

THE
CLOAK & DAGGER
COMPENDIUM

A HANDBOOK OF PRACTICAL SKILLS
AND INVALUABLE KNOWLEDGE
*FOR THIEVES, ROGUES, SCALLYWAGS,
& OTHER DISREPUTABLE PERSONS*



Issue #2: Lockpicking

BY A COLLECTIVE OF ANARCHIST THIEVES
EDITED BY ROBIN MARKS

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O THOU, divine OUTRE-RETER!
We go out for plunder.
Cause all things to sleep in the house.
Owner of the house, sleep on!
Threshold of the house, sleep on!
Little insects of the house, sleep on!
Central-post, ridge-pole, rafters, thatch of the house, sleep on!
O RONGO [god of cultivated foods], grant us success!

~ *Prayer to the God of Thieves, South Pacific Islands*

AFTERWORD, FUTURE ISSUES

We've made it through our second issue, lovelies, and what a trip it's been. We have now covered shoplifting, expropriation of resources from the capitalist waste-stream, and the beautiful art of picking and bypassing locks. In the coming issue we intend to illuminate the terrifying and exhilarating life of the bung nipper. Look forward in coming months to *Cloak & Dagger Issue #3: Pickpocketing*.

Till next time,
The Authors



#10: Tubular Locks



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Disclaimer

The authors and editor of this publication disavow any connection to or endorsement of criminal organizations, including, but not limited to, governments, police forces, military forces, nation states, empires, colonizers, industrialists, imperialists, capitalists, and big businesses. Quite to the contrary, we wholeheartedly decry, detest, disdain, and wish to abolish all such organized criminal activity.

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

May 30, 2010

Beloved Blackguards,

Well, readers, it's been a few months since issue #1 was published, and we've finally managed to hack out the second. We are tremendously excited to bring you *Cloak & Dagger* #2!

In this issue we intend to offer an in depth exploration of the The Black Art, the sleek science of picking locks. We will cover pin and tumbler locks, their lesser-known cousin the wafer tumbler lock, and the less conventional and less secure warded lock. Unlike other reputable lockpicking guides, we shall also provide the reader with templates and instructions for the fabrication of lockpicks and skeleton keys from easily scavengeable materials. Complex locks, such as optical scanners and palm readers, are beyond the scope of this pamphlet.

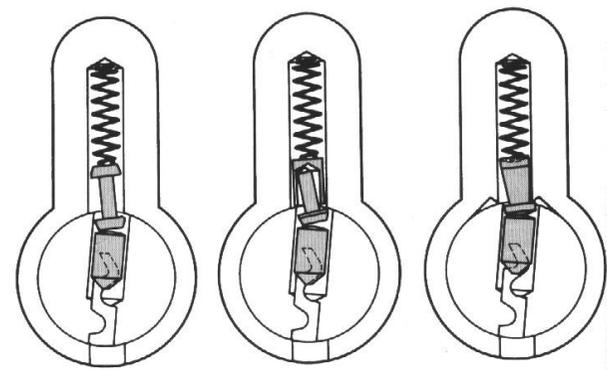
I can say with complete confidence that lockpicking is one of the most useful and empowering skills I have learned in my career. No dumpster is forbidden to me, no filing cabinet off limits. Given time and obscurity, doorknobs and deadbolts alike fall before my rakes and tension tools.

Learn well the skills within this zine and new worlds will be opened to you, reader. Master these skills, liberate material goods and forbidden grounds by defeating every lock you encounter, and pass these skills along to some promising footpad.

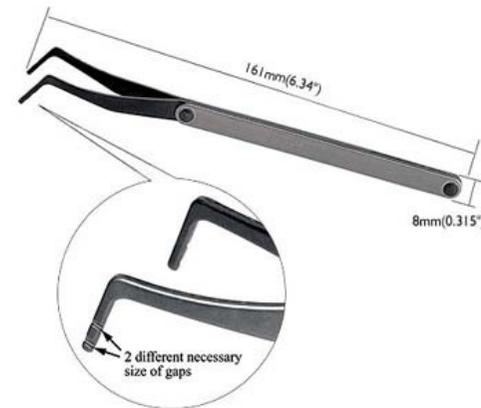
Happy pickings, bene coves,
~ Robin Marks

