

Locksmith interview questions

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What to expect

Locksmith interviews mix a conversation about your trade background with practical and scenario-based questions. Employers want to know you can work safely, legally and without damaging property, and that you can handle a customer who is already stressed.

- **Technical and practical:** Questions about key cutting, lock installation, rekeying, electronic key programming and non-destructive entry.
- **Scenario or judgement:** How you handle a lockout, an angry customer or a job that turns out to be more complex than quoted.
- **Client-facing:** How you explain options, quote clearly and manage expectations on site or over the phone.
- **Safety and legal:** Security licensing, working alone, vehicle entry and the limits of what you can and cannot do.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of solving problems, dealing with difficult access or managing a mobile schedule.

Typically a phone screen, then a face-to-face or workshop interview with a practical test, and often a ride-along or paid trial. Some employers run a short skills assessment on key cutting or non-destructive entry.

1. Walk me through how you would open a locked house when the owner is locked out and has no spare key.

Why they ask

This tests your process, your legal awareness and whether you can get someone back inside without wrecking the door.

How to structure your answer

A process walk-through: confirm identity and ownership first, assess the lock and door, choose the least destructive method, explain what you are doing, then test the lock afterwards.

Example answer

"First I ask for photo ID and proof of address, or if they have none, I ask them to confirm details only the occupier would know. I check the lock type and the door material. If it is a standard pin tumbler, I will try picking or using a decoder before I consider drilling. I tell the customer what I am doing and that I am aiming for no damage. Once it is open, I test the lock and key, and I offer to rekey if the key is missing. If I cannot open it without damage, I stop and explain the options and the cost before I proceed. Then I clean up and make sure they are inside safely."

2. Tell me about a time a job did not go to plan and how you handled it.

Why they ask

Employers want to see how you communicate and problem-solve when reality does not match the quote or the plan.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result. Keep it specific to a locksmithing job and focus on what you did, not what someone else did.

Example answer

"I was rekeying a set of office doors and found the master key system had been changed by a previous contractor without updating the plan. Halfway through, my new keys would not work on two doors. I stopped, took photos and wrote down which cylinders were out of sequence. I told the office manager the same day, gave her two options to fix it, and we agreed to re-pin those two doors on a Saturday so staff were not locked out on Monday. I finished the job, updated the master key chart and left a copy with her. She used us for the next two floors."

3. A customer calls after hours, says they are locked out of their car and they are frustrated. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests how you manage pressure, safety and an emotional customer without making promises you cannot keep.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: stay calm, confirm safety and location, set expectations, choose the method, and keep the customer informed on arrival.

Example answer

"I stay calm on the phone and let them talk first. I confirm their location, the make and model, and whether the car is in a safe spot or on a road. I tell them how long I will be and what I will need to see, like their licence and proof of ownership. When I arrive I check the car and decide whether to use a long reach tool, an air wedge, or a decoder. I talk them through what I am doing so they are not standing there worrying. If it is a transponder key they need, I check whether I can cut and programme on site. If I cannot, I tell them the next step without overpromising. I keep the interaction calm and professional, because most people are already having a bad day."

4. How do you programme a replacement transponder key for a vehicle you have not worked on before?

Why they ask

This probes your technical method and whether you use your tools systematically rather than guessing.

How to structure your answer

Technical walk-through: identify the vehicle, check tool coverage, confirm ownership, follow the security process, test every function, and document the job.

Example answer

"I start by reading the vehicle identification number and confirming the exact model and year. Then I check my programming tool, whether that is Autel or Xhorse, for coverage and any online subscription requirements. I look up the key type, whether it is a remote head, smart key or blade. Before I cut anything I confirm the customer owns the vehicle and has ID. I cut the key, then follow the tool's menu for that model. If the vehicle needs an online security code, I log in and get it. I programme the key, then test the ignition, the remote buttons and the boot release. If it fails, I do not keep guessing. I reset and try again or tell the customer it needs a dealer or a different tool. I document what I used so I know for next time."

5. What do you check before you install a deadbolt on a customer's front door?

Why they ask

This tests your attention to detail, your knowledge of Australian Standards and whether you make a lock fit properly or just drill holes.

How to structure your answer

Technical and compliance checklist: door and frame condition, AS 4145, fire rating, backing, alignment, and customer sign-off.

Example answer

"First I check the door and frame. A solid timber or metal door is fine, but a hollow core door will not hold a deadbolt without reinforcement. I measure the backset and check for obstructions like wiring or a glass panel. I make sure the deadbolt meets AS 4145 and suits the door's fire rating if it is a unit or commercial building. I check the frame has enough meat for the strike plate, and I use a backing plate if it does not. I ask the customer where they want it and confirm the height. I drill the pilot holes, fit the lock, and test it with the door closed, checking the gap and the throw. Then I show the customer how it works and ask them to test it themselves."

6. Describe a time you had to quote a job that was more complex than it first looked.

Why they ask

This shows how you communicate cost and scope to a customer without losing the job or cutting corners.

How to structure your answer

Client-facing and behavioural: explain the discovery, how you communicated it, how you quoted, and the outcome for the customer.

Example answer

"A customer asked me to rekey a front door. When I got there, the door had three locks, one of them a restricted keyway, and the frame was out of alignment so the deadbolt was catching. I could not just rekey it. I explained what I found and gave them a written quote for realigning the door, replacing the worn strike plate and rekeying all three locks to one key. They agreed. I did the work the same visit, tested everything, and the door closed smoothly. They called me back later to fit a security screen. I think it is better to explain the problem and quote properly than to force a cheap fix that fails in a month."