



THE LOCK PICKING STARTER GUIDE

EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO KNOW
TO GET STARTED IN
THE CRAFT OF
LOCK PICKING!



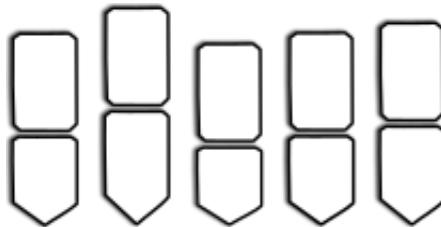
ART OF LOCK PICKING

~THE LOCK PICKING STARTER GUIDE~

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PRESENTS

THE

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INTRODUCTION

Oddly enough the first headache inflicted by this craft typically isn't from picking a lock.

Rather it's caused from beating one's face repeatedly against the nearest hard object while trying to establish where to even freaking start.

The beginning is always the hardest step of any craft and lock picking with its extremely vague nature is no exception.

The purpose of this ebook is to strip away all of the fluff surrounding lock picking and to focus intensely on the beginning aspects of learning this skill. To give you the essential information that you need to get started but not overwhelm you with information that you can't yet use.

To begin we'll cover the essentials of lock picking tools to help you understand what lock picks are useful and what tools are worth investing in.

Then we'll jump into the most critical topic for beginners -- **lock selection**. When learning to pick locks, there is nothing more important than selecting the correct first lock. If you start with one that is too easy – which can happen even as a beginner – you likely won't learn much. Yet, if you get one that is too hard, you might be in for some pain that may even cause you to quit picking altogether.

In the third section we'll get you started right with a basic -- but very comprehensive -- beginner's guide to lock picking that will cover the fundamentals of lock theory, why we can pick locks, and how to pick them!

To finish everything off, we'll quickly cover the legality of lock picking to help keep you safe from any unfortunate situations with the law.

As you'll soon see, lock picking is a simple skill to learn and once you get past the beginner stages of confusion and frustration, it truly is an addictive and fulfilling craft.

So let's waste no more time and get to it!



PART 1

LOCK PICKING TOOLS 101

This pick, that pick, what are all these different types of lock picks for?

What is the purpose of this squiggly pick or that squiggly pick? Is there a big difference between this pointy hook and that flat hook? What are the best lock picks?

But, most importantly, should you invest your hard-earned cash into all these different types of lock picks and will they benefit your ability to open locks and progress your lock picking skill?

Let's tackle all of these questions and then go into the primary purpose of many of these different types of lock picks — their strengths, shortcomings, and when to best utilize them!

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THE TRUTH ABOUT LOCK PICKS

Before we jump into the different types of lock picks, I want to try and break a harmful little bias that influences many newer pickers. **If you are looking at that set of 20-something lock picks, this section is definitely for you!**

The truth is, you don't need very many picks to absolutely slaughter the majority of locks. As a matter of fact, most lock picks are fluff and are simply variations of the same tool with very small differences in how they affect the lock.

One of our contributing authors Jesse has always put it best, "***Lock picks are like fishing lures, they are meant to catch the fisherman, not the fish.***"

Sure that shiny new fishing lure with the red and blue feathers, polished metal spinners, and scent of fresh dog turds looks like it would **ABSOLUTELY** slaughter that trout under hiding under a log at sunset, but the reality is, in the eyes of the fish, it's not likely that much more appetizing than any of the other lures you already have.

There is a dangerous mindset that plagues every craft, whether it be fishing or lock picking. This mindset is that the tools make the player. That having the correct lures or bait make the best fisherman and that having the right lock picks for the right locks make the great lock picker.



This mindset is dangerous because it bases your expectations and your perceived skill on your tools and not on what is important — like practice, knowledge, technique, and more practice.

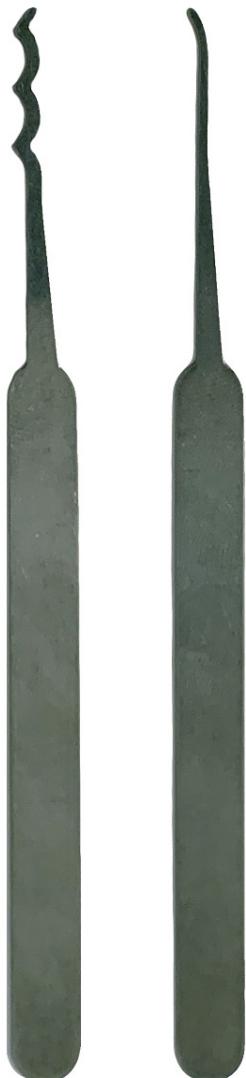
And even further, when these expectations are broken — when that new lock pick fails to easily open that lock — what will remain is a feeling of frustration and more often than not, the urge to give up on lock picking entirely.

In addition to all this, if you are a beginning lock picker, it is best to stick with a couple of types of lock picks. Progressing your skills is about developing your senses and

recognizing patterns based on those sensations.

When learning how to pick a lock, swapping between 17 different tools will only give you 17 different variations of the same feedback. It can be very difficult to learn anything when the information you receive is always changing.

So even if you desire to own every pick ever made, for the sake of getting better — RESIST –, at least as a beginner!



Grab a few high quality picks or [small form lock pick set](#) from a quality manufacturer such as Peterson, Sparrows, Multipick, or SouthOrd that accommodate the style of picking that you wish to do – more on that below – and then bunker down and focus on mastering those tools. **Also, do your best to stay clear from those cheap Chinese picks on Amazon.**

You will progress far faster spending that extra cash on more practice locks that you will with more picks.

Now, this isn't to say that you can't nor shouldn't ever go nuts and buy a bunch of random lock picks.

One of the great joys of lock picking is collecting different lock picks and trying out new pick profiles. You never know which picks will be your favorites!

Just don't fall into the mental trap of thinking that a particular pick profile will make all the difference in your progression and skill.

So, with that out of the way, let's cover the more common lock picks, their intended use, and their strengths.

NOTE: This guide will be discussing tools related to picking pin tumbler locks. While many of these tools are useful for other types of locks, any advice given in this guide is for the intent of using them on pin tumblers.

TURNING TOOLS

It is said that lock picking is 90% how you use your tensioning tools (turning tools for the purists) and 10% everything else. I tend to agree. **With the exception of practice, tensioning is the single most important aspect of lock picking, yet it is the most overlooked and undervalued.**

As a beginner, developing your skill is directly correlated to developing your sense of feel and identifying the feedback the lock gives you.

To this end, it is important that when starting out you do everything in your power to maximize the feedback you are receiving. **This will help you to identify what certain feedback means and, as a result, significantly increasing your lock picking skills.**

So before we jump into the nitty gritty of lock picks, let's take a moment and cover the [best type of tensioning tool for the beginner!](#)

THE STRAIGHT WRENCH

Because the tension wrench provides us with the most feedback – more than every other factor combined – it is crucial that we use one that will provide us with the most feedback possible.

The ideal tension wrench will be as thick and stiff as possible – such as a top of the keyway pry bar. To understand why you want these characteristics, let us take a look at a tensioning tool that is the exact opposite – thin, floppy, and springy.

You may have noticed that many lock pick sets include tensioning tools that have a 90-degree twist down the shaft.



While these twisted wrenches have their benefits, they are absolutely the worst wrench you could use to develop your skills. The reason being is that the twist acts as a spring and dampens the vibrations moving through the wrench.

To better illustrate this, think of the springs used in the suspension system of a car. If you were to hit a pothole, the springs will absorb and dampen the vibrations you feel as a driver. However, if you were to take out the springs and drive over that same pothole... well let's just say you as a driver would know you hit it.

Remember that when it comes to picking, feedback is everything. We want to feel every pothole, speed bump, and potentially crack in road as we metaphorically drive our lock picks up and down the pins of a lock.

When using bottom of the keyway tension, you want a tool that looks similar to this:



Because of the way in which these tools are bent, they will not flex and will remain rigid while you apply torque to them, thus providing you with a maximum degree of feedback!

Because of the way in which these tools are bent, they will not flex and will remain rigid while you apply torque to them, thus providing you with a maximum degree of feedback!

NOTE: It's always best to have several sizes of tension wrenches because the lip of the lock between the plug and lock body can cause problems if you don't use the correct size wrench — for instance if you use a wrench that is too small it can bind against the lock and you won't be able to properly torque the plug. Yet, if you use one too big, well then you may not have any room for a pick.

SINGLE PIN PICKING

Single pin picking is the act of manipulating a single pin at a time.

In my opinion, it is the purest form of lock picking as it takes a tremendous amount more skill, precision, and practice to develop and master.

Single pin picking is also significantly more reliable because you are not just bumping and humping your way to an open lock like when raking.



Instead, you are moving components in a precise and logical way and adapting your movements to how the lock responds. You can think of single pin picking like the Tango where your actions are a response to your partner, and their movements are a response to yours.

