



PICK A LOCK LIKE A COVERT OP

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Pick a Lock Like a Covert Op

SLAM!

It's half a second too late before you realize what happened.

As the lock clicks into place, you suddenly remember your keys. And realize that they're right where you left them... on the kitchen table... in your home... behind a locked door.

And just like that, your entire day goes out the window. The car keys... house keys... office keys... everything is on there.

It could be hours before the locksmith shows up. And he's probably going to charge you hundreds of dollars — all for a job that takes him barely 15 seconds.

Never again.

As a former intelligence officer, I've amassed countless valuable skills — handcuff removal, escape and evasion driving, casing and reinforcing home security and even how to recognize and lose a tail.

But one of the most valuable skills I know is lock picking. I can't count the amount of binds I've gotten myself, friends and relatives out of with this easy-to-learn skill.

And with this guide, you too can learn how to pick virtually any household lock in under 30 seconds. Even if you've never tried to pick a lock in your life.

Don't worry. It's not going to take tons of practice or skill. Learning to pick a lock is easy. In fact, it's pretty much an open secret that most household locks are useless against anyone who knows what they're doing (we'll discuss this more a little later).

Your newfound skill is going to come in handy when...

- You misplace the key to that desk drawer or filing cabinet full of important documents
- Your neighbor locks themselves out and you heroically come to their rescue (I do this all the time)

- You step out to bring in the trash cans and realize you can't get back inside
- You can't get that newly copied key to work because the cut is slightly off
- You want to test the locks on your home to ensure they're up to snuff (I hate to break it to you — they probably aren't).

Whatever the reason, lock picking is a crucial skill that everyone should have in their back pocket. There's no telling when you might need it.

And I'm confident I can train you so that you're able to pick a lock in less than 30 seconds. Even if you've never tried... or have tried but could never "get it."

How can I be so sure?

With the right tools and instruction anyone can learn how to do it.

Best,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Hanson'.

Jason Hanson
Former CIA officer
Safety and survival expert

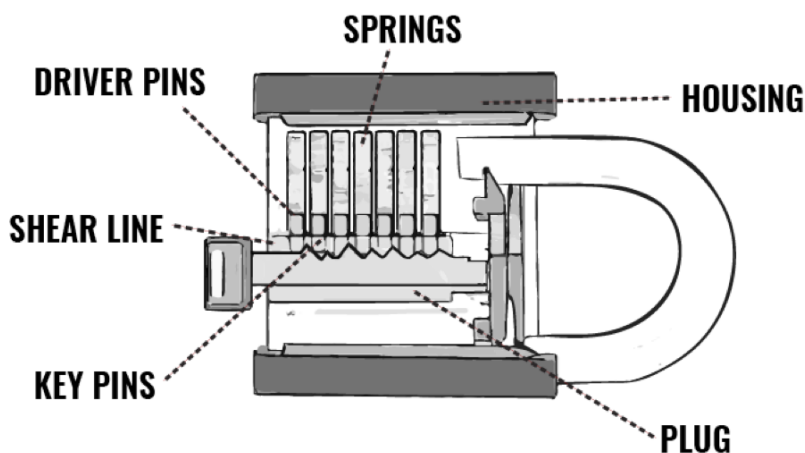
The Lock

Successfully picturing the inside of a lock is the key to easy lock picking.

They'll never show this in the movies but when Jason Bourne is picking a lock, he's got a little picture of this diagram in his head.

Note: Mr. Bourne spends most of his time trudging around Europe so he's probably picturing this lock upside down. European locks typically have the pins underneath the plug, which is something to remember

when you're overseas. However, we're going to stick strictly to the American design for this guide.



The number of these pins varies from lock to lock. Padlocks often have three or four, while door locks generally have between five and eight.

Most American homes use this cylindrical pin and tumbler lock with five pins. It's a pretty basic design that dates back to the Civil War but — despite being easy to pick — they're still everywhere today.

Note: This is great for us lock pickers but it's also a huge benefit for burglars and thieves. Don't trust your lock to keep anyone who knows what they're doing out. Upgrade your home security with alarms or Schlage or Medeco locks to keep the bad guys out.

The above diagram may look a little complicated but it's really simple. Here's a quick explanation on each of the lock's main parts:

The Housing: This is a fixed cylindrical shell that houses all the moving parts of the lock.

The Plug: The plug is the interior cylinder that rotates with the key. Without a key, the **pins** — which enter and exit through a series of holes on top of the plug — prevent the plug from rotating.

Key Pins: There are two type of pins in a pin and tumbler lock. The key pins are the bottom set of pins. These pins will correspond with the notches on the key. With the right key — or a simple lock picking

set — you will be able to turn the plug by aligning these pins with the **shear line** (more on that below).

Driver Pins: These pins are what keep a locked door locked. At rest, the driver pins sit between the housing and the plug, preventing the cylinder from turning. The goal when picking a lock is to move these pins back up into the housing without forcing the key pins up there too. That's where the shear line comes in.

The Shear Line: The shear line is the gap between the plug and the housing. Picking a lock is as simple as lining up the shear line with the gap in between the driver pins and key pins.