2 - Letter From the Editor

#7: Security Pins



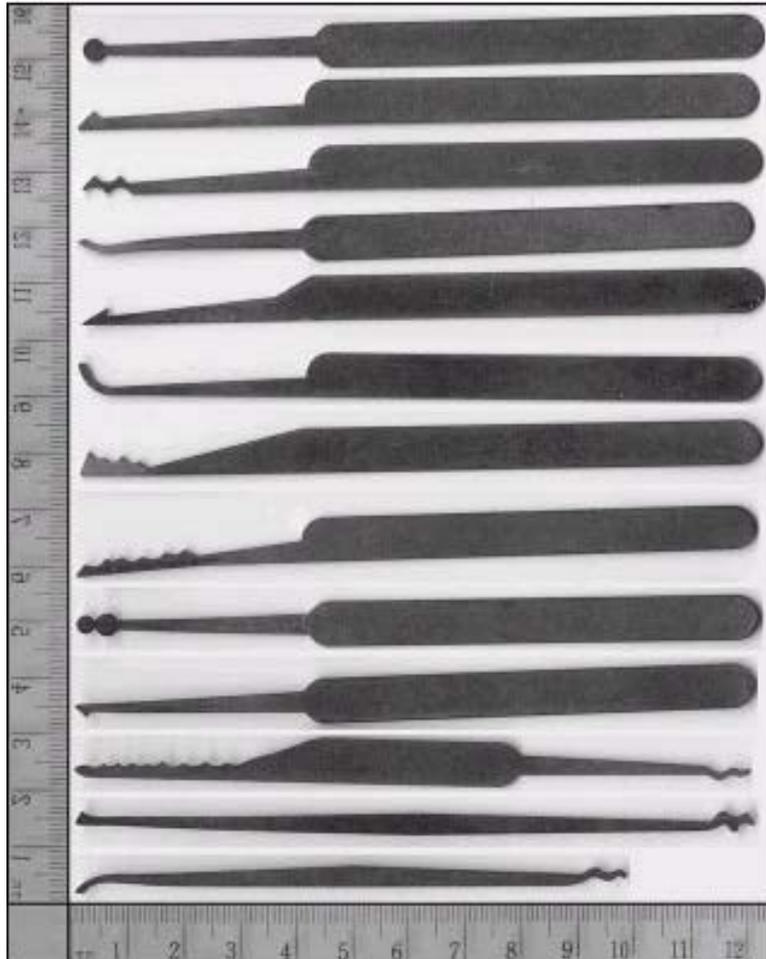
#8: Wafer-tumbler/Car-lock Tension Tool



#9: Bump Keys



#6b: Lockpick Templates



FORCIBLE ENTRY: BREAKING & ENTERING

In Which We Discuss Bypassing Locks Without Lockpicking

Lockpicking is a delicate art, one that demands finesse, a refined sense of touch, a oneness with the Void- *that which cannot be seen-* that Musashi spoke of. It is an amazing feat, to be sure. However, lockpicking often takes time, a commodity that the thief can not always afford. Therefore, in many cases, it is easier and wiser for the thief to simply circumnavigate locks altogether. This chapter and the next focus on bypassing locks without picking them.

The easiest way to avoid locks is usually by force. Forcible entry, for the purpose of this manual, is defined as the intentional damaging or dismantling of security devices or portals (windows, doors, etc.) to gain access to a forbidden area. This contrasts with lockpicking, lock bumping, and shimmying, as these techniques involve no intentional damage.

There are a number of tools and methods ready for such a task.

A perennial champion of the burglar is the crowbar or pry-bar, also called a bess, betty, jemmy, or ginny. This handy wedge can defeat a huge range of obstacles, including heavy locked doors and windows. In times of conflict, ginnies also make superb bludgeons. The many uses of the crowbar should be self-evident, and can be researched elsewhere.

Closely related to the crowbar is the bolt cutter, or Universal Key. This amazing (and inexpensive) device puts out upwards of 4000 lbs. of force in the jaws when only 50 lbs. are exerted on the handles. This means a typical set of bolt cutters will slice through padlocks, bolts, fences, and so on. One intense disadvantage of bolt cutters is that their

very presence is incriminating- being spotted with bolt cutters is a quick ticket to the iron-doulet. The utility of bolt cutters often outweighs the risk of using them.

When neither crowbar nor bolt cutter is available or desirable, breaking windows can go a long way. Although a common pop-culture trope, breaking a window and reaching inside to unlock a door is a functional and beautiful trick. One must be cautious in this era of "high" technology, for security systems are complex and subtle, sometimes silent. The thief must be completely positive that a house or business is not equipped with a security system before breaking windows.

In the event that a store, business, or residence is equipped with an alarm, a window can be broken to set off the alarm. Unless the business or residence is particularly wealthy, it is unlikely windows will be replaced within a single day. Thus, after breaking a window, a thief can return to a location the following night and remove any temporary window covering and enter through the broken portal.