However, because single pin picking is precise and logical, you need a type of lock pick that matches these qualities. **You need a type of lock pick that is agile and maneuverable — that isn't going to bump things unintentionally.**

So let's look at a few picks that gush these qualities!

1. THE SHORT HOOK

The standard [Short Hook](#) is hands down the most versatile and useful pick and is an absolute staple to any pickers toolbox.

The power of this pick comes from its moderate hook that is just long enough to set most pins with ease, but short enough that it's easy to maneuver in the lock.



In addition to single pin picking, the Short Hook is also a great pick to use for other various techniques of raking – such as zipping, bitch picking, rocking, or reverse picking!

However, the one area in which this pick falls short is literally when it falls short.

Because it has a shorter hook, it sometimes may not have the reach to fully set shorter cut pins that are behind longer cut pins.

But regardless of this literal shortcoming, if you could only have one type of lock pick, the Short Hook should always be first in line to the party!

2. THE GEM

The Gem is another favorite among many lock pickers as it gives you many of the remarkable benefits of the short hook, but with a little more reach.



However, the extended point on this pick can be a double edge sword.

To the experienced picker, this pointy tip is a gift from God that gives them more precision and accurate control over their actions. It's like trying to hit a button on your TV remote with your finger rather than your fist. The more precise the tool, the easier it is to accomplish precise activities.

However, to newer pickers, this pointy tip can cause some real emotional pain. Because it is pointy, there is a high chance of pins slipping off the pick as you lift them. To continue the nutty analogies – it's far easier to balance a penny on an un-sharpened pencil than it is a sharpened one.

If you had to choose between the Short Hook and the Gem, I would highly recommend grabbing the Short Hook first.

3. THE HALF-DIAMOND



While the Half-Diamond doesn't exactly scream "PRECISION," it does provide us with a pretty unique benefit while single pin picking.

The thing that makes this pick awesome is its ramp-like form.

If you can imagine for a moment dragging this pick across the pins – it would gently raise the pins as they went up the ramp and then gently lower them as they go down the ramp.

Now, this can be extremely useful when trying to find binding pins.

All you have to do is apply light tension and gently drag this pick across the pins until you find a pin that causes the pick to move down rather than the pin move upward. It is simply that easy to locate binding pins with the half-diamond!

However, this pick has two downsides.

1. It has a very wide base that makes it hard to squeeze between pins. So if you have a lock with a radical bitting (high – low – high – low), this pick likely won't do you much good.
2. It's a pretty massive pick overall that sometimes won't fit into the keyway at all.

To sum the Half-Diamond up, it can be a good beginner pick that can help you orientate yourself in the lock, but when it comes to picking higher-skilled locks, the Half-Diamond will start to lose its glamour.

So use it if you have it or if you're genuinely interested in trying it, but I wouldn't go out of my way to get one.

4. THE DEEP HOOK

The [Deep Hook](#) — if you didn't guess — has a longer hook that gives us a deeper reach.



The benefit of this added length is that it can reach further between pin stacks without bumping the adjacent pins.

This makes it a **terrific weapon against shorter pins behind longer pins or when dealing with heavy warding and paracentric keyways**. Because of its reach, you can easily lift the pins without having to maneuver your pick through the warding!

However, there is a trade-off. Because the Deep Hook is longer, it is also much more

intrusive and harder to maneuver.

So it's not ideal to use a deeper type hook as a primary pick, but instead as a secondary one. If you find that you can't easily reach a pin with a shorter hook, you can swap over to a Deep Hook to solve your problems!

5. THE PETERSON REACH

The [Peterson Reach](#) is a little bit of an oddball pick, but it really kicks some ass.



This type of lock pick is what we refer to as an “offset hook.” **The goal of an offset hook is to take the benefits of the short and deep hook but minimize their downsides.**

This is typically done by creating a curved-like shank that can pivot around pin stacks without bumping them!

The Peterson Reach is an excellent example of this and is literally curved!

It also has a rounded tip that can make finding and lifting pins feel buttery smooth. But sadly, nothing is perfect. The Peterson Reach has the fatal flaw of being very thin and fragile. If you have a heavy hand – as most beginners do – you may find yourself snapping this poor guy’s little neck.

That being said, the Peterson Reach is my favorite pick, and there are truly few locks that this little guy won’t absolutely slaughter! I like to compare it with the killer bunny from Monty Python and The Holy Grail!



6. THE DEFOREST DIAMOND



The [Deforest Diamond](#) is another offset pick that blends the power of the Half-Diamond with a little more reach.

The main benefit of this pick is its ability to slide under the pins – much like the half-diamond – and then leverage them up by rotating the pick, similar to a crowbar. This allows us to get under the pins without lowering the pick, which can be a blessing in tighter keyways.

However, just like the Half-Diamond, its fat base can make it difficult to squeeze between pins and sometimes even fit in the keyway at all.

In my experience, I have never found the Deforest Diamond to be a fantastic pick. However, many skilled pickers better than myself swear by it, so your mileage may vary.

That will do it for single pin picking!



Raking is the act of manipulating multiple pins at the same time with the goal of bumping them to the shear line and setting them as quickly as possible.

It is a type of lock picking that is very imprecise and unpredictable.

Raking a lock is much like a funny dancing man. If we jump off our previous analogy of single pin picking being like the Tango, raking is much more like club dancing. You do whatever the hell you want and whatever happens... well it happens.

Because the goal of raking is to manipulate as many pins as possible, **the best type of lock pick is one that touches the most pins at any given moment.**

This is why most rakes have tons of humps and bumps along their shafts.

However, the downside of rakes is that they are almost useless against locks with [security pins](#) and sidebars — so don't expect to be able to rake your way to lock picking mastery!

With that, let's look at three of the most common rakes for causing havoc in the lock!

RAKING



1. THE BOGOTA

The [Bogota](#) — also known as the “Bogie” or “Pagoda” — is one of the most powerful and popular rakes there is!



The power of the Bogota comes from its extremely polished triple peaks that glide through the keyway like a pickle flying out of a cheeseburger.

With each pass through the lock, the Bogota has three chances to strike and set each pin — except for some of the pins in the back where some of the peaks can't reach.

This type of lock pick is also **extremely effective against radically pinned locks that have high – low – high – low pin arrangements.**

2. THE SNAKE RAKE

The [Snake Rake](#) is one of the oldest styles of rake and to this day still makes many pickers' list of best pick profiles. Being a staple in many beginner and advanced lock pick sets, it's a very powerful little rake to have.



While the Snake Rake only has two tiny peaks of different heights, its effectiveness comes from its smaller profile. Unlike the Bogota, the Snake Rake is very short. **This not only gives it the ability to be used at various and more extreme angles while raking, it can also be used in smaller or more paracentric keyways.**

Other common names used are “C Rake”, “Squiggly Rake”, or “Double Rake”. But regardless of all these alternate names, most lock pickers refer to it as the Snake Rake.

3. THE CITY RAKE

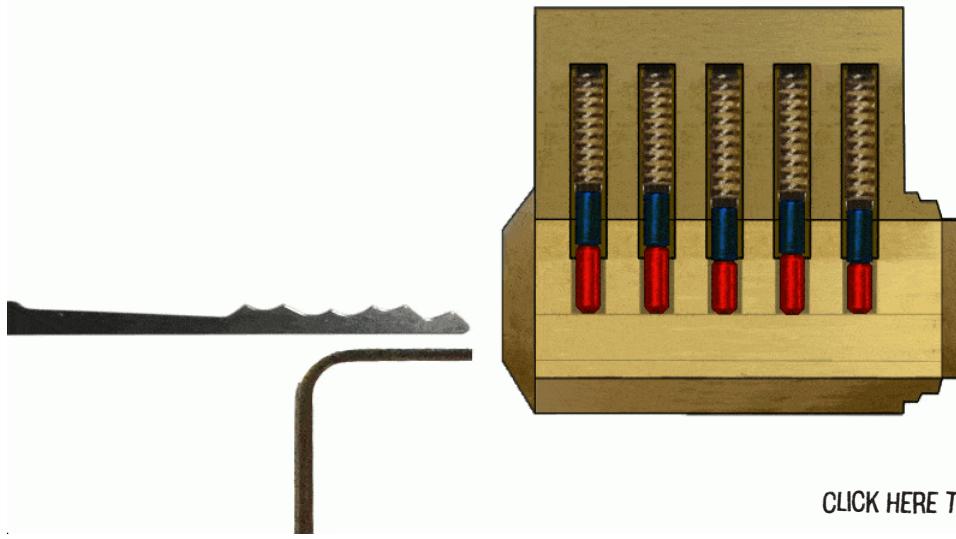
The next rake is the oddball of the group – the [City Rake!](#) It is also referred to as the “L Rake” or “Long Ripple.”



The City Rake gets its name from its resemblance to a city skyline! Can you see it?