Springs: The springs simply force the driver pins into the plug, keeping the plug from rotating.

How does it work?

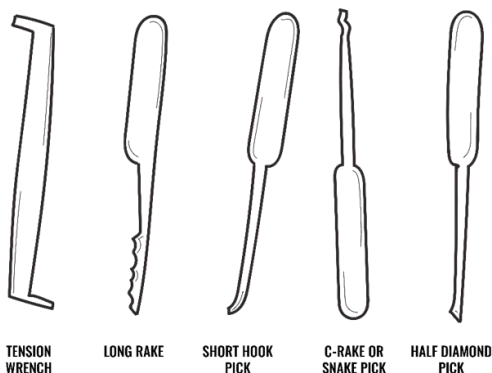
When you slot the key into the **plug**, it lines up the **key pins** with the **shear line** and forces the **driver pins** out of the plug. When the gap between the key pins and driver pins is the same as the shear line you can rotate the plug and unlock the door.

Below, I'll show you how you can get this same mechanism to work without any keys. But first, you're going to need the right tools.

Tools of the Trade

You're not going to believe how simple your average lock picking set is.

Despite all the advances in technology we've made, one of the easiest ways to open a pin and tumbler lock is with a classic set of picks and a basic tension wrench. Sure, you could drop a few hundred bucks on a lock pick gun. But when your basic pick set will open a lock in less than 30 seconds, what's the point?



Tension Wrench

Most of the movies forget about the tension wrench but it's the backbone of every lock picking job. This is the tool that mimics the turning of the key. With the tension wrench you'll apply gentle pressure to the plug. This will keep the pins in place after they are correctly set at the shear line. You'll also be using it to turn the plug once all the pins are set.



TENSION
WRENCH



HALF DIAMOND
PICK

Half-Diamond Pick

This versatile pick is one of the most common lock picker's tools — and with good reason. Its diamond shape allows you to precisely pick pins, one by one. The tradeoff is that this will take a little bit longer — and more practice — than the easy-to-use “raking” technique we're going to show you below. Half-diamonds can technically be used to rake simple desk locks but we have a much better solution for that (see the section on wafer locks, below).

Short Hook Pick

Like the diamond pick, the hook pick is used for precision picking and is **never** used for raking. It's also known the “feeler” or “finger” pick, as locksmiths will often use this pick to feel out the lock before they start working on it.



SHORT HOOK
PICK



C-RAKE OR
SNAKE PICK



LONG RAKE

Rake Picks (Snake Rake and Long Rake)

These picks work differently than the precision picks described above. Rake picks are designed to align pins by scraping (or raking) the pick past all the pins, bouncing them until they align with the shear line. This method requires less skill than picking pins individually. Using the raking method, even folks with zero practice can crack a pin and tumbler lock in less than 30 seconds.

How to Pick a Lock

The Tension Wrench and the Sweet Spot

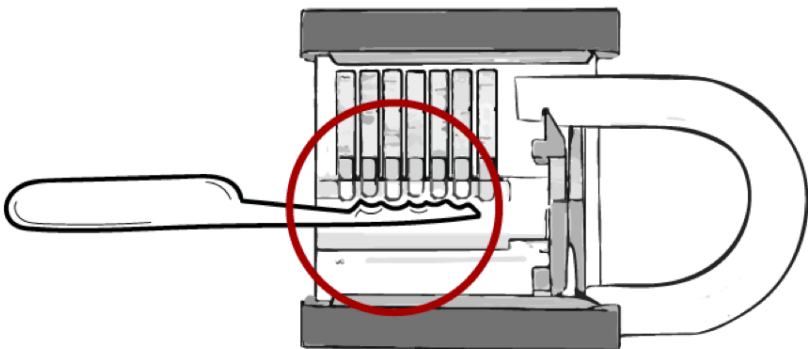
While different lock pick techniques use different picks, you'll always need a tension wrench to apply torque as pick the lock. When used correctly, your tension wrench will act as a key and keep the pins in place after they are correctly set at the shear line.

Mastering your tension wrench is simply a matter of judging how much pressure to apply when picking a lock. If you apply too much pressure, it will cause the pins to bind before they align with the shear line, while too little tension will allow the pins to fall back into place.

To begin, insert the shorter end of your tension wrench into the lower part of the keyhole. The plug should be able to turn slightly both ways but we can determine the way the lock will turn by feel. The wrong direction will feel stiff and stop abruptly, whereas the right direction will have a little give and feel springy. (Note: padlocks and some cheaper locks will open both ways.)

Most locks require very little pressure to get going — the sweet spot lies somewhere in between a light touch and a gentle push. Start out with the slightest touch of a single finger, and increase the pressure until you can feel the aligned pins starting to lock into place (more on that below). If your tension wrench is starting to bend, you're applying too much pressure.

Method #1: Raking



Raking is by far the easiest and fastest way to open most locks and the method I personally prefer.

About 75% of the locks in the U.S. are basic pin and tumbler Kwikset locks, which are highly susceptible to raking. Anytime I visit my brother in Salt Lake City, I like to remind him of this by letting myself into his house and making a snack for myself while he's at work. (Reminder: You can protect yourself against lock picks with a Schlage or Medeco lock.)

