What New Homeowners Should Check About Their Locks

Moving into a new home is a busy time. Between unpacking boxes and changing the address on your bills, lock security often gets pushed aside. But the previous owner, their family members, contractors, and maybe even a neighbor could still have copies of your keys. A simple check of your door hardware can save you from a costly surprise later.

Most people assume that once they move in, the locks are safe. The truth is that you have no idea how many keys are floating around. That is why many homeowners turn to home lock rekeying as their first security step. Rekeying changes the lock cylinder so that old keys no longer work, while you keep the same handles and deadbolts. It is faster and less expensive than replacing everything, and it gives you full key control from day one.

When you are ready to take stock of your lock security, a systematic approach helps. A 24/7 Mobile Locksmith can handle the work for you, but knowing what to look for makes the process smoother. Below are the main points to check, each with a short reason why it matters.

Check every exterior door

Walk around the outside of the house and note every door that leads from the outside to the inside. This includes the front door, back door, side door, garage entry, and any door from a deck or patio. Each of these doors should have a functioning lock. If you find a door with no lock at all, or a lock that is broken, that is a priority to fix. A door that does not lock properly is an open invitation to anyone who tries the handle.

Also look at the strike plate, the metal piece on the door frame where the latch or deadbolt goes. A weak strike plate held on with short screws can be pushed in with a kick. For better security, the strike plate should be attached with screws that reach into the door frame stud. If you see short screws, plan to upgrade the strike plate during the rekeying process.



Identify the lock type and security grade

Not all locks offer the same level of protection. Look at the brand and model on the lock face or on the cylinder. Common residential locks are graded by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) from grade three (basic residential) to grade one (high security). Many standard builder-grade locks are grade three. They work fine for basic privacy but are easier to pick or force open.

If you have grade three locks on all your doors, consider upgrading to grade two or grade one hardware when you rekey. The new lock cylinder will fit the new grade, and you will get better key control and a longer-lasting mechanism. This is also a good time to check that the door hardware matches: knobs, levers, and deadbolts should be from the same system so that keys and cylinders work together.

Test the deadbolt operation

A deadbolt adds a second layer of security beyond the spring latch in the knob or lever. Open each door and turn the deadbolt from the inside. Does it slide smoothly? Does it fully extend into the strike plate? If the deadbolt sticks or only goes partway, the door may be misaligned or the lock may need adjustment. A deadbolt that does not fully engage is almost as bad as no deadbolt at all.

Also check whether the deadbolt has a keyhole on the outside. Some deadbolts are single-cylinder, meaning the same key operates both the knob and the deadbolt. Others are double-

cylinder, where the deadbolt has its own key separate from the knob. Both types can be rekeyed, but the locksmith needs to know what you have. If the deadbolt uses a different key than the knob, you will want to rekey both to the same key for convenience.

Check for master key systems

In some homes, especially if they were previously rented out or used as a multi-family dwelling, the locks may be part of a master key system. A master key is a single key that opens all locks in the system, even though each lock also has its own individual key. If you buy a home with a master key system, the previous owner or property manager may still hold the master key. That means they can open every door even if you change the individual keys.

To regain full control, you need to rekey the locks away from the master key system. The locksmith will install new lock cylinders that are not part of any master system, so only your keys work. If you later need a master key for your own household, you can set up a new system from scratch. But starting fresh is the safest route.

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Examine the garage and service doors

Garage doors often have a different kind of lock than the main entry doors. Many have a simple slide bolt or a cylinder lock that can be opened with a key from the outside. These locks are sometimes overlooked during a move-in security check. A determined person can pick a low-grade garage cylinder lock quickly. If your garage connects to the house interior, a break-in through the garage gives access to the whole home.

Consider rekeying the garage door lock at the same time as the main doors. If the garage uses a different key system, you can either rekey it to match your house keys or install a keyless entry pad. The goal is to have one set of keys that works for everything, or at least to know exactly who has copies.

Think about key control from the start

Once you have rekeyed your locks, you have a clean slate. Now is the time to decide how many keys you want and who gets them. Keep a spare key in a secure place, not under the mat or in a fake rock. If you give a key to a neighbor or a house sitter, make sure you can get it back later. Good key control means you know exactly who has a key and can limit the number of copies.

Some homeowners also choose to have a spare key cut and stored with a trusted friend or family member. That way, if you get locked out, you have a backup without needing to call for emergency help. But if you do need help, a 24/7 Mobile Locksmith can assist with lockouts, rekeying, and upgrades at any hour. Having a plan for key control from the beginning prevents small problems from becoming big headaches.

Put your checklist into action

Start by walking through your new home with a notepad. Write down every exterior door, note the lock brand and type, test each deadbolt, and check the strike plates. If you find any door that does not lock securely, mark it for immediate rekeying. Then contact a locksmith to rekey all exterior locks to one key. This single step gives you peace of mind and eliminates the worry about lost or copied keys from the previous owner.

Rekeying is a straightforward process that does not require new handles or hardware. The locksmith removes the lock cylinder from each door and installs a new one that works with a new key. The rest of the lock stays the same. In most cases, the whole house can be done in a couple of hours. The cost is much lower than replacing all the locks, and you get the same security benefit.



If you decide to upgrade your lock hardware to a higher security grade, the rekeying process still applies. The new cylinders will match your chosen key, and you will have a uniform system. Whether you stay with the existing hardware or upgrade, the key point is to take action soon after you move in. Waiting even a few weeks leaves a gap in your home’s security.

A little effort at the start of your homeownership pays off for years. You will sleep better knowing that only you and your family can open the doors. And if you ever need help, a reliable locksmith service is just a phone call away.