Now, this pick is a little different than most other rakes both in how it looks and how we use it!

Rather than using it in scrubbing motion, the City Rake is best used in a rocking motion! Check out the animation below!



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THIS ANIMATION](#)

The City Rake is also very powerful against pin arrangements where there are shorter pins in the middle and longer pins in the front and back.

This all being said, you can also find success using it as a traditional scrubbing rake!

4. THE BATARANG

The [Batarang](#) — also widely known as the “S-Rake”, “Triple Rake”, or “Camel Back” — is one of the few picks that was designed around the style of zipping.



It has two peaks to give it two chances to set each pin per zip and each peak is radically sharp so that it can violently throw pins to the shear line.

However, one of the fatal flaws of this pick is its tendency to break where the beginning of the rake meets the shank of the pick. This makes this pick pretty weak against tighter keyways, paracentric keyways, heavy warding, rusty and corroded locks, or essentially anything that has a chance of snagging the pick on the way out.

Manufacturers have recently begun to re-enforce the bottom of these rakes to help diminish this weak point.



THE BEST BEGINNER LOCK PICK

The [GSP Ghost set](#) is one of the best beginner lock pick sets with the ability to pick a ridiculous variety of locks without needing any other tools — essentially making it one of the most versatile small form pick sets out there.

It provides you with an excellent selection of lock picks and tensioning tools — all of which are in surgical grade 420 stainless steel. The lock picks also include very ergonomic and comfortable plastic handles molded onto each pick that will keep the picks from digging into your fingers.

However, if you find that the [GSP Ghost set](#) is not quite your speed I would highly recommend finding a set similar to its setup from another manufacture or building one like it.

Before we move on I do wish to note that it's far better to own a few high-quality lock picks than it is to own a bunch of crappy ones.

Buy quality and **stay far away from Amazon lock picks!** You can get a quality set of pick for cheaper from manufacturers like Peterson, Sparrows, or SouthOrd that will serve you far better!

That concludes lock picking tools! Let's move on and cover the best beginner locks!



[CHECK IT OUT HERE!](#)

PART 2

CHOOSING YOUR FIRST LOCK

When learning to pick locks, there is nothing more important than selecting the correct first lock.

If you start with one that is too easy – which can happen even as a beginner – you likely won’t learn much. However, if you get one that is too hard, you might be in for some pain.

While challenging yourself is crucial to getting better, picking locks that you don’t yet have the developed senses and skill to pick is only going to frustrate and perhaps even deter you from continuing to pick locks at all.



Patience has its limits and its limits are like beating your head against a wall... one way or another you are eventually going to lose.

Lock picking is supposed to be fun and the quickest way to get better is to make sure that it stays fun.

Having a little structure in what kinds of locks you should be picking -- and at what stage -- can make all the difference in the world.

So let’s first take a look at a common trap that many beginners fall into and then look at a couple of good options for your first lock!

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VARIETY IS KEY

There's an age-old saying, "if you spend your whole life only reading 'The Cat in the Hat,' then '50 Shades of Gray' is going to be 'hard' material."

Maybe that's not the saying, but regardless the same principle applies to many aspects of learning lock picking.

Many pickers in their early stages, including myself, make the fatal mistake of picking the same lock over and over again with the false notion that the lock is getting easier because they are getting better at picking.

While there is a tiny inkling of truth to that, it is more true **that by picking the same lock over and over again you are simply memorizing how that lock is picked.**

Every lock is different and every lock is a puzzle. Thus every lock is a different puzzle. The more time you spend solving that "one" particular puzzle, the less that puzzle becomes about utilizing the skills it initially took to solve it the first few times.

It instead becomes something very dangerous.

It becomes a mindless sequence of motions that, not only, no longer requires much skill, but also something that begins to numb you to the feedback the lock is providing. When you can pick a lock through memorization, your brain will stop interpreting any feedback that isn't in coherence with how that lock has been picked before.

Picking that lock is no longer about listening to what the lock has to say and more about waiting for it to say what you want to hear.



Teaching your brain to ignore important feedback is a very nasty habit to fall into.

So don't make this fatal mistake and keep your locks fresh. It's significantly better to pick 100 different locks once than it is to pick the same lock 100 times.

One of the most common issues that I hear from many beginning pickers is the inability to transition from a transparent plastic lock to a real metal lock.

They often times express that they can easily pick these clear locks without looking and understand the feedback that they are feeling, but when it finally comes to picking a real metal lock, everything feels foreign and strange.

The truth is, using any sort of clear and plastic lock to develop and practice your picking skills is going to do more harm than good for **two main reasons:**



1

Lock picking is about developing patterns based upon the feedback we receive from the lock and the senses that we use to receive that feedback. **When we develop these patterns using feedback and senses that we can't apply to real locks,** these patterns become flawed and distorted.

2

Locks are puzzles. The more times that you solve a particular puzzle, the more solving that puzzle again depends upon memory and less so on skill. **When you have picked a lock using visual cues, you have denied yourself the ability to solve that puzzle with feedback that can be used on a real lock.**

You have also denied yourself the ability to establish a foundation in two very important skills. The first being the ability to draw a mental map of what is occurring within the lock. The second is the refinement of crucial lock picking senses -- touch and sound.

I do want to clarify that these transparent locks do have two very useful purposes.

They are excellent **visual aids for understanding and explaining how locks and lock picking work** and they are **great at demonstrating how particular tools affect the internal components of the lock.**

However, beyond simple demonstration, **these locks should never be used for practice.**

THE BEST BEGINNER LOCKS

Alright, so now that we know the potential dangers of using transparent locks, let's look at some real locks that are perfect for those just starting out!

The best beginner locks are going to be those that have a wide and open keyway, a moderate bitting, no security pins, and preferably a spring-loaded core.

So let's look at a couple of locks that mesh around these criteria!

THE MASTER LOCK #3

Master locks are terrible, atrocious, and appalling locks that truly only serve one purpose -- to be a practice lock. It is their calling and final destination!

Seriously, it's like **Master Lock designed these locks just so you could learn lock picking!**

These locks are poorly made and have terrible tolerances — meaning finding and setting binding pins is especially easy because they have tons of slop in the core.

They can literally be opened using any method of bypassing including single pin picking, raking, bitch picking, zipping, shimming, light tension, heavy tension, or even using a chicken bone -- yes a chicken bone (YouTube that one haha.)

It doesn't matter because you can easily find success with any method available and it will lay an important foundation for each method to be built upon.

They have only four standard pins, a very wide and open keyway, and a spring-loaded core. However, their single downfall as the perfect single pin picking practice lock is that because they are built so poorly and their tolerances are so bad, there is a ton of excess friction from the internal components rubbing and binding — even when there is zero torque on the core.

As a result, trying to pick some of these Master Locks is almost like sticking your pick into a bowl of mash potatoes.



[GET ON AMAZON](#)

It feels mushy and the feedback is very dull — which makes it very hard to learn or accomplish anything. Now, this doesn't represent every Master Lock #3, but it is important to note that if you get a lemon with too much internal friction, you may have a frustrating time with it.

So if you do go the route of the Master Lock #3, I would pick up at least two. They are pretty cheap if you hunt around [Amazon](#) or even eBay.

Super Cool Tip: You can also use a Master Lock #1 or #5 instead as they have the exact same core as the #3. The only difference is that the #1 has a smaller body and the #5 has a bigger body — but all three will pick the same.

THE MASTER LOCK 141D

Alright, this lock may at first glance seem like a sick joke as it looks like something that a little girl would use to lock up her diary, but bear with me for a moment.

The [Master Lock 141D](#) is a plastic-covered lock with 4 standard pins, a wide-open keyway, and a lightly spring-loaded core. Now unlike the laminated Master Lock #3 above, **these super cheap little locks have significantly better tolerances and usually a more difficult bitting.**

They are wonderful little locks that can teach you a ton about tension and pick control and for the most part, might be the only standard pin lock you ever need.

I would highly recommend snagging a couple of these to play with and if you are looking for a cheap lock to get you through the beginner stages of lock picking, the Master 141D is your huckleberry.



[GET ON AMAZON](#)

THE REVOLVER

Last up on our list is a lock that isn't really a lock, but rather a nifty little training device developed and manufactured by Sparrows. This hunk of metal is essentially 4 locks in 1. I can't really do it justice with words, you'll just have to check it out yourself [here](#).

Yet, the greatest part about the Revolver is that it's extremely easy to repin. **This is SIGNIFICANT to any new or developing picker and means that you have full control over the number of pins, the type of pins, and the bitting of those pins.**

This can be an absolute game-changer for anyone learning as you will be able to progressively pin any of the 4 locks to match your developing skill. On top of that, the Revolver also comes with a variety of security pins — spools, mushrooms, and serrated — so that when the time comes you can easily transition over to these trickier pins in a self-controlled manner.



