Locksmith

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Practice Questions

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1. What does the term 'electronic access control' primarily refer to?

A. Systems that use electronic credentials to grant or deny entry
B. Systems that use mechanical keys for entry
C. Systems that only use biometric scanning
D. Systems that rely solely on security guards

2. What is the primary purpose of a slim jim tool in automotive locksmithing?

A. To manipulate a vehicle's door linkage to unlock it without a key
B. To cut new ignition keys on-site
C. To program transponder chips in car keys
D. To disassemble a door lock cylinder

3. What is the primary function of a transponder chip in an automotive key?

A. To communicate with the vehicle's immobilizer system to verify the key is authorized
B. To store the vehicle owner's personal information
C. To control the power door lock system remotely
D. To provide GPS tracking of the vehicle

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4. A locksmith's primary professional obligation when called to a job is to:

A. Verify the customer's identity and authorization before performing work
B. Complete the job as quickly as possible to maximize revenue
C. Accept any job without questioning the customer's purpose
D. Demand full payment before assessing the situation

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5. In a master key system, a key that opens every lock in the system is called a:

A. Grand master key
B. Change key
C. Sub-master key
D. Control key

6. What is a 'master key'?

A. A key that operates two or more locks in a keying system
B. A key that can open any lock regardless of manufacturer
C. The first key cut in a new key blank
D. A key used exclusively by locksmiths for picking

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7. In a standard pin tumbler lock, what prevents the plug from rotating when the correct key is NOT inserted?

A. Driver pins block the shear line between the plug and shell
B. The cam is engaged with the bolt
C. The key pins rest above the shear line
D. The spring tension holds the plug against the shell

8. What is the primary purpose of a tension wrench (turning tool) during lock picking?

A. To apply rotational pressure to the plug while the pick sets pins
B. To push each pin stack up to the shear line
C. To scratch the keyway and damage the lock
D. To lubricate the plug so it turns freely

9. What does a UL TL-15 rating on a safe primarily indicate?

A. The safe resists attack with common hand tools for 15 minutes on the door face
B. The safe weighs at least 15 pounds
C. The safe can withstand a 15-foot drop without opening
D. The safe is rated for 15 hours of fire protection

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10. What is the primary advantage of electronic access control over traditional mechanical locks?

A. Lower initial cost
B. No requirement for electricity
C. Greater physical strength of the hardware
D. Ability to revoke access without changing hardware

11. Which tool is commonly used to pump air into a vehicle door gap to create space for a long-reach tool?

A. Slim jim
B. Key decoder
C. Air wedge
D. Jiggler key

12. A customer asks you to keep a duplicate key on file for their home. What is the most ethical approach?

A. Refuse all key-on-file requests as a matter of policy
B. Obtain written consent and store the key in a secure, logged system
C. Store the key without documentation to simplify the process
D. Share the key with the customer's landlord for safekeeping

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13. A change key in a master key system opens:

A. All locks in the system
B. All locks in a department
C. Only the one lock it is cut for
D. Any lock with a matching master wafer

14. What term describes a key that operates only one lock or a group of locks keyed alike?

A. Master key
B. Change key
C. Grand master key
D. Control key

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15. A locksmith measures the cut depths on a key and finds the total bitting is 3-2-5-1-4-6. What does the number represent in a typical Kwikset-style bitting system?

A. The length of the key pin in millimeters
B. The height of the key shoulder
C. The number of driver pins in each chamber
D. The depth of the cut, with higher numbers indicating deeper cuts

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16. In single-pin picking (SPP), what tactile sensation tells the picker that a pin has 'set'?

A. The plug suddenly rotates a full turn
B. The pick spring bounces back sharply
C. A slight click or give in the plug rotation as the pin reaches the shear line
D. The plug completely stops rotating

17. Which UL rating indicates a safe can withstand torch and tool attacks for 30 minutes?

A. TL-15
B. TL-30
C. TRTL-30
D. TXTL-60

18. Which credential technology uses radio frequency to communicate between the card and reader without physical contact?

A. RFID (Radio Frequency Identification)
B. Magnetic stripe
C. Barcode
D. Wiegand wire

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19. A 'long-reach tool' is used in combination with an air wedge for what purpose?

