

Types of Lockpicking Tools & Their Usage



The most popular tool in lockpicking is the hook. Used to perform the methodical “pin by pin lifting” technique, the hook can reach into each pin stack’s chamber and lift to a wide variety of positions. Naturally, the deep hook can achieve greater lift than the short hook, but its larger size makes it unwieldy and difficult to insert into many keyways. Since the long travel of the deep hook is unnecessary in most picking attempts, the short hook tends to be far more popular. Nine out of ten times, a single short hook and a simple torsion wrench are all you need to open a lock.

A far less sophisticated method of opening locks is the technique of “raking” or “scrubbing” the pins. Pick tools known as rakes are inserted into the keyway and worked across the bottom pins while a small degree of tension is applied. This technique is much more effective against locks of poor quality and cheap construction. Raking should not be confused with “jiggling” and rake picks are not moved vertically against the pin stacks. Which style of rake to use is entirely arbitrary and depends upon the lock’s internal construction and your own preferences.



One last pick tool included in these kits is a half diamond. This tool is the most difficult to categorize, primarily due to the fact that it could be called a jack of all trades but master of none. The half diamond can be used for either individual pin lifting or for raking/scrubbing. It doesn’t perform either function as well as a specialized tool... but what it *can* do quite successfully is fit into very small spaces. Locks with exceedingly small keyways where normal pick movement is impossible can sometimes be tackled with the half diamond. Additionally, the long flat bottom face of this tool can be useful in determining how many pin stacks a lock contains. By inserting a half diamond pick *upside down*, raising it to lift the pins, and slowly withdrawing it you can hear each pin stack drop down one by one. Count the clicks and you’ll know the number of pin stacks with which the lock was constructed.

Torsion tools are used to apply force upon the plug during all picking and raking operations. Very, very light force is required. There is no right or wrong way to insert them into a lock. Some people insert it up high (figure 1) in order to have maximum room to work picks in the keyway below. This technique can make the tool’s hold on the plug rather tenuous, however, and can cause interference with the outermost pin stack. Alternately, some people opt to insert their torsion tool in the bottom of the keyway (figure 2) for greater ease of use. This can limit your range of movement in very tight spaces, however. Some torsion tools have twisted necks, while others are flat pieces of metal with a single bend. Other shapes can be found, too, in different kits. The variations are designed to give you a wider range of positions in which to comfortably hold the metal in your hands while you work.



figure 1



figure 2