While a \$39.00 price tag may seem like a pretty penny for a rotating locking device, **considering that you can continue to pin it up in an endless variety of ways this thing is truly the best lock picking training device there is.** If you can get your hands on one of these, I would absolutely do so.

It's the price of four or five locks and will provide you with the lessons of hundreds.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- [Master Lock #7](#)
- [Amazon Basics Deadbolt](#)
- [Kwikset Deadbolt](#)

That will do it for locks!

Let's move on and learn how to pick a lock!

PART 3

HOW TO PICK A LOCK

Alright, so now that we have covered the essentials of lock picking tools and the best beginner locks, it's finally time to bunker down and learn how to pick a lock!

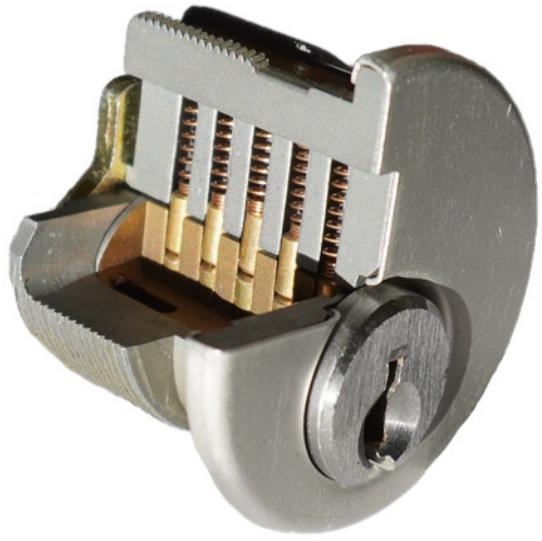
But first, what exactly is lock picking? Simply put, lock picking is a non-destructive way to open a lock without using the original key.

This can be done through a variety of different ways, but all have the same goal in mind — to mimic the key by using something other than the key.

But in order to mimic a key, we must understand how a key works in a lock. This is done by first understanding how a lock itself works.

This lock picking guide will instill within you a deep foundation of how locks work and how you can begin to defeat them!

Let's get started and learn lock picking!



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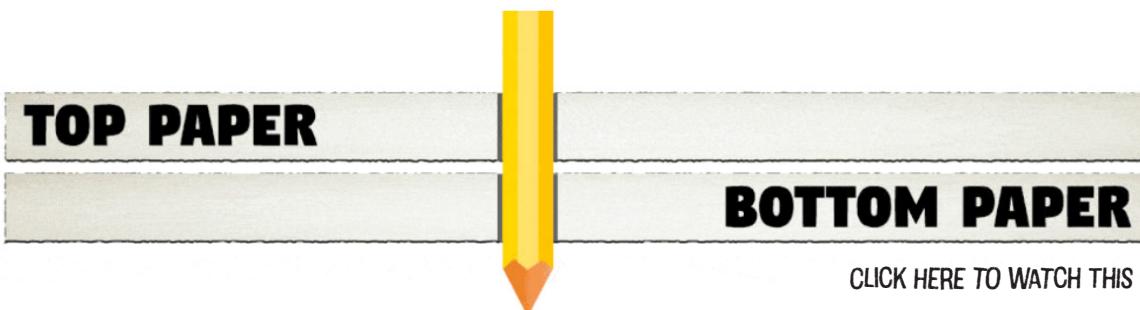
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THE SIMPLEST LOCK

Imagine for a moment that you have two pieces of paper, one sitting on top of the other.

Now with very little effort, you could take that upper piece and slide it around the top of the bottom piece and it would move freely with very little resistance.

However, if you took a pencil and stuck it through both pieces of paper, **they would become bound to each other and would no longer be able to move independently of one another.** Essentially, they would become “locked” to each other.

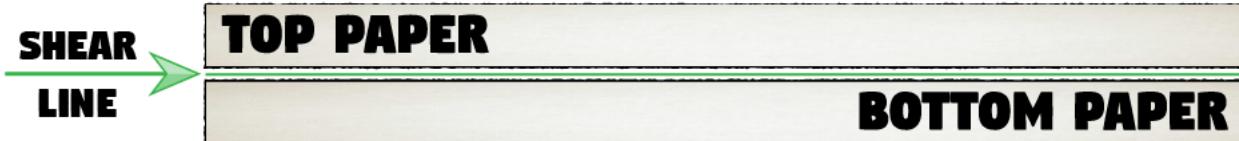


[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THIS ANIMATION](#)

This little paper model, as demonstrated above, is the simplest example of how most locks function.

But let's dive a little deeper and take a closer at what is truly occurring. Obviously, the two pieces of paper are bound to each other because there is a pen crammed through both of them.

However, what is also true, and more important to note, is that we have also obstructed the space between them — that is the line that separates the two pieces of paper. This line is what we refer to as the shear line and is the absolute foundation of how all locks work and, as we will soon see, the key to defeating them!



The moment that we remove that obstruction — the pencil — from the shear line, the two pieces of paper will once again be able to move freely.

But lock's aren't flat and they sure as hell aren't made from paper and pencils, so let's change a few things and add a few more components to this simple lock and see what we get.

There are a ton of different types of locks roaming the world today – from the tubular locks that you find on vending machines to combination locks securing safes. **But of all these different types of locks, only one is king, the pin tumbler lock!**

The pin tumbler lock is an extremely simple design that makes up over 90% of the locks used throughout the world.

Additionally, if you can learn to pick a pin tumbler lock, you can essentially transfer that skill to any other type of lock in one way or another!

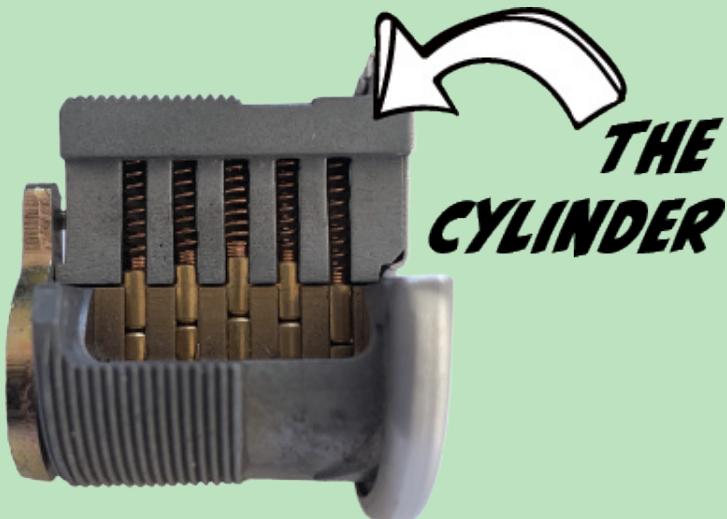
These two reasons alone make the pin tumbler the best type of lock to begin your lock picking journey! With that, let's dive a little deeper into how the pin tumbler lock works!

These locks are made up of 6 primary components that we affect while picking. Let's quickly go over each of them!

1. THE CYLINDER

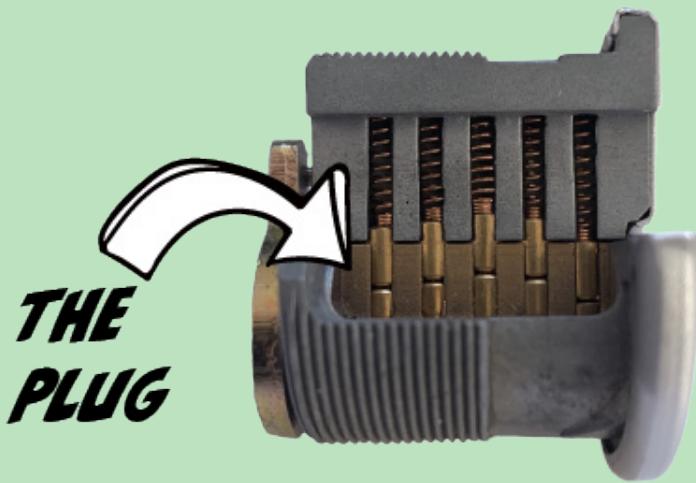
The cylinder of the lock is nothing more than a little container that “houses” the rest of the components. This part is typically what slides into a door or padlock. If you jump back to our simple paper lock above, the cylinder of the pin tumbler lock is the top piece of paper if it were wrapped around the rest of the lock.

The cylinder creates the upper limit of the shear line and can also be referred to as the shell, housing, or body of the lock.



2. THE PLUG

The plug is the bottom piece of paper from our simple lock. However, rather than shearing across a flat surface like in our simple lock, **the plug is a cylinder that rotates freely within the housing, creating a rotational shear line.**



The front of the plug is also where the key is inserted and on the back is either a cam or tailpiece which retracts the latch and opens the lock when rotated.