A. To rekey the ignition cylinder
B. To press the unlock button or manipulate internal door hardware
C. To decode the door lock's key cuts
D. To extract a broken key from the ignition

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20. In most U.S. states that require locksmith licensing, practicing without a valid license is:

A. Permissible if the work is only residential
B. Only a violation when working on commercial properties
C. A criminal or civil offense subject to fines and penalties
D. Allowed provided the locksmith passes a background check on demand

21. What is the primary method by which a pin tumbler cylinder is mastered?

A. Adding extra driver pins of a specific length
B. Inserting master wafers (additional shear points) between the key and driver pins
C. Using a thinner plug to allow more key bitting variance
D. Replacing the bottom pins with mushroom-shaped pins

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22. In a masterkey system, what is a 'grand master key' (GMK)?

A. A key that operates only the highest-security locks
B. A key that works at the change-key level of a system
C. A key that operates all locks under two or more master key systems
D. A key cut to the deepest possible cuts on every position

23. What is the 'shear line' in a pin tumbler lock?

A. The interface between the rotating plug and the stationary shell where pins must align for the lock to open
B. The cut made in the key that lifts the pins
C. The gap between the driver pin and key pin
D. The slot in the shell where the plug slides in

24. Which tool is typically used to lift individual pins during single-pin picking?

A. A tension wrench
B. A short hook pick
C. A plug follower
D. A key extractor

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25. A UL TXTL-60 rated safe is tested with tools, torches, and what additional threat?

A. Water submersion for 60 minutes
B. Impact from a 500-lb drop
C. Thermal cycling between -40°F and 160°F
D. High explosives (nitroglycerine)

26. A proximity card typically operates at which frequency?

A. 13.56 MHz
B. 125 kHz
C. 915 MHz
D. 2.4 GHz

27. When using a slim jim on a modern vehicle, why must the locksmith be especially cautious?

A. Because the tool may overheat and damage the window
B. Because slim jims only work on vehicles with manual locks
C. Because all modern vehicles use encrypted lock cylinders
D. Because modern vehicles contain side-curtain airbag wiring near the door frame

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28. Why do many states require locksmiths to undergo criminal background checks?

A. To ensure locksmiths have sufficient credit scores
B. To verify that locksmiths are citizens
C. To confirm that locksmiths hold the required insurance
D. To protect the public from individuals who might misuse access to homes and businesses

29. Adding master wafers to a pin tumbler cylinder increases the number of potential shear lines, which has what security implication?

A. It eliminates cross-keying entirely
B. It makes the lock immune to picking
C. It reduces the number of available key changes
D. It increases the likelihood of cross-keying (phantom keys)

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30. What does 'keyed alike' (KA) mean?

A. All locks share the same master key cuts only
B. Each lock has a unique change key
C. Locks are pinned to accept no keys at all
D. Multiple locks are operated by the same individual key

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Answer Key & Explanations

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1. A — Systems that use electronic credentials to grant or deny entry
Electronic access control uses electronic credentials such as cards, PINs, or biometrics to grant or deny access, replacing or supplementing traditional mechanical locks and keys.

2. A — To manipulate a vehicle's door linkage to unlock it without a key
A slim jim is a thin metal strip inserted between the window and weather stripping to reach and manipulate the door latch or lock linkage, allowing entry without a key. It does not cut keys or program transponders.

3. A — To communicate with the vehicle's immobilizer system to verify the key is authorized
A transponder chip in a key communicates with the vehicle's immobilizer ECU. When the correct encrypted signal is exchanged, the immobilizer permits the engine to start. Without this signal, the engine will not run even if the key's cuts are correct.

4. A — Verify the customer's identity and authorization before performing work
Verifying identity and authorization protects both the customer's property and the locksmith from liability. Performing work without authorization can make the locksmith an unwitting accomplice to theft or trespass.

5. A — Grand master key
A grand master key (GMK) is the top-level key in a hierarchical master key system and operates every lock in the entire system. Change keys open only a single lock, while sub-masters open a subset of locks.

6. A — A key that operates two or more locks in a keying system
A master key is designed to operate multiple locks within a keying system, each of which can also be operated by its own individual change key. It does not open every lock universally.

7. A — Driver pins block the shear line between the plug and shell
Driver pins span the shear line between the plug and shell when no key (or the wrong key) is inserted, physically blocking rotation. When the correct key lifts each pin stack to exactly the shear line, all driver pins clear the plug and rotation is possible.

8. A — To apply rotational pressure to the plug while the pick sets pins
The tension wrench applies slight rotational pressure to the plug, creating a ledge at the shear line where set pins can rest. Without this tension, successfully lifted pins would simply drop back down.

9. A — The safe resists attack with common hand tools for 15 minutes on the door face
UL TL-15 (Tool-Resistant) means the safe door and front face withstand at least 15 minutes of attack using common hand and electric tools. It is a security rating, not a weight or fire rating.

