Locksmithing for Dummies

Maybe I'm Not So Dumb!

A Reference for the Rest of Us!

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Legal Notice

• Laws regarding lockpicking vary significantly state-by-state
• In most states purchase and possession of dedicated lockpicking tools is legal
  – Penalties are raised significantly if you get caught using them in commission of a crime
  – Typically moves an offense from a civil offense or misdemeanor to a felony
What Is Physical Security?

• Any physical object that creates a barrier to unauthorized access
• This includes: locks, latches, safes, alarms, guards, guard dogs, doors, windows, walls, ceilings, floors, fences, door strikes, door frames and door closers
Is Physical Security An IT Concern?

• You have been working hard to secure your network from cyber attacks
  – Redundant layers of antivirus programs, firewalls and intrusion detection systems should protect against every possible electronic method of entry

• But what if an attacker gains access to the server room or network wiring closet ...

• Is you network still safe?
Compromising Locks

• For centuries, the lock has been one of the cornerstones of physical security
  – We rely on dozens of them every day to protect people and assets
• The trust most people place in locks is unwarranted
  – Most locks can be easily compromised with nondestructive methods
  – Sometimes within seconds and with readily available tools
• “Locks keep honest people honest”
History of Locks Vs. Encryption

• Very easy to break
• Very few physical keys
  – The width and the length of the key
• Few combinations C$^S$
  – Difficult to use with a large number of cylinders (C) and symbols (S)
• Effective because people were not good at casting iron or algorithms

• Very easy to break
• Very few possible encryption keys
  – i.e. 1-26 letter shift
• Effective because people were not able to read (illiterate)
Splitting-spring lock

- Lock body has a Keyhole
  - key to insert
  - supporting guide for the sliding bolt to move

- Sliding bolt
  - a shackle for hanging the lock
  - a stem for bonding one end of the splitting springs

- If locked: sliding bolt is trapped by the opening springs against the inner wall of the lock-body.

- For opening, key is inserted and its head squeezes the opening springs so that the sliding bolt can exit from lock-body.
Letter-combination lock

- Lock-body has an axis with rotating wheels for guiding the movement of the sliding bolt.
- Rotating wheels have the same size with four letters engraved on the surface.
- When all letters are in the correct position a channel is formed that allows the stem to slide apart from the lock-body.
Warded Locks

- Locks of this type were used in ancient times
- The key moves the bolt assisted by a support spring
- Security relies on the fact that not all keys pass through the key hole
Skeleton Key

- Usually in old style doors or desks
- Different concentric obstructions
- Easy to lock pick with Skeleton keys
- They come from ancient Rome
Destructive vs. Nondestructive Entry

• Destructive entry
  – Involves using force to defeat physical security
  – Methods involve crowbars, bolt cutters and sledge hammers
  – Negative impact on IT resources is apparent
  – Remediation steps also obvious

• Nondestructive entry
  – Compromises security without leaving signs of a breach
  – Defeats intrusion detection
  – Greater and long-term threat
Warded Picks

- Warded padlocks have a number of elements that are superimposed to determine the profile of the key

- Easy to "break open" with a set of key samples
Pick vs. Bypass

Break open a lock in a nondestructive manner can be achieved either through:

• Pick: acting on the lock mechanism simulating the operation of the key

• Bypass: manipulation of the bolt without using the lock
TSA Lock

- The U.S. government has established a set of rules for the inspection of baggage without the presence of passengers
- Special TSA-approved locks allow both inspection and protection against theft
- An important element is that the inspection must be easily verifiable by the user
Handcuffs typically use locks
Warded

Opens the throttle inserting a shim between the rack and lock.