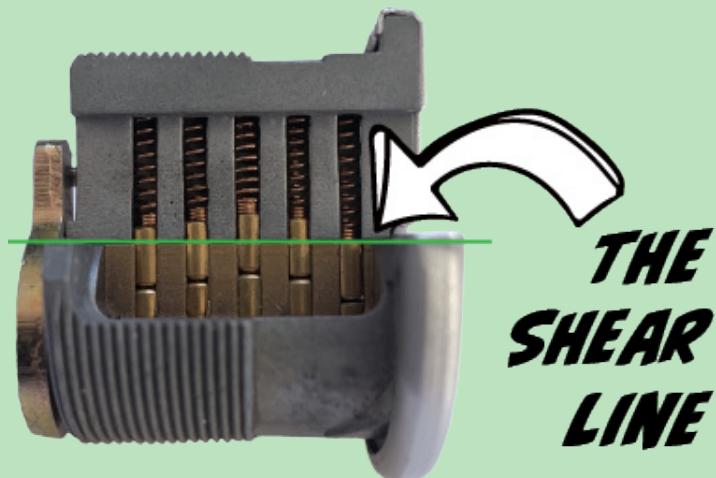
The plug creates the bottom limit of the shear line!

3. THE SHEAR LINE

The shear line is nothing more than the gap between the housing and the plug. Just like in the simple lock above, it is the conceptual line in which the plug rotates in the housing.

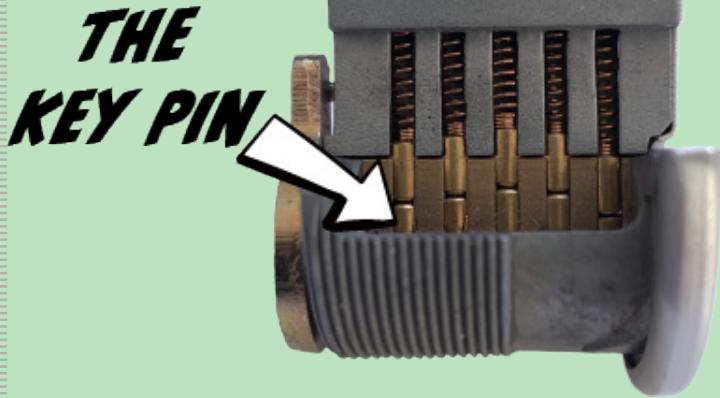
If this line is obstructed in any way, the plug and housing will become “locked” to each other – thus, the plug will not rotate.

Only when the shear line has been cleared of any obstructions will the plug once again be able to rotate freely. **The shear line is one of the most important concepts to understand when it comes to lock picking!**



4. KEY PINS

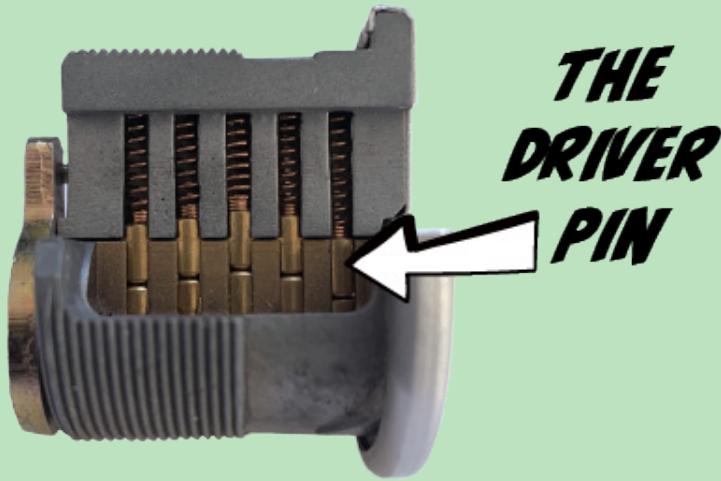
In the pin tumbler lock, there are typically two types of pins. **The key pins are the lower set and have the task of reading the “cuts” of the key.** This is done by using a variety of different length pins and then cutting a key that matches those pin lengths.



If you look at any key, you will notice that there are high spots and low spots. These spots are what we call “cuts,” and in a moment, we will see the role they play in how the lock works!

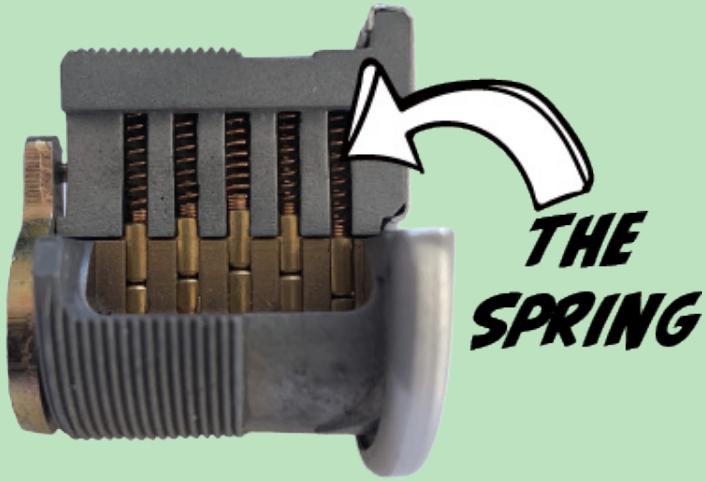
5. DRIVER PINS

The driver pins are the upper set of pins **whose job is to obstruct the shear line.** They are basically the pencil from our simple lock above! Unlike the key pins, the driver pins are usually all the same length.



6. THE SPRINGS

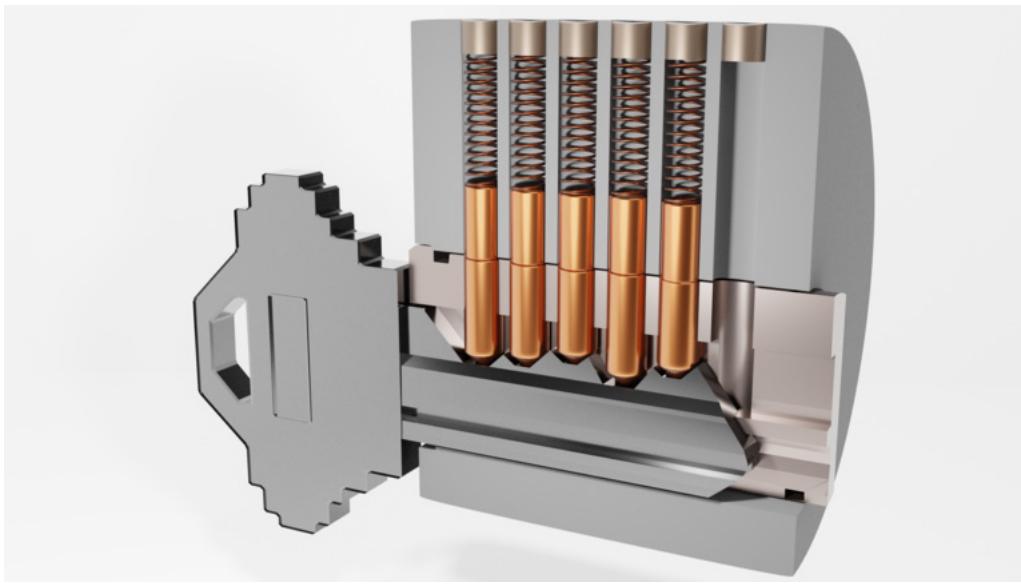
Last up is the springs and they have two jobs. **Their first job is to force everything down into the plug** and keep the driver pins at the shear line when there is no key in the lock. Their second job is to **push the key pins against the key**, which helps read the cuts.



Without the springs, the pins could get stuck anywhere in the pin chamber, which could make using a key impossible.

Alright, now that you understand the core components of the pin tumbler lock, let's take a look at how everything works together to make a fully functioning lock!

The following animation illustrates the pin tumbler lock in action!



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THIS ANIMATION](#)

As you can see, when the key is shoved into the plug, it pushes upward on the key pins. Because the biting of the key and the lengths of the key pins have been cut to match, the key pins will rise flush with the shear line causing the driver pins to exit the plug fully.

When the gap between the key pins and the driver pins is precisely that of the shear line, the key can rotate the plug to disengage the lock.

In short, the key has removed all obstructions — the pins — from the shear line!

By understanding this process, we can begin to see what we have to accomplish to pick a lock.

In essence, lock picking is simply the act of mimicking the key by manipulating the pins to the same state they would be at if the correct key were inserted.

But how do we do that? How can we hope to keep four or five pins from obstructing the shear line without the constant pressure of the key? **How do we keep them from falling back into the plug?**

The answer is pretty cool!



No matter how hard you try, you can never create two things exactly the same. In some way, there will always be something different between them — perfection is impossible!

WHY WE CAN PICK LOCKS



This also applies to the manufacturing of locks and their components. No two locks, pins, nor springs are the same.

They will always vary in some way from each other and their original design.