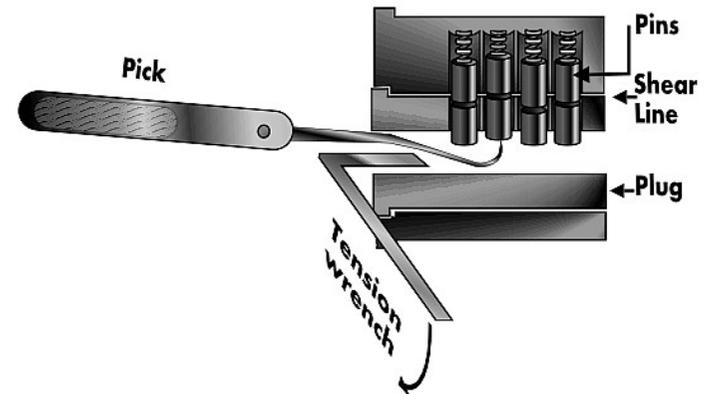
Removing Locking Mechanisms Entirely

Sometimes the thief is fortunate enough to come upon a lock whose locking mechanism can simply be removed by using the appropriate tools. This usually comes in the form of clasps that are screwed into place. Some such clasps- the low-security variety- can be removed using a screwdriver, Allen/hex wrench, TORX wrench, or other applicable tool. Please see picture #1a for an examples.

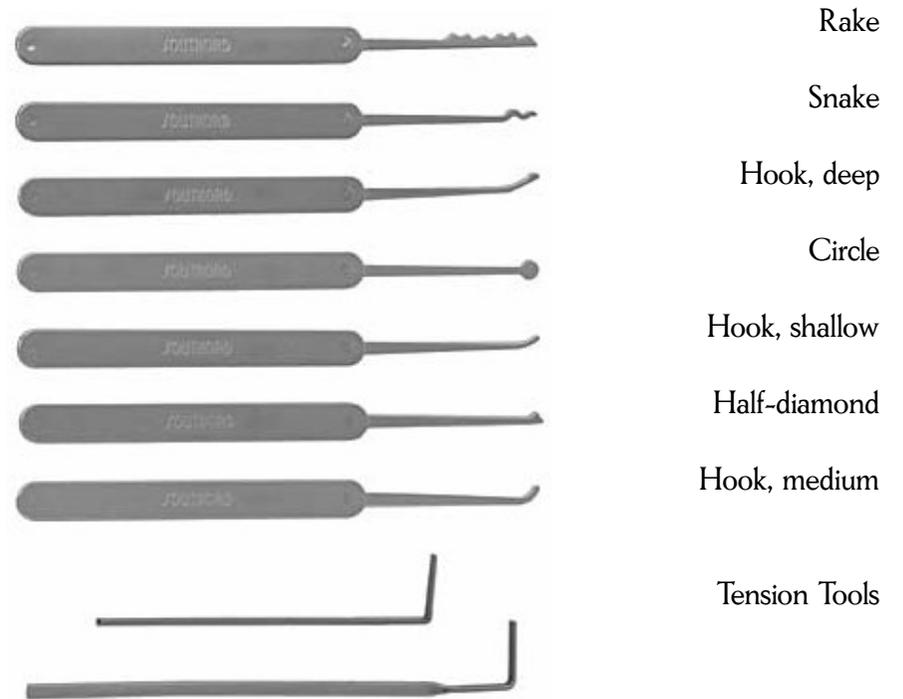
Certain manufacturers produce higher security clasps that conceal the screws that hold them in place when they are closed. Such clasps

4 - Forcible Entry

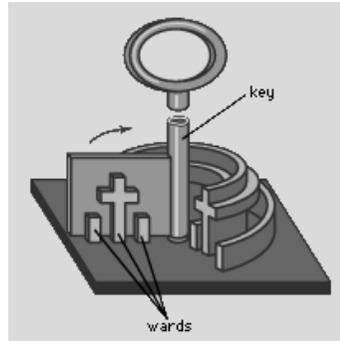
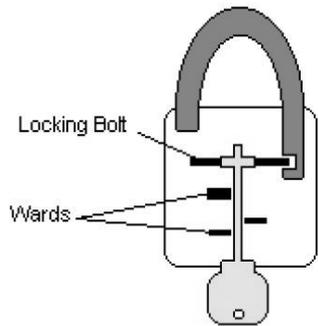
#5: Pin-tumbler Lock



#6a: Common Lockpick Types



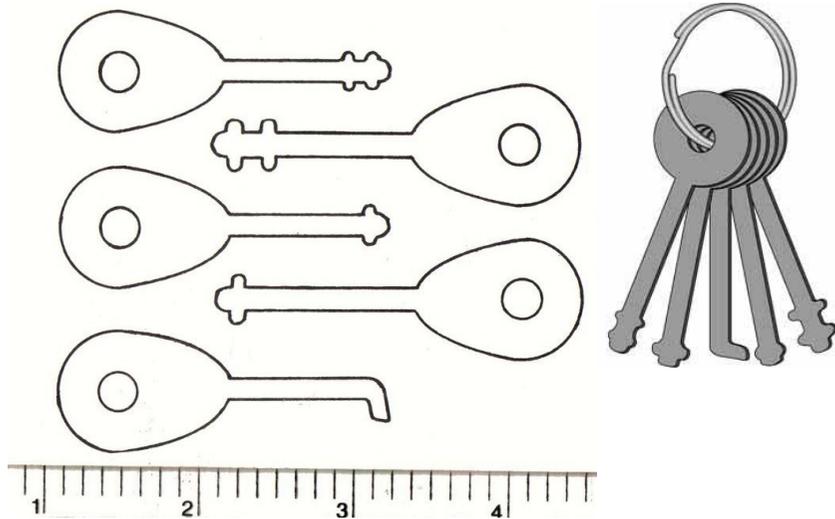
#3: Warded Locks



cannot be defeated using simple tools. See picture #1b for an example.

