What to check when securing the locks on a new home

Why the locks on a new home need your attention

Moving into a different house brings a long list of tasks. Changing the locks might not be the first thing on your mind, but it is one of the most important. You have no way of knowing who still has a key to the doors. The previous owner, a former tenant, a neighbour who once fed the cat, a contractor who worked on the kitchen, any of them could have a copy. Home lock rekeying solves that uncertainty without replacing the entire hardware. It lets you keep the existing locks but changes the internal pins so the old keys no longer work. A new set of keys operates every exterior door instead. This checklist walks you through what to look at so the job is done properly and nothing is missed.

Check the condition of each exterior door lock

Before you decide on rekeying, take a close look at every lock on the outside of the house. A lock that is rusted, stiff, or visibly worn might not be worth keeping. The cylinder, the part where the key inserts, should turn smoothly. If it feels gritty or sticks halfway, the internal pins could be damaged. A professional can often tell whether a lock can be rekeyed or needs replacement. The same goes for the deadbolt. It should extend fully into the strike plate on the door frame with no wobble. If the deadbolt only slides partway, the door or frame may have shifted. That is a separate fix, but one worth sorting before you spend time on rekeying. Also check that the keyway, the shape of the keyhole, matches the type of key you want to use. Most residential locks use a standard keyway, but older homes sometimes have unusual profiles that require a different approach.

Count every keyed entrance, including less obvious ones

People often focus on the front door and forget the side door, the back door, the garage entry, and the door from the garage into the house. A basement door that leads outside is another one that is easy to overlook. Walk around the entire property and note every exterior door that has a keyed lock. If you have a separate lock on a storm door or a security screen, include that as well. The goal is to have one key that opens everything. Home lock rekeying works best when all cylinders are pinned to the same key. That means the locksmith needs to work on every lock you want to match. If you miss one, you could end up carrying two keys for years before realising the mistake.

Decide whether to rekey or replace

Rekeying is usually the cheaper and faster option. It keeps the existing hardware and only changes the pins inside the cylinder. But it only makes sense if the lock body is in good shape. If the lock is a cheap model, if it has been forced open before, or if the finish is flaking and the mechanism feels loose, replacement might be the better call. New locks come with their own set of keys and often have updated security features. A good locksmith can advise on the condition of each lock and give you a straight answer. The choice also depends on whether you want all locks to match cosmetically. Rekeying keeps the existing look, while replacement lets you pick a uniform style. Neither is right or wrong, but it helps to decide before the work begins.

Look at the strike plate and door frame

A lock is only as strong as the frame it sits in. The strike plate is the metal piece on the door frame that the deadbolt slides into. If the screws are short or the plate is loose, a strong kick can pop the door open even if the lock is perfect. Check that the strike plate is secured with screws long enough to reach the framing behind the jamb. Many builders use stubby screws that only bite into the trim. Replacing them with longer screws is a simple upgrade that costs very little and adds real strength. Also look at the gap between the door and the frame. If the gap is uneven, the deadbolt may not align with the strike plate. That can make the lock hard to operate and wear out the pins faster. A locksmith can often adjust the strike plate or the hinges to fix the alignment before rekeying.

If you are unsure about any of these points, getting lock help after moving home from a professional is a sensible move. They can spot issues that are not obvious to a new homeowner and handle the whole process in one visit.

Confirm the number of keys you need

Once the rekeying is done, you will get a fresh set of keys. Think about how many people in your household need a copy and whether you want a spare for emergencies. A locksmith can cut extra copies on the spot. It is usually cheaper to get them at the same time than to come back later. Keep one master key in a safe place outside the house, a lockbox or with a trusted neighbour, so you are never locked out. It sounds obvious, but many new homeowners forget to plan for that until they are standing in the rain with no way in.



Consider the locks on shared or secondary entries

If you have a rental unit, a home office with its own entrance, or a door used by a cleaner or dog walker, you might want different keys for different locks. Rekeying can be done so that some doors share a key and others do not. That is a common request in multi-occupancy homes. Just tell the locksmith which doors should match and which should be separate. It is a small detail that saves hassle later. The same goes for a shared driveway gate or a lock on a shed where you store tools. Those are not always part of a standard rekeying job, so mention them when you book the appointment.

Check the brand and model of your locks

Most residential locks from major brands like Schlage and Kwikset can be rekeyed. But some cheaper or off-brand locks use non-standard pins that are harder to work with. If your locks are a brand you do not recognise, a locksmith can tell you whether rekeying is possible. If the locks are very old, the manufacturer may no longer make compatible parts. In that case, replacement is the only reliable option. Knowing the brand also helps if you want to match a new lock to an existing key. Some brands offer rekeying kits for DIY, but those are limited to certain models. For a full set of exterior doors, a professional job is usually more reliable and saves the frustration of a lock that jams after a few weeks.

If any of this feels overwhelming, remember that **lock help after moving home** is exactly what a good locksmith provides. They can inspect each door, explain what needs doing, and handle the work efficiently.

Verify that all keys work before the locksmith leaves

When the job is finished, test every lock with the new key. Try it from both sides if the lock has a thumb turn. Lock and unlock each door several times to make sure the mechanism cycles smoothly. If a lock feels sticky or the key does not insert fully, the pins may need adjustment. It is much easier to fix that while the locksmith is still there than to call them back later. Also check that the old keys no longer work. That is the whole point of rekeying, and a quick test confirms the job was done right. Keep the new keys in a safe spot and label them if you have multiple sets. A little organisation at this stage prevents confusion down the road.

Think about future access for service people

If you plan to hire contractors, cleaners, or pet sitters, consider whether you want to give them a key. A rekeyed lock means you control who has access. You can have a spare key cut for temporary use and then have the lock rekeyed again after they finish. That is more secure than handing over your only key and hoping for the best. Some homeowners keep a separate lock box with a combination for deliveries and short-term guests. It is not a must, but it is worth thinking about while the locksmith is still there and you have their attention.