However, because of this variance, things will also never fit together perfectly and there will always be some degree of slop between components.

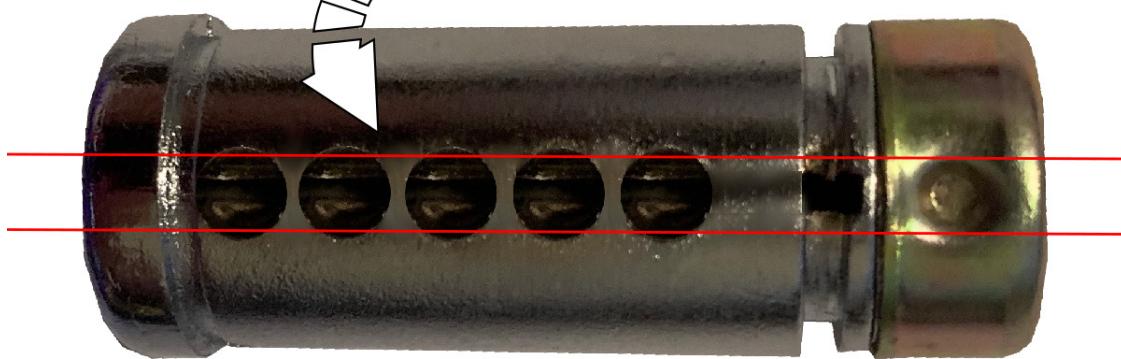
But it's this slop that gives us the ability to pick locks and when it comes to the pin tumbler lock, **the imperfect drilling of the pin chambers is what makes lock picking truly possible!**

During the production of the plug, the pin chambers are drilled down an imaginary centerline so that they are lined up perfectly with each other.

But remember, nothing can be done perfectly and as a result, these pin chambers are drilled slightly off-center and are misaligned from one another.

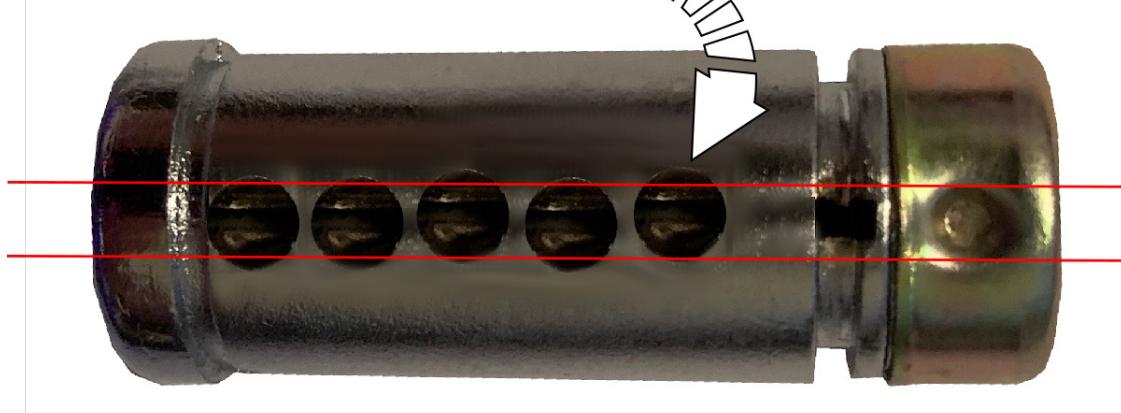
Ideal Plug:

Pin Holes Perfectly Center



Real Plug:

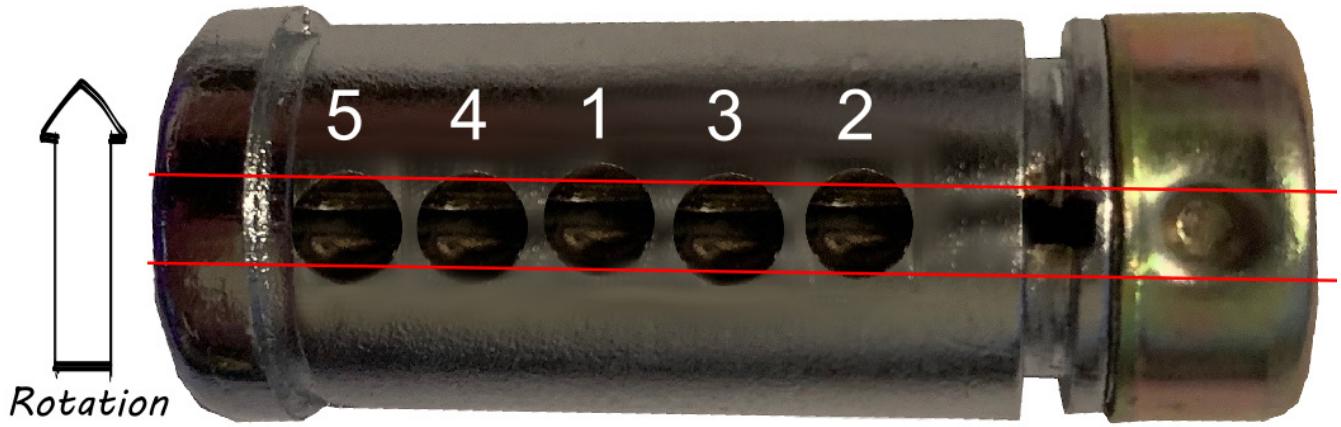
Pin Holes Off-Center



But how do misaligned holes help us pick locks?

There is a concept that we lock pickers call “binding.” Imagine sticking a screwdriver into the keyway of a lock and trying to rotate the plug like it was a key. But because the driver pins are still at the shear line they will stop the rotation of the plug and in the process become **bound** between the housing and the plug. This is binding.

However, because of inaccurate drilling, some pins will bind before others. The furthest pin off-center in the direction of rotation will be the first pin to bind and stop the rotation of the plug. **This pin that is the first to bind is what we call “the binding pin.”**



If you have to, read through this section once more and be absolutely certain that you understand the concept of the binding pin. As you'll see in a moment the binding pin is the literal key to lock picking!

Key Takeaway: Because perfection is impossible, the pin chambers on the plug are drilled off-center. This creates a binding defect when the plug is rotated. Because there is a binding defect, one pin will bind before the rest and with more force. This pin is called the binding pin.



GETTING STARTED WITH TENSION

It's finally time to learn how to use your first tool — the tension wrench!

This little guy does two very important things:

1. Firstly, it gives you the leverage you need to rotate the plug and create a binding pin. Remember, the binding pin is the key to lock picking.
2. Secondly, it holds the pins that you lift with your pick above the shear line — much like the key!

Here is how it works!

You begin by placing the tension wrench into the bottom of the keyway and applying a very light degree of force in the direction that the key would turn to disengage the lock — typically clockwise.

Also, by light force, I mean something similar to the amount of force that it takes to press a key on your keyboard. It's that light.

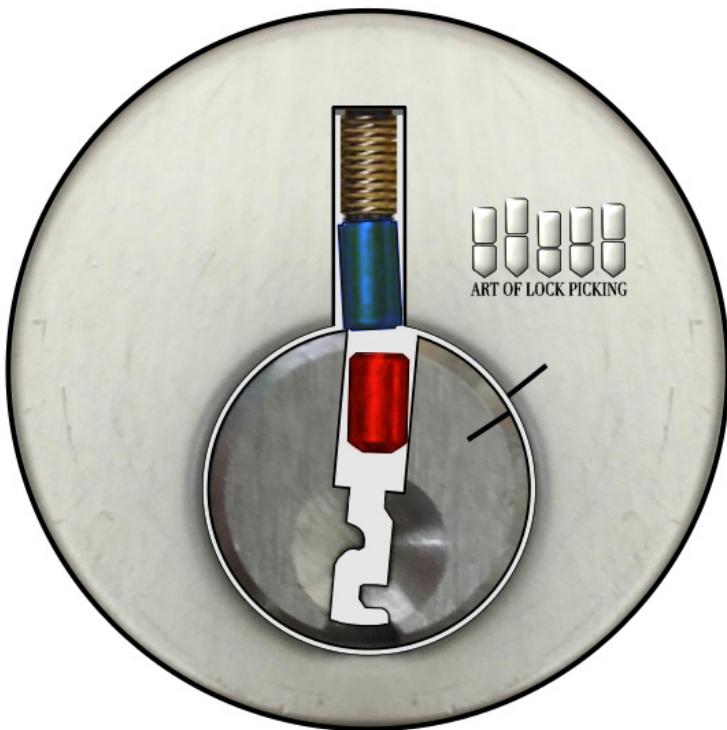
This light degree of force — or tension — is typically enough to create a binding pin. This is where you learn the importance of the binding pin!

If you take a pick and lift that binding pin to the shear line — or the height that the correct key would lift it to — the bind will break and the plug will continue to rotate ever so slightly until it binds on another pin — the next binding pin.

However, something really cool also happens!

