white goods, cutlery, crockery, etc.)
- electronics, including tablets and games consoles
- items in the loft, garden, shed, and garage
- sports equipment, such as golf clubs and skis

As with fixtures and fittings, if you insure these items in your name, you'll have control of the claim and any repairs which need to be carried out in your home.

Fine art, antiques, valuables, and collectibles

Most fine art, antiques, and jewellery are insured on an "agreed value" basis. This means that after you've provided proof of an item's value, you and your insurer agree on the replacement cost up front. If you have a claim and the item is damaged beyond repair, your insurer will pay the agreed figure, less any policy excess.

All policies require you to list items over a certain sum (single article limit), and to provide proof of its value.

Remember, the insurer pays no more than the agreed value, even if the item is of greater value at the time of the claim.

Always seek a professional valuation

The price of gold and gemstones changes all the time, and art trends are in constant fluctuation, - which means it can be difficult to keep your items accurately insured. It's easy to lose touch with the number of valuable pieces you own or have hidden away in the loft or garage.

We strongly recommend having all relevant belongings valued professionally at least once every three to five years to establish their current value, and to provide you with helpful photographic and descriptive evidence should you ever need to make a claim.

For further information about valuations, or if you would like us to recommend a valuation company, please get in touch.



According to BCH Ltd, 75 per cent of the buildings that they survey are underinsured.

Some steps you can take

- Review how much it would cost to rebuild your home and speak to us to see if we can organise a buildings appraisal.
- Check your policy schedule thoroughly to make sure you understand what your cover includes.
- Calculate your contents. We can supply you with a template or arrange a visit.
- Be sure to include items like jewellery and watches.
- Make sure any high-value items are listed and your valuation is up to date.
- Take photographs of each room in your home and of any high-value items.

It's essential to keep your insurance up to date, and to review your level of cover at every renewal. We're happy to provide you with advice in person, whether at your home or your office, or over the phone.



Accuracy matters

What do you need to tell insurers?

When it comes to purchasing or renewing your insurance, or at any other time the policy is still active, you must provide complete and accurate answers to any questions we may ask you. You'll also need to make sure that the information you give us remains up to date.



We're here to guide you through the process. Remember, the information you give determines the terms of your policy. This includes any previous information you've provided and any changes you've made over the life of your policy. If for any reason the information you provide is not complete and accurate, your insurer could:

- cancel your policy
- refuse to pay a claim either in part or in full
- revise the premium, change the policy excess, or amend the terms of your cover.

Most insurers include this information on a "statement of fact", which appears on your policy schedule. Again you need to check it for accuracy. If you can't find your information and would like to know what your insurer has kept or if you have any other questions, please contact us.

With over 60 years of expertise, our advice will help you find the right home insurance policy for you.

What you need to tell us

General

- Details of any incidents of loss or damage that might give rise to a claim under your policy, regardless of whether a claim is actually submitted or not
- Changes in the occupation of anyone insured
- If any member of your household or any person insured is charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence (other than motoring offences) that is not considered spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- Whether any member of your household or any person to be insured has been declared bankrupt
- Any changes to the people insured
- Details of any insurer that has declined to accept, cancelled, or has agreed to continue only on special terms for any insurance for any person insured under your policy

Household

- Planned alterations or renovations to your property (insurers might only require this when the value exceeds a specified amount)
- Any changes to the occupancy or use of the property
- Changes to the security and fire protections
- If you've made any significant new purchases. If you don't tell us, they may not be covered
- Whether your property is to be unoccupied for any continuous period exceeding that which is allowed in your policy
- Items of value that will be loaned to galleries or exhibitions
- Changes to the condition of your home

Travel

- Any newly diagnosed medical conditions or changes to the health or medication of anyone insured.
- Details of any trips involving business or charitable work
- If you or anyone insured plan to take trips longer than the single trip limit of your policy
- Plans for any trips that involve taking part in adventurous or hazardous activities



Motor

- Fixed penalty notices for driving-related offences (speeding, use of mobile phone, etc.) for anyone insured under the policy
- Changes in health of anyone insured that adversely affects their ability to drive
- Changes to the garaging address.

Any visual or performance-enhancing modifications to any vehicle insured which go beyond the manufacturer's specification

If you notify us of a change, we'll immediately tell your insurer. The change may affect your policy, such as a revision to the terms or a change to your premium. If it does, we'll explain the changes to you right away.

Need to make a claim? We're here for you

If an incident occurs that may lead to a claim, it's important to notify us as soon as you can. If any items have been lost or stolen, or if you have suffered a break-in, you must notify the police immediately and obtain a crime reference number. Delays could lead to your insurer not accepting your claim.



To make a claim
simply call
020 8557 2456

In the event of a travel emergency, please refer to your
policy booklet for your insurer's emergency number.

Outside of office hours

Your call will go through to a third party. Under the Data Protection Act 2018 they don't have access to your policy, but they can advise you how to deal with the emergency.

Any third party will notify us as soon as our office is open so we can contact you.

What you should do if things go wrong

- If you experience a burglary or break-in, don't tidy up until the police have attended the scene as they may wish to take fingerprints
- Arrange for any temporary repairs, if required, and make sure you keep copies of the invoices
- Advise your card issuer immediately if your credit cards have been misused or stolen, so they can cancel the cards to help prevent fraudulent use
- Never dispose of any damaged items unless we have confirmed it's acceptable to do so
- Except in an emergency, or to prevent further loss, do not proceed with a repair or replacement until we have confirmed it's acceptable to do so

Keep all supporting documentation such as photographs, valuations, purchase receipts, written proof of replacement costs, and police crime reports as these help us settle your claim quicker. Insurers will ask you to provide estimates for replacement or repair of lost or broken items.

The insurer may allow you to use a repairer of your choice. Check your policy or ask us for clarification.

If you're involved in a dispute over liability, or if someone is holding you responsible for injury or damage, you must never admit liability or make any offer. Please contact us immediately.

Sometimes, your insurer may need to appoint a loss adjuster to help agree on the cause and cost of a claim and to help reach a settlement.

Please note that making a claim could have an effect on your premium on renewal. Before we present you with your renewal terms, we'll always have a discussion with your insurer to review any increases or changes to your policy and to determine whether these changes are fair. This includes considering any previous claims history, what the loss was, improvements made following the loss, and your customer loyalty.



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