This method is not limited to clasps. Any part of a door, window, trunk, etc. that can be unscrewed or undone to provide access is a viable target. This requires the thief to come prepared with the appropriate tool, be it flathead, Phillips-head, hex wrench of a certain size, and so on. The authors recommend that all thieves outfit themselves with a multitool. These clever devices will undo a number of different screws and are perfectly legal to own and carry.

#4: Warded Key/Skeleton Key Templates



SHIMMING PADLOCKS & OLDER DOORS

In Which We Discuss the Exploitation of Gaps

All mechanical contraptions are engineered with flaws. *All of them!* The adroit dab will take advantage of design flaws. One way to do this is by shimming.

Shimming Padlocks

In padlocks, one such flaw is the locking mechanism itself. One side of the shackle on all padlocks has a small indentation that hooks onto the locking bolt (within the body of the padlock). Higher security padlocks have indentations on both sides of the shackle.

Rather than pick the lock or try to decipher the combination, padlocks can be beaten by shimming. Shimming a padlock is done by inserting a thin, flexible material- usually aluminum- into the holes that the shackle enters when locked. Then, because of the thinness and maneuverability of the shim, the lock and the indentation on the shackle are pushed

apart, thus opening the lock. For cheaper, lower security padlocks, this must only be done on one side of the shackle (typically the left side relative to the front of the lock). Superior padlocks require shimming on both sides of the shackle.

Commercial metal shims are available on the internet for sale and purchase. These shims do work, but they're not cheap. Another option is to make padlock shims from aluminum cans. Pictures #2a and 2b illustrates the shape, size, and use of shims.

Shims often bend and break. Be careful not to cut yourself when shimming padlocks, and make absolutely sure not to leave any evidence of shims behind in the field.

Shimming Doorknobs- Ye Olde Credit Card

Almost all older doors are susceptible to this attack. Very similar to shimming a padlock, the would-be burglar can insert any small, thin material between a door and the door frame, thus separating the knob's lock and the frame housing.

Only older doors and incredibly low-security modern doors can be opened with this tactic. The vast majority of modern doors come equipped with security plating that prevents the use of shims.

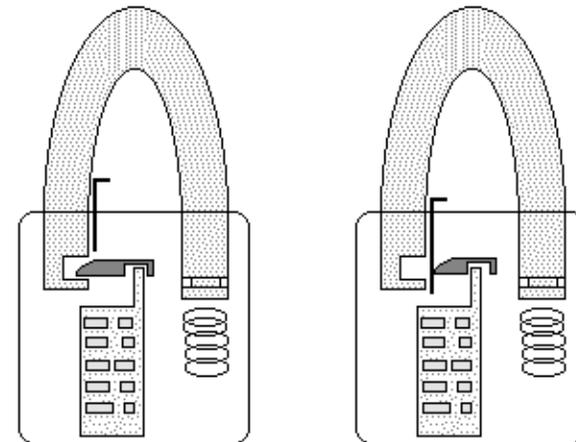
This tactic also fails when deadbolts are locked; it can only be used to open knobs.

Carrying a credit card, or any other similar hard plastic or thin metal shim, is completely legal in the Western world. Using such cards to shim doors is a quick and simple way to gain access to a small number of doors. For these reasons, the authors recommend that all thieves

#2a: Padlock Shims



#2b: How Shims Work Inside a Padlock



- Lockpicking.org, excellent primer on lock picking and bypassing
<http://www.lock-picking.org/>

- youtube.com

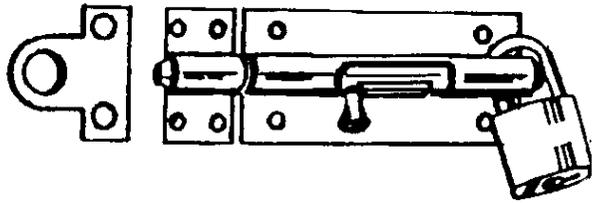
Contains countless videos of lockpicking, shimming, bumping, fabricating lockpicking tools and bump keys, and so on.

- Southord, Professional Lockpicks

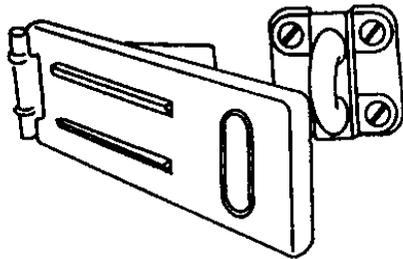
<http://www.southord.com/>

PICTURES, PLATES

#1a: Low-security clasp, removable with screwdriver



#1b: High-security clasp, not removable with tools



carry a small plastic or metal shim.