Because the plug slightly rotates when the driver pin passes the shear line, there is a small ledge that is produced by the plug that the driver pin can set on. This is called “setting a pin” and as a result, the driver pin stays above the shear line and out of the plug!

To help fully understand setting a pin, check out the animation below!



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THIS ANIMATION](#)

Lock picking is simply the act of creating binding pins and setting them at the shear line.

It really is as simple as that!

So now that you fully understand the purpose of the binding pin and what you are trying to accomplish within the lock, you can finally start cramming your picks into some keyways and learn once and for all how to pick a lock!

INTRODUCTION TO SINGLE PIN PICKING

Alright, now that all the conceptual crap is out of the way, we can finally take a crack at actually picking a lock with our first style of lock picking — **single pin picking!**

Single pin picking, or SPP for short, is the style of lock picking in which you locate and set one pin at a time and is considered the purest form of lock picking.

While SPP is not always the quickest method of bypassing a lock, it is the most reliable and most skillful. If you truly wish to get good at lock picking, focusing on single pin picking is the quickest route to developing your lock picking skills.

STEP 1: USE TENSION TO CREATE THE FIRST BINDING PIN



Remember, to set pins at the shear line and successfully pick a lock, you have to apply a light rotational force to the plug and create your first binding pin

To do so, **start by inserting the short end of your tension wrench into the bottom of the keyway and applying very light tension to the plug.** Be certain to maintain this force on the your tension wrench throughout the entire process of picking the lock.

STEP 2: LOCATE THE FIRST BINDING PIN

Now that you have created your first binding pin, you have to find it! But how?

Because the binding pin will have more “binding” force on it than the other pins, **the binding pin will be stiffer and harder to lift than the other non-binding pins.** So basically, you are just looking for a pin that is not loose!

Insert your hook type pick all the way into the lock and locate the rearmost pin. Very gently begin to lift each pin and gauge how it feels.

Continue to probe each pin until you find the pin that doesn’t feel like the others and is more difficult to move.

STEP 3: LIFT AND SET THE FIRST BINDING PIN

Now that you have found the first binding pin, you have to set it!

Gently lift the binding pin until you feel a slight rotation on the plug or hear an audible click. Either of these two indicators typically indicates a successfully set driver pin!

STEP 4: LOCATE AND SET THE SECOND BINDING

You have located and set your first binding pin, but now the lock is binding on a new pin.

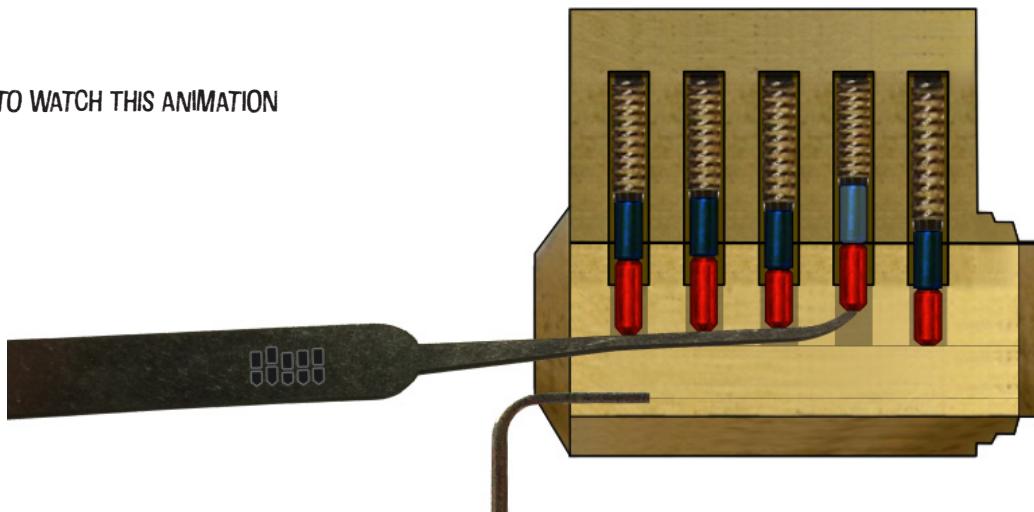
Repeat the same steps of gently lifting each pin until you once again locate another pin that feels stiff and difficult to move. As before, gently continue to lift that pin until you feel a slight rotation on the plug or hear an audible click.

STEP 5: REPEAT THE PROCESS OF LOCATING AND SETTING BINDING PINS

Continue the process of locating binding pins and lifting them to the shear line. Once every pin has been set, there will no longer be any obstruction to the shear line which will allow the plug to fully rotate and the lock to open!

Congratulations!!! You have just picked your first lock!

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THIS ANIMATION](#)



Key SPP Note: If you can no longer find a binding pin, you have likely overset or underset a pin. Release the tension to let the pins drop and restart the process over again. If you still can't find a binding pin, try applying slightly more force to the plug!

Up next is our second style of lock picking — raking!

INTRODUCTION TO RAKING

Raking is a very volatile and radical style of picking whose goal is to bump as many pins to the shear line as possible in the quickest amount of time.

While it can be a lot of fun and is a very quick method of bypassing many basic locks, it will only get you so far and can become almost worthless when you start getting into locks with additional security features such as sidebar and security pins.

There are several different types of raking. The method we are going to cover is called scrubbing and is basically the same motion as brushing our teeth!

STEP 1: APPLY TENSION TO CREATE A BINDING PIN

The first step is once again creating a binding pin.

Insert the short end of your tension wrench into the bottom of the keyway and apply a very light force to the plug!



Important Note: Be careful with your tension when raking. While you can get away with heavier tension during single pin picking, too much tension while raking can result in a broken pick.



STEP 2: INSERT LOCK PICK AND SCRUB THE PINS

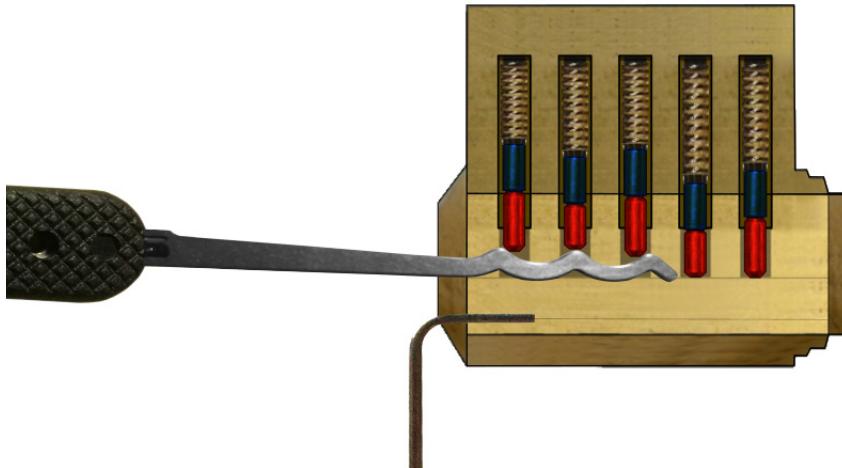
Next, insert your rake all the way to the rear of the lock and gently lift upward so that your pick slightly lifts the pins.

With a decent amount of speed begin to scrub the pins as if you are scrubbing the top of your teeth with your toothbrush. Change the angle, the height, and the speed of your pick as you rake.

If the lock doesn't open within 10 seconds, release tension to reset the lock and begin again. It's very common to have to reset the lock several times before you successfully rake a lock.

Continue to scrub the pins until the plug fully rotates and the lock opens!

If you still can't manage to rake your lock, try to apply slightly heavier or lighter tension. Raking is truly more about applying the right tension than it is about lock pick control!



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THIS ANIMATION](#)

I hope this guide successfully revealed to you that lock picking is not as difficult as it may first seem.

However, before we conclude this starter guide, let's quickly cover the legality of lock picking to help keep you safe from any unfortunate situations.

PART 4

LEGALITY OF LOCK PICKING

Before we hit this topic, I understand that legal and ethical mumbo jumbo can be more boring than watching a sloth eat paint chips for six weeks straight — or maybe that would be interesting?

In any case, **lock picking can get you into some real trouble**, even if you feel as if you are doing nothing wrong. Lock picking isn't as black and white as simply picking your own locks and you'll be fine — even though that is a solid first step on the correct path.

By simply educating yourself on the basics of the lock picking related laws and ethical picking, you can truly save yourself from an unfortunate situation with the law.

It's far better the spend the 10 minutes going through this section than it is to spend an assload of your hard earn dollars and time in court over something as silly as picking a lock.

So let's tackle the legality of lock picks head on and answer this question once and for all for those wishing to take the plunge and begin the amazing craft of lock picking!



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2. [Know Your Legal Terms](#) page 36
3. [United States Lock Picking Laws](#) page 37
4. [The Golden Rules](#) page 39

So is lock picking illegal?

