

Locked out

Easy · 15 min to set up now · Free to prepare

Call your landlord or building's after-hours line first. If you need a locksmith, call one you've checked, get the full price before they come, and check ID when they arrive. Fake locksmiths quote a low price on the phone, then charge far more on site.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your landlord's after-hours number, saved in your phone
- ☐ A trusted locksmith's number, saved now
- ☐ A spare key with someone you trust

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Call your landlord, property manager or the building's after-hours maintenance line first.** Many can let you in for little or nothing. Your lease or welcome packet has the number.
- 2 **Locked out of your car?** Call your roadside assistance first. It may come with your car, your insurance or a club like AAA.
- 3 **If you need a locksmith, don't just call the first search ad.** Fake local listings route you to out-of-state call centers.
- 4 **Listen to how they answer.** A generic "locksmith services" instead of a business name is a warning sign. Ask for the business's legal name. If they won't say, call someone else.
- 5 **Get the full price before they come: service call, travel, labor and parts.** Ask for a written quote before work starts, and don't agree if the price goes up on site.
- 6 **Check ID when they arrive, and see if it matches the business name on the bill and the vehicle.** A real locksmith should ask for your ID too, to make sure you live there.
- 7 **Get an itemized invoice when it's done.** Pay by card if you can, so you can dispute a bad charge.

Watch out Hear "the lock has to be drilled" on a basic lockout? Be skeptical. Bait-and-switch locksmiths claim the job is more complicated than expected, then raise the price and push for cash. Some states, like Connecticut, require locksmiths to register, and you can look them up.

DAD NOTE *Pick your locksmith while you're calm. Locked outside at midnight is the worst time to shop.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/your-place/when-something-goes-wrong/locked-out/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: Minnesota Attorney General; Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection; Washington State Attorney General.