Another easy-to-implement and silent method of entry involves the use of the under-appreciated screwdriver! Any locks or security devices that are attached via a latch or hasp can be removed with a screwdriver rather than picking the lock. Some of these hasps are attached with screws that require an Allen/hex wrench and others- a rare few- are attached via TORX screws. Having a tool appropriate to the screw allows a thief to silently remove the entire hasp and locking mechanism, which not only allows access to the desired area but also gives the thief a hasp and lock!

WARDED LOCKS & SKELETON KEYS

In Which We Learn About the Simplest of Locks

Warded locks are perhaps the easiest locks to pick, and so we shall begin our exploration of lockpicking with them. Warded locks are named for their internal barriers- wards- that obstruct the keyway and prevent the lock from being opened. See picture #3a for an idea of what warded locks look like inside. Most people in this day and age will recognize warded locks by their cartoonish, skull-shaped keyhole.

Warded locks are commonly found on antiques, chests, cheap Masterlocks and other padlocks, and European doors. In North America, the most common warded lock is the cheap Masterlock padlock. These are easily recognizable given their zig-zag shaped keyholes, and the inability to pick them with common pin and tumbler picks and tension tools.

Warded keys, also called skeleton keys, can be quite elaborate. However, since only one part of any given warded key is required to push the locking mechanism inside, extremely simple keys and picks can be used to open locks with complex wards. Opening a warded lock is as simple as turning a key, and requires no explanation.

Skeleton keys can be acquired via the internet or from locksmiths sympathetic to those who walk in shadow. They can also be manufactured from sheet metal, and they can be made from elaborate warded keys by filing them down. This later method works swimmingly with Masterlock warded keys- once filed down, these keys make strong warded picks. See picture #4 for templates of warded keys.

PIN-TUMBLER & WAFER-TUMBLER LOCKS

In Which We Explore the Dub Lay, and the Fabrication of Rum Dubs

This category of lock is the most common in the world. Most locks that the modern thief will interact with are pin and tumblers. Thus, knowing well how to defeat these locks is of paramount importance.

Pin and tumbler locks are so named because they have a series (usually 3-5) of pins contained within a tumbler or "plug". In order for a pin and tumbler lock to successfully turn, all of the pins must be pushed to a specific height, the so called "shear line". So aligned, the tumbler will turn freely. See picture 5 for an example.

This is typically accomplished by means of a key, which pushes the pins to the proper height every time it is used. Without a key, the lock is commonly thought to be secure and inaccessible.

Dub (n.): a lockpick or skeleton key

Dubber (n.): a lockpicker

Dub Lay (n.): art of picking locks; robbing houses by picking locks

Flash Lingo (n.): the canting language

Footpad (n.): a common or novice thief

Iron-Doublet (n.): a prison

Kate (n.): a lockpick

Prig (n.): a thief

Rum (adj.): fine, good, valuable

RESOURCES

In Which We Provide Material for Further Study

Lockpicking

- *MIT Guide to Lockpicking* by Ted the Tool

<http://yggdrasil.distro.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/mitguidetolockpick.pdf>

- *The Complete Guide to Lockpicking* by Eddie the Wire
Excellent paperback on beginning lockpicking.

- *The Open Guide to Lockpicking*
<http://lockpickernetwork.wikidot.com/>

- *The Open Guide to Lockpicking- Security Pins*
<http://lockpickernetwork.wikidot.com/security-pins>

- Lockpicking 101, active forum for all things lockpicking
<http://www.lockpicking101.com/>

Certain tubular locks- namely older Kryptonite bike locks- can be picked with a ball-point pen, paperclip, or other small device. However, once picked, most tubular locks' pins will fall back into place when the cylinder is rotated, meaning the lock must be picked again.

The authors highly recommend that all footpads invest in tubular lockpicks. These tools are invaluable additions to any thieving arsenal.

THIEVES' CANT: A GLOSSARY OF HISTORIC & MODERN UNDERWORLD SLANG

In Which We Sum Up the Flash Lingo

In the first issue of *The Cloak & Dagger*, we began our exploration of thieves' cant, the secretive tongue of the underworld. In this issue, we used a number of new terms straight out of thieving antiquity. As discussed in the first issue, these terms are taken from several 18th and early 19th century sources. These include the Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue (Francis Grose, 1811), The New Canting Dictionary (Nathan Bailey, 1737), and Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux (1819). Please see Issue #1 for more information.

Glossary of Cant in This Issue

Historical Cant

Black Art, The (n.): the art and science of lockpicking

Charm (n.): a lockpick

Colt (n.): an apprentice thief

Dab (adj. or n.): expert, well-versed

20 – Thieves' Cant

However, to the prig, a pin and tumbler lock is a mere hurdle to be jumped.