Do we as hobby lock pickers need to hide our lock picks deep within our dresser behind that weird grouping of socks we never wear?

In short, most likely not!

I'm happy to inform you that **in most countries and 94% of the United States, the purchase and possession of lock picks is perfectly legal.**

Let's take a moment and look into why and how they are considered legal in some places and not in others.



Note for Non-US Pickers: This section will primarily focus on United States lock picking laws. While I wish that I could host an entire database of lock picking laws for every country, it would be impossible to maintain. That being said, the legal terminology used below is common throughout the world in describing laws related to lock picking. Knowing these can better help you understand your local laws.

To truly understand lock picking laws, we have to break down three simple legal definitions that govern the possession of lock picks.

Don't worry they are pretty straight forward:

KNOW YOUR LEGAL TERMS

Not Illegal: In some states, like North Dakota, there are no specific laws regarding lock picks or locksmithing tools. In these states lock picks are not mentioned by any laws, thus possession of lock picks is not illegal.

Prima Facie Evidence: Prima Facie is a fancy Latin term that essentially means, “guilty until proven innocent.” In states enforcing prima facie evidence, merely possessing lock picks is intent to commit a crime — regardless if you were or not. So if you are caught with lock picks in these states, you may have to prove that you had no intent to use them in a malicious manner. For this reason we can consider them illegal in these states.

Must Show Intent: In most states, and most of the world, owning lock picks is 100% legal. It is only when you use them in an illegal way that you will find trouble. Lock picks in these states are seen by the law in the same light as a screwdriver or hammer. All of these tools can be used illegally, but until you show intent to use them in a malicious and criminal manner, they are just seen as tools.

Always remember that the best way to protect yourself from the law is to know the law. Not every cop nor attorney knows every law, so knowing your local laws could one day save you from an unfortunate situation. Know the law so you can safely play within the limits of the law.

Also in general, just don’t do anything stupid and follow the golden rules of lock picking — which is the topic of our next lesson. These golden rules will help guide your actions from doing anything that could potentially get you into any form of trouble.



In the US there are several states that have unique laws regarding the possession of lock picks. Three of these states have specific laws directly **restricting** lock picking tools. These states are:

1

Mississippi: Possession of lock picks is **legal** so long as they are not concealed. However, once you put them in your pocket it becomes intent to commit a crime. If you live in this state and own lock picks, leave them at home.

2

Tennessee: Possession of lock picks is **legal**, however, Tennessee has some very strict laws to prevent locksmith fraud. If you live in this state it is illegal to use your skills for any sort of profit unless you are a licensed locksmith. If you don't have a license be sure to keep it a hobby.

3

Illinois: Possession of lock picks is **legal**, however, the possession of bump keys is illegal.

4

Nevada: **Illegal**; Possession can be prima facie evidence of criminal intent. You may have to prove noncriminal intent.

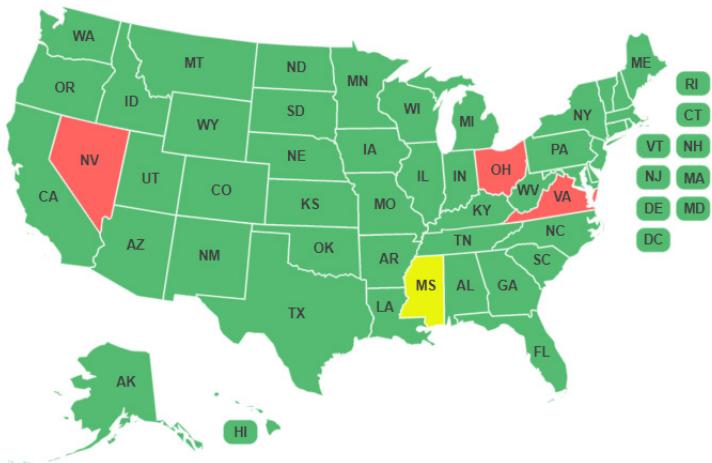
5

Ohio: **Illegal**; Possession can be prima facie evidence of criminal intent. You may have to prove noncriminal intent.

6

Virginia: **Illegal**; Possession can be prima facie evidence of criminal intent. You may have to prove noncriminal intent.

Below is a link to our interactive map containing current United States lock picking laws -- along with current law excerpts to help you better understand your local laws.



[**Click Here**](#)
**to check out
your local
lock picking
laws!**

Disclaimer: I am not an attorney nor an expert at law. This is my interpretation of the law as the law has always been subjective in its nature. While I will always do my best to keep the above link updated, laws do change so be sure to check if there have been any updates.

Your good friend Betsy calls you up one day in a complete state of panic. She has just locked herself out of her apartment and is in desperate need of your lock picking skills.

The question is...

Can you ethically help her — or just as importantly, could you possibly face legal issues if you did?

The answer?

No, you ethically and legally can not help her.

As a matter of fact, to do so would violate the 2 Golden Rules of lock picking:

THE GOLDEN RULES



Rule 1: Never pick a lock that you don't own nor have permission by the owner to pick.

Rule 2: Never pick locks that you rely on or that are in use.

While these two rules may seem self-explanatory, they aren't as black and white as they appear. Let's jump into what they mean and how they can keep you out of trouble!

GOLDEN RULE 1

Rule 1: Never pick a lock that you don't own nor have permission by the owner to pick.

This rule is pretty straight forward. It's a common-sense rule that anyone would naturally follow to keep out of trouble. But there is often a little confusion when it comes to the "owner" part.

Let's go back to our example with our friend Betsy. Why is it that we can't help her? She is giving us permission, right?

While it's true she is giving us permission, the fact is that she is not the owner. She is the tenant renting that apartment and lock from the owner. Her permission to pick that lock is legally and ethically the same as walking up to some stranger's home and sticking your pick in their door.

A great way to always ensure you are never violating Rule 1 is to ask yourself, "If this lock had to be replaced, who would pay to fix it?" If you have that person's permission to pick the lock, it's fair game. But until then, keep your picks clear and you'll never have to fear dropping the soap.



But even if you had permission from the landlord to pick Betsy's lock, it would violate our next Golden Rule.

GOLDEN RULE 2

Rule 2: Never pick locks that you rely on or that are in use.

While lock picking is a very gentle means of bypassing locks, it's still pretty harsh to the locks themselves. Picking can cause abnormal wear on the internal components of any lock and in some cases permanently break them. This is especially true with beginner's whom are typically much harsher with their tools.

The point is that **practicing on your in use locks can permanently disable these locks.** By doing so you could disabled yours or somebody else's security and can no longer secure the property — as is a locks purpose. You also stand the chance of locking yourself out of your own home if the lock all of the sudden stops working.

In any case, fixing it could prove costly. It's just best that you follow Rule 2 and only pick locks that are not in use.

Note: There are those emergency exceptions — such as locking yourself out of your home. In these situations, so long as you are fully following Rule 1 it is acceptable to utilize your skills.

But do so understanding that there is a chance that you could break your lock and you have fully considered that and are willing to accept the consequences.

GOLDEN RULE 3

Rule 3: Know Your Local Laws Regarding Lock Picks

I know that I said there were only 2 golden rules, but I'm adding this one for good measure. While the first two rules will keep you safe in terms of utilizing your skills, knowing your local laws will keep you safe in regards to owning and carrying lock picks.

Knowing the law will always give you the upper hand. It allows you to fully and earnestly enjoy lock picking to its full extent without any fear.

Remember, stick to your practice locks and follow these three easy rules and you shouldn't ever have to deal with any nonsense.

WHAT IS NEXT?

I hope that this little ebook broke any confusion or frustration that you may have had about getting started in this awesome craft!

While it takes a lot of time and practice to master lock picking, it truly isn't as hard as it first seems. **By simply practicing 15 - 20 minutes a day, you'll find yourself accomplishing things with those little metal tools that you likely once thought impossible.**

But beyond this guide, what's next?

As your skill grows, so should your knowledge.

Consider joining a lock picking community like [The Art of Lock Picking Academy Facebook Group](#). We have a very active community full of new and experienced lock pickers, all helping each other become the best that they can be!

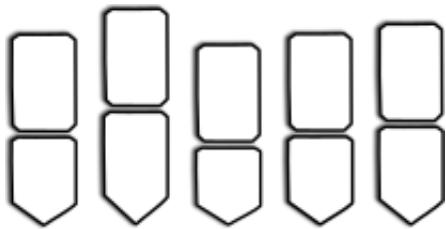
Also, be sure to check out our [Academy](#) and [Blog](#) for new guides, techniques, and tips!

If you have any questions, comments, or any awesome ideas of how I can make this beginner's guide better, feel free to throw me an [email here](#). I always love to hear from you guys!

Until next time,

Happy Picking!!!

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Disclaimer:

This Information is strictly to inform and not to be used in any malicious manner. Pick locks you own or have clear permission from the owner of that lock to pick. Know your local laws and stay safe!

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