Step 1: Insert your tension wrench into the bottom of the keyway. Turn your wrench gently, applying just the slightest bit of pressure. Feel for the position where the pins bind in the lock mechanism and stop the plug from turning. Hold it in place for the rest of the steps.

Step 2: Maintain that tension and insert your rake pick — teeth side up — into the top of the lock. Use the pick to scrape the bottom of the pins, gently moving back and forth with your pick. As you pull the pick out, lift up in order to apply light pressure on the pins.

Step 3: Most Kwikset pin and tumbler locks have five pins. After about 10 seconds of gentle scraping, four of those pins should be aligned with the shear line and set in place. To align the final pin you need to...

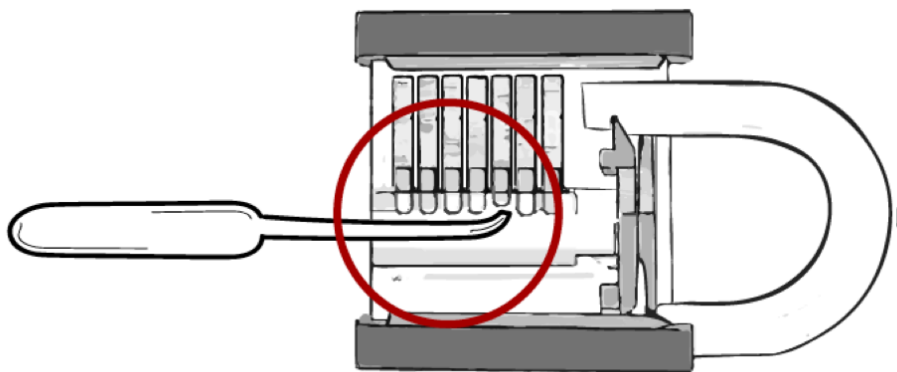
Step 4: Rock back and forth — maintain the constant pressure on your tension wrench — to find that final pin. It should only take a few seconds of rocking before the final pin sets and you can turn the tension wrench to unlock the lock. You can watch me demonstrate this technique on video [right here](#).

Step 5: Open the lock. When the last pin sets, the lock should disengage and open. Apply just a little more pressure with your tension wrench to turn the lock to open it.

Pro tip: If the pins aren't setting after 30 seconds, relieve pressure and start over. Your pressure may be slightly off and you just need to allow the pins to reset and start again.

Method #2: Single Pin Picking

The raking method can crack your basic pin tumbler lock in seconds, but if you've got a stubborn (usually more expensive) lock on your hands, you're going to want to check out this powerful little technique.



In this method, we simply bump each individual pin up one at a time using a hook-type pick. At first glance, single pin picking is slower than the raking method. But what you lose in speed you gain in precision and versatility.

In fact, this is often the first thing an apprentice locksmith will learn. That's because you can crack any pin and tumbler lock with single pin picking, plus it will subconsciously teach your brain how the lock works (which makes using the raking method even easier).

Step 1: Insert your tension wrench and apply gentle pressure as described above.

Step 2: Insert either your half-diamond or short-hook pick into the keyway. Lightly touch each of the pins with your pick. One pin should resist more than the others. This is known as the binding pin.

Step 3: While maintaining pressure with the tension wrench, gently lift the binding pin with the tip of your pick. When the pin aligns with the shear line you should feel a click vibrate through your tension wrench and it should turn with the plug slightly.

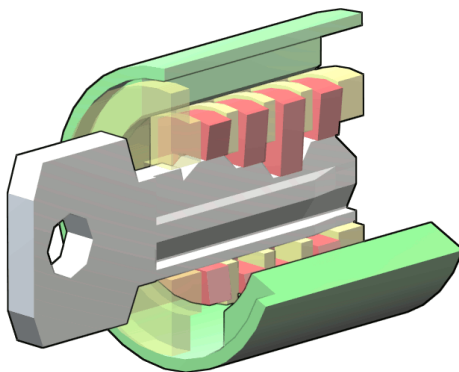
Step 4: With the first pin set, repeat the process — locating the pin that resists the most and setting it in turn. Repeat until all pins are set. Many locks' pins are set in sequence, either front to back or back to front. However, some locks use a random sequence.

Wafer Locks

The above tools and methods are well-suited to cracking your average household lock. But for the wafer lock — which some folks encounter daily — you'll need to change your tactics.



If you've ever opened an electrical panel, office cabinet or a locker, you're already familiar with this lock. It operates on similar principles to the pin and tumbler lock, except instead of pins it has rotating wafers. When the key is inserted it aligns the wafers and the plug can turn freely.



To be honest, we don't need to get bogged down in the wafer lock's design or details. This is a simple lock with a simple vulnerability...

Jiggler keys: If you use wafer locks at all, you should have a set of jiggler keys in case of emergencies. Jiggler keys are sets of common key patterns (with a little wiggle room for versatility).



Simply insert one of the keys into the lock like a normal key and rock the key back and forth (jiggle) while turning. If there's no movement after 10 seconds, try a different key in the set. This should unlock almost any wafer lock in moments.