

How to Find a Good Locksmith

Given the overwhelming number of unlicensed locksmiths who advertise in the phone book and the internet, it can be difficult to find a good licensed locksmith. An easy solution is to have a copy of Consumer Checkbook (www.consumerscheckbook.org) by your phone. Think of the publication as a local version of Consumer Reports. Businesses listed in the book are generally pretty trustworthy.

It's always a good idea to check with the Better Business Bureau (<http://search.bbb.org/>) about any company you hire before you hire them. The Better Business Bureau will give you a reliability report which will include the number of complaints the bureau has received about the company in the last 36 months. The BBB will also rate the company as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Some chapters of the BBB have gone to a letter grade system to rate companies.

It is easy to check if a locksmith is licensed. Here is a step by step guide on how to verify a license.

STEP 1: Visit the California state's locksmith search Web site at <http://www2.cslb.ca.gov/OnlineServices/CheckLicense/NameRequest.asp>

STEP 2: Enter the name of the business you would like to check out. In this example we have used "Sam's Locksmith." Click "Find" to complete search request.

Business Name:

Match any part of Business Name

OR

License Number: Enter numbers only (no letters)

AND/OR

City:

County:

Records displayed each time?

STEP 3: Find the business you searched for and click on the name.

Search Results for Locksmith Company

This information is updated Monday through Friday - Last updated: FEB-26-2007

To see all the information for a licensee, click on the highlighted name. This will also include c

Name	Type	Number	Status	City	County
SAM'S LOCKSMITH DO		756	CLEAR	SAN FRANCISCO	SAN FRANCISCO

STEP 4: View the results of your search.

A locksmith is required by law to include a license number in any advertising they do and to carry their license with them to any job. When a locksmith arrives, always request to see a license.

Many locksmiths operate under several business names. The locksmith is required to have a separate license for each business name. The Department of Consumer Affairs says many locksmiths only have one license, even though they are known by several business names.

Attorney Al Anolik in San Francisco says if a locksmith is unable to produce a license, a consumer does not have to pay them. A bill by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (d) San Francisco raises the fine for operating without a license ten fold to \$10,000. It's hoped the higher fine will encourage the district attorney to prosecute these cases.

Finally, consumers should also check for membership in such professional organizations as the California Locksmiths Association and the Associated Locksmiths of America. Locksmiths who charge \$500 or more must also have a contractor's license in addition to a locksmith's license. To check for a contractor's license, go to [http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllpub/wllquery\\$.startup](http://www2.dca.ca.gov/pls/wllpub/wllquery$.startup).

To file a complaint against a locksmith, go to <http://www.dca.ca.gov/complainthelp/citizen-complaint.html> or call the Bureau of Security and Investigative Services at 1-800-952-5210.

The state received 73 complaints about unlicensed locksmiths last fiscal year, but the number of people victimized is believed to be much higher.