10. D — Ability to revoke access without changing hardware
Electronic access control allows administrators to revoke or modify a user's access rights in software without the need to rekey or replace physical hardware, making it far more flexible for managing large numbers of users.

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11. C — Air wedge
An air wedge (also called an airbag wedge) is inflated in the door gap to create enough space to insert a long-reach tool. This non-destructive method reduces the risk of damage to the door and weather stripping.

12. B — Obtain written consent and store the key in a secure, logged system
Written consent and secure, logged storage protect the customer's privacy and limit the locksmith's liability. Undocumented key storage creates serious security and ethical risks.

13. C — Only the one lock it is cut for
A change key (also called an individual key or servant key) is cut to operate a single specific lock cylinder. It is the lowest level key in a hierarchical system.

14. B — Change key
A change key (also called a servant key) is cut to operate one specific lock, distinguishing it from master keys that open multiple locks in the hierarchy.

15. D — The depth of the cut, with higher numbers indicating deeper cuts
In most residential bitting systems (including Kwikset), the bitting number represents cut depth — a higher number means a deeper cut into the key blade, resulting in a shorter (lower) key pin. Each depth increment corresponds to a fixed measurement step.

16. C — A slight click or give in the plug rotation as the pin reaches the shear line
When a driver pin rides up to the shear line under tension, it catches on the plug ledge and the picker feels a slight click or small rotation advance. This is the 'set' feedback used to confirm pin position.

17. C — TRTL-30
TRTL-30 (Torch and Tool Resistant, 30 minutes) means the safe resists both thermal lance/torch attacks AND hand tools for 30 minutes. TL-30 covers only tools without torch resistance.

18. A — RFID (Radio Frequency Identification)
RFID credentials communicate via radio frequency, allowing the card or fob to be read without direct contact with the reader, which improves convenience and reduces wear on hardware.

19. B — To press the unlock button or manipulate internal door hardware
After an air wedge creates a gap, a long-reach tool is inserted to manipulate interior components such as pressing the power unlock button or pulling the door handle. This avoids damaging the door.

20. C — A criminal or civil offense subject to fines and penalties
Practicing without a required license is generally a criminal misdemeanor or civil infraction carrying fines and possible prosecution. Licensing laws apply regardless of whether work is residential or commercial.

21. B — Inserting master wafers (additional shear points) between the key and driver pins
Mastering is achieved by inserting a master wafer (also called a master pin or spacer) between the bottom pin and driver pin, creating two potential shear lines so the lock opens on either the change key or the master key bitting.

22. C — A key that operates all locks under two or more master key systems
A grand master key sits above the master key level and can operate every lock under the master key systems it controls, enabling tiered access across an entire facility.

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23. A — The interface between the rotating plug and the stationary shell where pins must align for the lock to open
The shear line is the circular boundary between the plug (which can rotate) and the shell (which is fixed). When the correct key lifts every pin stack so that each key pin/driver pin junction sits exactly at this line, nothing blocks rotation and the lock opens.

24. B — A short hook pick
A short hook pick is the standard tool for lifting individual pin stacks one at a time during SPP. The hook's curved tip allows the picker to engage and lift a single pin stack precisely.

25. D — High explosives (nitroglycerine)
TXTL-60 (Tool, Torch, and Explosive resistant, 60 minutes) adds explosive resistance to the tool and torch tests. This is the highest UL burglary rating and is typically seen in bank vaults.

26. B — 125 kHz
Standard proximity cards (such as HID prox) operate at 125 kHz. Higher-frequency smartcards like MIFARE operate at 13.56 MHz, which offers greater data capacity and security.

27. D — Because modern vehicles contain side-curtain airbag wiring near the door frame
Modern vehicles often route side-curtain airbag wiring along the door frame. Inserting a slim jim carelessly can damage this wiring, potentially causing inadvertent airbag deployment or disabling the safety system.

28. D — To protect the public from individuals who might misuse access to homes and businesses
Locksmiths have unique access to locks, keys, and security systems. Background checks are designed to screen out individuals with relevant criminal histories who could abuse that access.

29. D — It increases the likelihood of cross-keying (phantom keys)
Each master wafer creates an additional shear point. In complex master key systems, multiple wafers per chamber dramatically increase the chance that an unintended key bitting aligns all chambers simultaneously—a condition called cross-keying or phantom keys.

30. D — Multiple locks are operated by the same individual key
Keyed alike means two or more locks are set up so that one common key operates all of them, convenient when a user needs a single key for several locks.

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