



Smart Lock Buying Guide Quick Reference Handout

Smart locks are one of the most important smart home devices you can own. Having a smart lock means you never have to look for keys or be locked out of your house again. There are a lot of options when shopping for a smart lock, and to get the most out of the model you choose it's important to choose the right type for your home.

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What is a smart lock?

A smart lock is a door lock that lets you lock and unlock your door from an app on your phone or a keypad on the lock itself. You won't need physical keys to use this kind of lock, but some types do offer a physical key you can use if you'd like to. You can set your smart lock to automatically open when you are near it or tap to open or lock it when you'd like to let someone else into your home. You can also send other people digital keys or grant them access so they can enter your home too.

Types of smart locks

There are many different options when choosing a lock for your smart home, and the type you choose will depend on where you are placing the lock and what type of lock you'd like to install.

1. Smart locks to fit your existing deadbolt

You can choose a smart lock that works with your existing deadbolt. You install this type of lock over your own hardware on the interior side of your door and leave the exterior keyhole in place. Also known as retrofit smart locks, this lock works by physically turning the deadbolt for you.

2. Smart locks with their own deadbolt

Some types of smart locks have their own deadbolt or other hardware. The process to install this type of lock is slightly more complex as you'll have to switch out your door's existing deadbolt for the new deadbolt.

Connection options for smart locks

Once the smart lock is installed you'll need to connect it to your home network so you can control it via an app. Depending on the type of smart lock you'd like, it will connect in one of three ways.

1. Wi-Fi smart locks



A Wi-Fi-connected smart lock connects to your home's Internet network. Some models of Wi-Fi lock have software that connects directly to your Wi-Fi network while others offer Wi-Fi connectivity as an add-on option. With add-on Wi-Fi connectivity you'll use another device called a bridge or a device you plug into a wall near the lock itself.

2. Bluetooth smart locks

A Bluetooth smart lock will connect to your phone when you're within range of the lock. The range will depend on the lock itself, but most can connect within 200 to 300 feet.

3. Z-wave locks

A Z-Wave smart lock is a lock that requires a Z-Wave hub to transmit data from your lock to your home's Internet router. A Z-Wave hub is a device that becomes the central hub of your smart home, and it connects other devices like your smart lock, smart doorbell, or smart appliances.

How secure is a smart lock?

Smart locks offer you a very secure way to lock your door. Although a retrofit smart lock will use your existing deadbolt, most locks have a touch screen or plate on the front of the door for added security. They will also track any attempt to log in to your brand's app and tamper with your lock, and you can always change the keycode if you're concerned someone may gain access to your home. Here are a few tips to keep your smart lock secure.

1. Update your smart lock software

Smart lock brands will update the lock's software from time to time. Be sure to install these updates as soon as they are available as they may contain security patches or software to keep your lock up to date.

2. Use a strong password

One of the best tips for using a smart lock is to create a passcode that would be difficult for anyone to guess. Try not to use a passcode that's also a birthday or special date, and be sure to switch your passcode from time to time to keep your home safe and secure.

3. Choose a smart lock with encryption

Some smart locks have technology that encrypts your smartphone and smart lock connection. Take a look at the features on the smart lock you're interested in to see if it supports 128-bit AES encryption or Bluetooth SMART.

4. Upgrade your router

A smart lock connects to your home's Wi-Fi network so one of the ways you can make your smart lock more secure is to upgrade your router. The latest routers can block malicious threats to your network and the devices connected to it.



Things to consider when choosing a smart lock

Here are a few things to consider when choosing the best smart lock for your home.

1. Do you need a smart lock to work with your smart doorbell?

Some smart locks can be paired with a smart doorbell. When you pair the two devices together you have a security system that notifies you of who is at your door and gives you the opportunity to unlock the door and let them into your house if you'd like to.

2. Battery life of smart locks

Most smart locks have a battery life of 3 months to 1 year before you need to swap out the batteries.

3. How does auto-unlock work?

Auto unlock is a feature on smart locks that lets you unlock the door without needing to pull out a key or tap on a keypad. Auto unlock can be activated by geolocation or Bluetooth access via the smart lock's app or your smart watch.

4. What happens if there is a battery failure?

Some smart locks have a backup if your battery fails before you can charge it or change it. There are certain types of smart lock that have a keyhole and keys and some smart locks have a small spot you can touch with a 9-volt battery to give you enough of a charge to open it up and change the batteries.

5. Do you want your smart lock to allow guest access?

If you'd like to allow your delivery driver to put your packages inside your house or you have a rental and you'd like to let people in and out of the unit temporarily, you can choose a smart lock that allows guest access by setting a pin code with date and time expiry so your guest can enter on a certain day or time.

Features on smart locks

A smart lock can do much more than just lock and unlock your door. Here are a few features different models of locks will share.

1. Fingerprint scanner

Some types of smart locks have fingerprint scanners. You can train the lock to recognize your fingerprint and when you place it over the sensor your door will unlock.

2. Touch keypad



A touch keypad lets you enter a pin code to unlock your door. You can set up a pin code for yourself or create one for a friend, family member, or delivery person.

3. Auto Locking

With Auto-Lock turned on your lock will lock within a set time frame. If you'd like your door to lock after one minute of opening, you can set it to Auto-Lock and it will lock for you.

4. Geo locking

Geo lock and unlock is a feature that will unlock your door when the lock picks up that you're within a certain distance or range.

5. Voice control

Some smart locks are compatible with voice assistants like Alexa, Google Assistant, Siri, or Bixby.

6. Access log and history

Some lock apps will keep a history of who opened and closed the door or how the door was locked and unlocked. Whenever someone uses their code you'll see a history of how many times your door was locked or unlocked.

7. Assign individual key codes

You can program individual key codes in your lock and set the key code to expire after a certain period of time, making a smart lock the perfect choice for an Airbnb property or rental.

8. Alarm

A few types of locks will offer a built-in alarm. If someone tries the key code too many times or they are attempting to remove the lock itself, an alarm will go off.

9. Lock with built-in video doorbell

You can find smart locks with built-in video doorbells. Having your doorbell right on your lock reduces clutter near your door and puts your lock and doorbell control in one app.