This obstacle is overcome by the use of certain tools, namely lockpicks and tension tools. Bump keys are also used to defeat pin and tumbler locks, but these are discussed in later pages. Lockpicks act to push up the pins within the lock in place of the teeth on keys. The tension tool acts to keep a small amount of rotational force on the tumbler, the same way a key does when turned.

Because locks are manufactured imperfectly, exerting tension on the tumbler with the tension tool creates a small lip to trap and hold the pins once they are pushed to the shear line.

Lockpicks and Tension Tools,

Obtaining and Making Lockpicking Tools

Before a colt sets off to pick her first lock, she must first find or create a set of shiny kates. Lockpicks are easy enough to purchase via the internet, and certain kindly locksmiths and talented picklocks may gift such lovely little tools to the beginner. Resourceful rogues can fabricate their own picks and tension tools from common materials using simple hand tools. Before we discuss the making of lockpicking tools, let us first detail the types of picks a thief will use.

Types of Lockpick

The most common tools a thief will use in picking locks are the rake, hook, and half-diamond. Circle picks and diamond picks may come in handy for defeating wafer-tumbler locks, car door locks, and other two-sided (i.e., top and bottom pins/wards) tumblers. Picture #6a illustrates and defines different kinds of picks and tension tools.

Fabricating Lockpicks

Lockpicks can be constructed from common materials in a matter of minutes. The authors' favorite is the humble street-sweeper bristle. In most large cities, cacophonous machines drive by once or twice each week and sweep the streets with whirling steel-bristled scrubbers. These bristles break off in huge numbers, and make superb lockpicks. Their steel is strong and flexible, and they can easily be filed down into a variety of rakes, hooks, half-diamonds, and other picks. Picks made from sweeper bristles are stronger, longer-lived, and more flexible than commercial picks. Look for such bristles in gutters and intersections.

Bicycle spokes can also be used to fashion lockpicks. Traditional round spokes work for this purpose, but must be filed flat on the sides. Newer bladed spokes (flat on the sides) are superior in this capacity in that they don't require filing on the sides.

Hacksaw blades are a third option. These blades are incredibly cheap and easy to come by, and their steel is absurdly strong and flexible. They also provide access to deeper, longer hooks, full-diamonds, full-circles, and other picks that are too large to make using spokes or bristles. However, hacksaw blades are far more difficult to file down than street-sweeper bristles or bicycle spokes, and demand considerable time to make.

Besides these materials, any other strong, flat, lithe metal will suffice. Those who wish to make lockpicks must also obtain metal files. The process is made easier if one has access to both small, detailed files and large files that cover a lot of area.

Once all the materials are assembled, making lockpicks is as easy as filing down metal. The shape and size of the final pick depend on the

Bumping locks is a clumsy, albeit swift, way to bypass pin tumblers. It is also easy to learn, and bump keys can be made from nearly any key in a matter of minutes. Bump keys are reusable, sturdy, and effective for every lock they fit.

Bumping is a quick and painless way to open locks. However, it is loud and tactless. There are also a number of companies at present that manufacture bump-resistant locks, making the technique less practical. These locks are not made to be pick-resistant, though, so even thieves who rely heavily on bumping should learn how to pick locks.

TUBULAR LOCKS & TUBULAR LOCKPICKS

In Which We Discuss a Unique Form of Lock

Tubular pin tumbler locks are much less common than standard pin tumbler locks, but the rewards of picking these locks is often more substantial. Tubular locks are commonly found on vending machines, motorcycle locks, ATMs, computer locks, elevators, slot machines, and some bicycle locks. Tubular locks have a series of pins within the tumbler, but these pins are arranged in a circle rather than a straight line.

Though these locks are generally considered to be of a higher security level than standard pin tumblers, they are remarkably easy to pick with the proper tool. Tubular lockpicks can be purchased on the internet. They're pretty pricey, but considering the wide range of money-heavy machines they can open, the investment pays for itself in no time. Please refer to plate #10 for sample tubular locks.

on filing cabinets, chests, dressers, and desks.

Wafer tumblers are sometimes made with wafers on the top and bottom of the lock, making them harder to pick. Such wafer tumblers can be beaten with standard picks and tension tools, but they are much easier to overcome using a circle or diamond pick and a specialized tension tool. Without the special tension tool, it is still extremely helpful to use a diamond or circle pick with a standard tension tool. See image #8 for an idea of what wafer tension tools look like. Such tension tools are also used for car locks.

BUMPING PIN-TUMBLER LOCKS

In Which We Discuss a Noisy and Clumsy Method of Bypassing Locks

Lockpicking is not the only way to surpass a pin and tumbler lock by attacking the mechanism itself. Another technique, called bumping, has garnered some popular favor.

