

Locksmith

Introduction

Locksmiths supply, fit and repair locks for homes, businesses and cars. They make keys to fit locks, using a wide range of tools.

Locksmiths also fit sophisticated security systems such as closed-circuit television. Some provide a 24-hour emergency service, for example, helping customers who are locked out or whose locks have been damaged in break-ins.

Work Activities

As a Locksmith, you will supply, fit, service and repair a wide range of locks. You also give people advice on ways to improve the security of their homes or business premises.

You are highly skilled. Your work involves everything from basic key cutting to emergency opening procedures and the installation of sophisticated security systems.

Many Locksmiths work from a shop and offer a call-out service to do a wide variety of different tasks. Others are mobile and offer a 24-hour emergency service.

You deal with emergency access problems, for example, when someone has lost their keys, locked themselves out of their house or had a lock damaged during an attempted break-in.

You may also do this at the request of the police, local authorities and housing associations.

Call-outs can involve travelling in the local area at any time of the day or night to gain access to a vehicle or building. Locksmiths often work outdoors, sometimes in bad weather.

When fitting a new lock or replacing a faulty one, you first talk to the owner or Builder of the property to discuss their requirements.

You often give advice on security and fire safety issues, using your expert knowledge to recommend the most appropriate security systems for the customer.

Some customers (for example, businesses and large organisations) have sophisticated requirements, for example, electronic locks, master key systems and closed-circuit television.

Larger projects of this kind may involve you in co-operation with building companies and security guard firms.

After talking to the owner or Builder of the property, you will advise which type of lock assembly is most suitable.

You measure and mark the exact position of the new lock, and then use tools to cut or chisel holes that fit the lock exactly. Using screws, you secure the mechanisms. You make sure mechanisms work properly, making minor adjustments if necessary.

Locksmiths who work in retail outlets give advice and sell security products to the general public. This may include selling padlocks and safes, and producing duplicate keys either by hand or using key cutting machinery.

You work for specialist firms, advising Property Owners on security issues.

You may become involved in auto-locksmithing (repairing locks in cars), for example, or providing an emergency call-out service.

Locksmiths may offer a specialist service such as key cutting and repair of antique locks, for example, for customers who are renovating an older property.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.



Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Locksmith, you need:

- a high level of technical skill
- expert knowledge of a wide range of lock assemblies and other security devices
- good hand to eye co-ordination
- an interest in mechanical and electronic gadgetry
- a thorough knowledge of sophisticated techniques and technology, including master keying and electric locks
- to be willing to keep up to date with any new changes in the security industry
- to be a good communicator and able to get on with a wide range of people at all levels
- a good deal of patience
- basic number skills for calculating advanced security systems, as well as working out quotes/estimates and preparing invoices
- to be honest, trustworthy, discreet and able to inspire confidence
- to be tactful and calm when dealing with people who have been locked out - they could be upset
- to follow health and safety procedures, and use lifting equipment where possible
- a flexible attitude, as you might get called out at any time of day or night

You may also deal with heavy items, such as safes, so bending and lifting may be involved.

Carpentry skills would be very useful.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £22,000 - £25,000
- With experience: £28,000 - £34,500
- Senior Locksmiths earn £38,000 - £42,500

Hours of work

Locksmiths work 40 hours a week, which may include Saturdays and standby duties to be available for call-out.

Where could I work?

Employers are:

- retail outlets
- security companies
- specialist workshops
- manufacturers

Opportunities for Locksmiths occur with employers throughout the UK.

Self-employment

Opportunities occur for experienced Locksmiths to become self-employed, either working on their own or through a franchise operation.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in local newspapers, trade industry publications, at Jobcentre Plus and on the Find a Job website.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry

An Intermediate Level Apprenticeship is a great place to start. Take a look at our information article 'Apprenticeships – How do I apply', for more details about applying for apprenticeship positions.

Training

You can follow training courses run by the Master Locksmiths Association (MLA). The courses take place at the MLA's training workshops near Daventry, Northants.

City & Guilds also offers relevant courses.

It's important for you to keep up to date with new products and techniques through Continued Professional Development (CPD).

Work Experience

Previous experience in the construction industry such as carpentry, engineering or electronics would really make you stand out from the crowd!

Progression

Locksmiths can progress to specialist posts or to Team Leader/Supervisor positions after further training and experience. Some Locksmiths become self-employed, either working on their own or through a franchise operation.

Qualifications

To get onto an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need at least 2 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, possibly including English and maths.

Practical craft, technology and engineering subjects will give you an advantage in this career.

A full driving licence is essential for this job.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

Skills/experience

Most employers look for candidates with relevant work skills, though some want you to have academic qualifications too. A background in carpentry, engineering or electronics could give you an advantage.

Work within the security industry, for example, working on alarm systems, can also be helpful.

Statistics

- 4% of people in occupations such as locksmith work part-time.
- 6% have flexible hours.
- 2% of employees work on a temporary basis.

Further Information

Contacts

- **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Tel: 0800 015 0400
Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
Website: www.apprenticeships.org.uk
- **City & Guilds**
Address: 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD
Tel: 020 7294 2468
Email: learnersupport@cityandguilds.com
Website: www.cityandguilds.com
- **Skills for Security**
Address: Security House, Barbourne Road, Worcester WR1 1RS
Tel: 01905 744000
Email: info@skillsforsecurity.org.uk
Website: www.skillsforsecurity.org.uk
- **Master Locksmiths Association (MLA)**
Address: 5d Great Central Way, Woodford Halse, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 3PZ
Tel: 01327 262255
Email: enquiries@locksmiths.co.uk
Website: www.locksmiths.co.uk
- **Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/

Related Careers

- Domestic Appliance Service Engineer
- Maintenance Engineer
- Machine Operator
- Engineering Craft Machinist
- Office Machine Service Engineer
- Vehicle Body Refinisher
- Vehicle Body Repairer
- Welder
- Toolmaker
- Watch and Clock Repairer
- Mechanic
- Lift Engineer
- Escalator Engineer
- PAT Tester