The key to remove the block that allows the lever to open.
• It is often possible to open a padlock by slipping shims in between the shackle and the lock's casing
• No need to defeat the actual locking cylinder where the key is placed
1860: Yale Pin Tumbler Lock

- Modern version of the Egyptian single-pin design
- Utilizes two pins for locking
- Double-detainer theory of locking
- Created shear line
Terminology

shell or hull

tumbler

spring

sheer line

cylinder or plug

keyway

driver

top or driver

pin

bottom or key
How Does a Lock Work?
LOCK PICKING
Lock Picking

• Lock picking had been the exclusive art of locksmiths, professional thieves, spies and magicians for hundreds of years

• However, with the advent of the Internet, information about lock picking methods and tools has become readily available
  — E.g., YouTube has many lock picking videos
Press Esc to exit full screen mode.
Lock Picking in Movies

• Genuine lock picking in movies used to be prohibited
• Before 1967, the Hays code (Motion Picture Production Code) required censorship of Hollywood movies
  – “All detailed (that is, imitable) depiction of crime must be removed, such as lock picking or mixing of chemicals to make explosives”
These techniques are based on the same principle, overcoming an obstacle that is in between you and something you are trying to access.
Lockpicking Tools

- Feelers
- Scrubbers
- Tension tools
Picking

- It is all about exploiting mechanical defects
  - Better locks = less defects
- Conceptually a $O(n^2)$ problem lifting all pins to the correct height
  - Misaligned pin stacks reduce it to an $O(n)$ problem or better
High Security Pins

- Special pins can complicate a lot the task of picking

Top pin is placed in a position similar to that on sheer line but that does not allow opening.
Locks for Critical Infrastructures

• Which locks protect these places?
• What characteristics do they have?
• What are they?

Medeco
Lock Picking

3/24/16
To resist drilling, Medeco adds hardened steel inserts to critical sections of the lock face and sidebar.

Medeco keys are unique and require special key cutting machines to precisely duplicate the right, left and center angles.

Medeco’s secondary sidebar locking mechanism can only operate when tumblers are properly aligned.

The Medeco pick-resistant pin tumbler must be elevated and rotated to the proper position for the lock cylinder to operate.

The common lock cylinder, with no hardened steel inserts, offers little protection against drilling.

Common pin tumblers are vulnerable to picking.

A common key can be cut at any corner store and has no provision for controlled duplication.
Statistics

• 4-6 pins, 4-10 levels
• $10^6 = 1,000,000$ possible keys!
• The angular positions of the cylinders allow to obtain about 180 different positions. $(180 \cdot 10)^6 = 3.4012224 \times 10^{19}$
• (Un)fortunately there is a need for some tolerance in locks
Typical enhancements

- Sidebar
- Drill-proof pins
- Slide
- Biaxial rotation
- Magnets
- Non-uniform top pin (more combinations)
- Strict chain of custody on key controls
- Electronic audit trails
Combination Lock

- There are locks that do not require a physical key to be opened but a code.
- Combination locks allow attacks based on reducing the space of possible combinations to try.
  - The gears have a higher tolerance of the external disk combination.
Bumping

• A different way of picking locks
• Virtually all traditional Yale and similar locks can be opened by bumping
• What lock pickers say about bumping:
  – RELIABLE
  – REPEATABLE
  – SIMPLE TO LEARN
“Bumping” Physics

Newton cradle

Third Law of Motion:
“For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction”

3/25/16

Lock Picking

Sir Isaac Newton 1650
Pick Gun

• Manual and electronic pick guns are a popular method for quick and easy ways of opening up doors.

• The pick gun is used in a similar way but usually has a trigger that creates an upward movement that must be repeated rapidly to open the lock.
Bump Keys

• Driver pins “jump” higher than the cylinder just for an instant
• If a light rotational force is applied, the cylinder will turn
• Lock bumping is a very fast method for opening the lock
• The lock is not damaged in any way
• Few key-pin locks cannot be bumped
Credits

Video:
• Richard Edwards, Mirko Jugurdzia
  Visual Guide to Lock Picking DVD
  Standard Publications, Inc.

Image:
• Southord.com
• Medeco.com
• MIT guide to Lock Picking
• www.clksupplies.com
• Wikipedia: lock picking, bumping, etc.