Bumping locks involves the use of a bump key and a hammer (or other bludgeoning device). Bump keys are made by filing the teeth down to their lowest possible point. See plate #9 for a sample bump key.

Once crafted, a bump key is inserted all the way into any tumbler that it fits. Then, it is pulled out by one pin. Once in this position, the key is struck from behind with a hammer or other heavy object, forcing it all the way into the tumbler. When the key moves forward, the force it exerts on the pins causes them all to jump up. When this happens, the thief begins turning the key, and as the pins fall they get caught on the shear line and the lock is able to turn.

desires of the maker. All manner of lockpicks can be made with these materials, but some (rakes, hooks, half-circles, and half-diamonds) are easier and simpler than others. Picture #6b provides templates of potential picks. Please don't feel limited by these templates or by commercial lockpicks. The authors routinely experiment with new designs and orientations, especially with rakes.

Improvised and Makeshift Lockpicks

Carrying a set of rum dubs is not always an option, and in many states (US) and provinces (elsewhere) it is expressly illegal to carry lockpicks. Getting caught with such tools where possession is illegal carries stiff penalties and lengthy jail or prison time.

Taking this into consideration, it is often preferable to fashion slapdash tools that can be discarded or easily concealed after use. Both lockpicks and tension tools can be cobbled together using a variety of materials.

It is common in popular media to depict thieves picking locks with bobby pins (hair pin, kirby grip, etc.). The truth of the matter is that bobby pins make excellent, though limited, lockpicks. Small sewing needles, paper clips, strong wire, and other firm, strong objects can be used in a pinch. In fact, upon hearing a story of a lightbulb filament being used as a hook, the editor of this shady periodical used such a filament to defeat a No.3 Masterlock.

As with lockpicks, so with tension tools. Tension tools can be made from bobby pins, paper clips, nails that are hammered flat, Allen wrenches hammered flat, street sweeper bristles, bike spokes, and so on. Flat-head screwdrivers, files, and other hand tools can also be utilized for this task.

Tips for the Novice Lockpicker

There are a few basic points that all nascent lockpickers should learn before trying their first lock. These principles hold true for the simplest of pin and tumbler locks and the most complex.

Finesse, Pressure, Using Too Much Force

The most common and most harmful mistake that lockpicking beginners make is the use of too much force. Lockpicking is truly a delicate art. The use of too much force not only damages and breaks picks and tension tools, but it also sometimes prevents successful picking.

Beginners are cautioned to use *very* little force. This is especially true for the picks themselves, somewhat less important for tension tools. On occasion, a lock's tumbler may be difficult to turn due to rust, corrosion, or gunk within the plug. Such tumblers require the picklock to apply greater force with the tension tool. Also, rarely, a lock's pins may be sticky. This requires greater force to be applied with the lockpick. This is dangerous ground, and can easily result in broken tools. Beginners are advised to avoid such locks.

Frustration, Calm, Focus

Lockpicking is difficult and stressful enough given its usually illegal nature. Therefore, the picklock must remain calm and focused when battling locks. Losing one's temper and/or getting frustrated makes lockpicking so much more difficult. It is best for the beginner to stop practicing this delicate skill before getting upset. Otherwise, it is easy to fall into the trap of using too much force and risk breaking one's tools. One can always return to a spot and attempt a lock again; one cannot necessarily always make or acquire new tools.

pins. The three most common types of security pin are the mushroom, the spool, and the serrated pin. Plate #7 shows these pins.

Security pins function by giving the impression that a lock has been defeated when it has not. Thus, they are easy to detect. When a tumbler turns as if it has been opened but only turns slightly and without opening, a security pin is most likely present. See the images below for an idea of what this looks like.

The easiest way to learn to defeat security pins is to practice. This means you must first obtain a lock with security pins. Remember, these can be identified because the tumblers will turn slightly without opening when a security pin is in action.

Security pins can be overcome by ever so gently releasing tension on the mechanism. Make sure not to release too much tension, lest you lose pins that have already been picked. With slight tension released, a small gap is created, allowing the security pin to be pushed past the shear line. Mastering this technique calls for devotion and repeated practice.

For a detailed analysis of security pins and methods for defeating them, please see <http://lockpickernetwork.wikidot.com/security-pins>.

Wafer Tumbler Locks

Wafer tumblers operate almost identically to pin and tumbler locks. The key difference is that wafer locks contain a series of square or rectangle-shaped pins rather than cylindrical pins. They are picked using standard lockpicks and tension tools, and they are typically much easier to defeat than pin and tumbler locks. Wafer locks are commonly found

Sometimes, picking an individual pin will cause previously-defeated pins to spring back down. This is a difficult and unavoidable obstacle. When this happens, the path to success is defined by discovering the order in which the pins must be picked.

Locks are often engineered in such a way that the innermost (rear) pins must be pushed very high. With the majority of these locks, raking alone will not suffice. Specialized deep-hooks are used to gain additional leverage and length, allowing the wielder to pick low rear pins without compromising the middle and foremost pins.

When using hooks and half-diamonds to battle specific pins fails, it is sometimes helpful to switch back to raking. In fact, switching between the two methods frequently can be very helpful. Just remember to keep tension on the tumbler when changing tools.

If raking is the thunderous cavalry stampede that beats the enemy into submission, picking individual pins is the silent knife in the dark. Anyone can learn to use a rake, but only truly adept picklocks know the ins and outs of the hook. If a lock can be opened exclusively by raking, that's wonderful. However, in order to gain a clear understanding of the mechanics of pin tumbler locks and to advance beyond noob picking, the authors advise that all thieves focus on the hook and/or half-diamond.

Advanced Picking: Security Pins

Some companies have caught wind of how laughably easy their locks are to pick. For this reason, these companies now manufacture high-end locks that contain internal devices meant to befuddle all but the most masterful dubbers. These insidious little devils are called security

Practice

This is the only way to master lockpicking. Steal padlocks, buy practice knobs and deadbolts, filch locks when they're open and sitting about unattended. Practice on the doors to your own home, practice on the doors to friends' homes. Practice, practice, practice, every day if possible. Push yourself, attempt locks that are incredibly difficult, practice on locks that contain security pins. Time yourself and try to improve on your previous times.

Use Your Hands and Your Ears, Listen While You Feel

Lockpicking is primarily an art of dexterity. One must develop "eye fingers", or the ability to see with one's hands. Tumblers are too small to visually see inside them, and so, while working, the rum dubber can visualize the innerworkings of the lock by touch.

The act of seeing with one's fingers is aided by one's sense of hearing. Listening to the internal happenings of a lock is sometimes crucial to picking it. It is often wise to release the tension on a lock when having difficulty picking it, and listen to the number of pins that click back down into place. Since most pin and tumbler locks have 3-5 pins, this can give an excellent idea of how many pins have been picked and how many remain uncompromised.

Adjust Tension

It is often helpful to adjust the amount of tension being exerted on the tumbler via the tension tool. Doing so throughout the process of picking a lock can help tricky pins to stay above the shear line. Adjusting tension can be most useful when a lock refuses to yield even when it seems it should open. Alternating between different tensions is pivotal to successfully picking security pins.

Figure Out Which Way the Tumbler Turns

Without knowing which way the tumbler turns (clockwise or counter-clockwise), it is difficult to pick a lock. The easiest way to determine this is to insert a tension tool, apply slight pressure in one direction, and observe the tumbler's reaction. If it gives ever so slightly, it most likely turn that direction. If it seems rigid, try the other direction.

Developing one's eye-fingers and feeling the reaction of pins can also be helpful. When attempting to turn a tumbler the way it doesn't turn, pins usually have a different and awkward feel to them.

Beware that some tumblers turn both clockwise and anti-clockwise.

Beginning Lockpicking: Scrubbing/Raking

The easiest lockpicking technique to learn is called scrubbing or raking. This technique will open a large number of cheap, low-quality pin and tumbler locks, including padlocks and doors. Though easy to learn and implement, this technique remains useful for even intricate and difficult locks.

Scrubbing utilizes the rake (hence its other name, raking). Half-diamond, half-circles, and hooks can also be used for raking, but with less efficacy than a rake. The technique is can be done in several variations, but is essentially always the same. To scrub a lock, the dubber inserts the tension tool and then the rake. The rake is then pulled upward (that is, pushing the pins up, but not necessarily "up" in regards to the lock or lockpicker) and out of the lock, while a small amount of tension is put on the tumbler. This affects each of the pins, and in cheaper locks will defeat many of them. The rake can be inserted again and moved rapidly (though gently) back and forth on the pins. Many locks will open with this technique alone.

When a lock cannot be defeated by scrubbing alone, this technique is still regularly implemented before detailed picking. Most locksmiths and rogues will scrub a lock before moving on to pin-by-pin picking with a hook or half-diamond.

Sometimes it is helpful to switch back to raking once a hook/half-diamond has been used to attack individual pins. This is discussed in the following section.

Intermediate Picking, Picking Individual Pins

When raking cannot open a lock, the thief must learn to use precise tools like the hook and half-diamond to pick each individual pin. Talented picklocks can also use this technique without scrubbing and defeat locks.

This is usually the second half of picking any given lock, the first being scrubbing. Almost all locks will lose some pins to scrubbing. Most locks will also not be defeated by scrubbing alone. Thus, after scrubbing, tension is kept on the tumbler and the rake removed. The thief then uses a hook or half-diamond to enter the tumbler and feel about for the pins that are still active. This requires sensitive and adept eye-fingers.

Upon finding functioning pins, the thief then uses the hook/half-diamond to push these pins up to the shear line, thus defeating them. It may be necessary to alternate or adjust tension while attacking individual pins.