

Eviction day is never anyone's favorite appointment. Tensions run high, schedules are tight, and small mistakes create big headaches. Yet when the paperwork is in order and the constable or sheriff is on scene, a skilled San Antonio Locksmith can turn a messy handover into an orderly fifteen minute job. The goal is simple: restore lawful possession to the owner, secure the property the same day, and document what was done so everyone can move forward.

I have stood in too many front yards in Bexar County to count, watching the patrol car idle while we wait on a property manager stuck in traffic. I have seen smart locks without backup keys, deadbolts installed upside down, and a tenant's dog that looked offended but ultimately ignored us. Through all those calls, a pattern emerges. Preparation, communication, and a clean re-key plan save time and reduce risk for everyone involved.

Where locksmith work fits into the Texas eviction process

In Texas, the eviction process follows a specific sequence. After proper notice to vacate and a court judgment for possession, the landlord can request a writ of possession. On writ day, a constable or sheriff's deputy arrives to supervise, ensure safety, and establish lawful possession. That officer dictates when we begin. Once they give the go-ahead, the locksmith changes the locks and confirms the old keys no longer operate.

It is important to separate this from a residential lockout for nonpayment. The Texas Property Code allows a limited lockout in certain situations, with strict rules, but the tenant must be given a new key upon request regardless of payment. A re-key tied to a writ of possession is different. By the time we arrive with the officer, the court has already decided possession. Our job is to secure the property for the owner or manager under that authority.

San Antonio has its own rhythms. Bexar County constables move efficiently and expect vendors to do the same. The officer does not wait around for hardware store runs or indecision at the door. A good San Antonio Locksmith shows up early, stages cylinders and pins in the truck, and has extra latches, strike plates, and latch guards ready because many front doors show years of wear.

What actually happens on site

Here is a typical scene from a mid-morning writ near Woodlawn Lake. I park two houses down, so I do not telegraph the plan. The property manager arrives with the court paperwork. The constable checks IDs, confirms the address, and asks for the landlord's intention regarding personal property. If the home is occupied, the officer knocks and announces. If vacated, we still proceed carefully. Once the officer authorizes, I photograph the door hardware and start the re-key. The manager or owner walks the interior with the officer, confirms rooms and condition, then returns to the porch while I finish cutting keys.

The entire re-key usually takes 15 to 30 minutes for a single front door and a keyed-alike back door. Add time for garage man doors, storage closets, mailboxes, and gates. The manager leaves with three to five brand new keys, a receipt indicating which cylinders were changed, and a short note on any issues found, such as a non-latching striker or a cracked frame.

A practical, field-tested sequence for eviction re-keys

The exact order changes with the property, but a disciplined flow reduces surprises. Below is a condensed version I use across single family homes, fourplexes, and small retail spaces.

- Confirm authority, scope, and safety with the officer and property contact, then document the start condition with quick photos.
- Identify every locking point that transfers possession, typically the primary deadbolt, any secondary egress door, garage man door, and exterior storage, then decide whether to re-key or replace each cylinder based on condition.
- Re-key or replace, then key alike across all designated locks, verify operation from both sides of each door, and address strike alignment or latch problems on the spot.
- Produce and label new keys, record the keyway and bitting or restricted code if applicable, and secure control of any master keys previously used by staff or vendors.
- Walk the perimeter with the property contact to confirm no forgotten locks, arm or reset alarms if access is provided, and finalize documentation with time stamps and officer badge number.

Those five steps look simple on paper. In practice, each one hides three small decisions. That is where experience speeds things up.

Re-key or replace, and why the decision matters

On writ day you do not want theory. You want a lock that works cleanly and holds up. I will re-key a serviceable Grade 2 deadbolt if the cylinder is smooth and the latch throws fully. If I feel gravel in the plug, if the bolt binds, or if the screws are stripped into soft wood, I replace. The cost difference on site is often 30 to 60 dollars per opening for decent hardware compared to the 10 to 20 dollars of labor to re-pin. The time saved by dropping in a new, known-good deadbolt can be worth it when the officer wants to clear.

For apartments or multi-tenant buildings with a master key, I ask whether the property uses a controlled keyway. If the answer is yes and they want to keep the master system intact, we re-pin to the correct change key and confirm the master still works. If they have lost track of their bitting list or key records, I recommend pulling that unit off the system and issuing a restricted keyway of its own until the property's master plan is sorted. Nothing ruins a system faster than a mystery cylinder jammed into the mix.

For commercial doors, I often see mortise locks with cylinders that have been working since the 1990s. If the cam or tailpiece feels sloppy or the retaining screw is chewed, [locksmith san antonio Keytext Locksmiths San Antonio](#) I replace the cylinder and clean the pocket. Returning a storefront to the owner without a gritty cylinder saves callbacks during a hectic turnover.

Key control, restricted keyways, and the myth of the stamp

Stamping DO NOT DUPLICATE on a key does not control duplication. Many hardware stores will copy it anyway. If a landlord cares about unauthorized copies, use a restricted or patented key system. In San Antonio, restricted keys are not as pricey as people fear. Expect 10 to 20 dollars per restricted key, depending on the platform, plus the cost of compatible cylinders, which can run 40 to 90 dollars more per opening compared to standard hardware. Over a five door house, that premium may be 200 to 400 dollars. That is money well spent for high turnover properties that have had break-ins due to old keys floating around.

If the property has Access Control Systems, key control shifts from keys to credentials. On writ day, we still re-key any mechanical over-rides, but the bigger task is deactivating fobs and codes. More on that in a moment.

Legal edges and judgment calls

Locksmiths are not there to interpret law, but we operate within it and we often get asked. A few common boundaries in Texas, stated in plain terms:

- If a residential lockout is done before judgment, the tenant must be able to get a new key at any hour upon request. That does not erase rent obligations, but it does protect access. Eviction re-keys, by contrast, occur after the court's judgment and the writ. Do not mix the two procedures.
- Mailbox locks are federal turf. If the mailbox is USPS owned, the landlord should coordinate with the post office for a lock change. Private cluster boxes and property owned mail centers can be serviced by a locksmith with property authorization.
- If you find firearms, medication, or sensitive documents, let the officer and property manager direct next steps. Document what you see, do not take custody unless specifically asked, and keep your receipts clean of personal property notes. Your job is the locks.

When a roommate remains on site claiming they were not part of the case, I do not decide who gets keys. I present the keys to the named property contact who stands with the constable. If the officer asks that a key be handed to someone else, I do so and record that instruction by badge number and time.

Smart locks on eviction day

Smart locks look great in a listing, but they double the work when no one knows the master code. In San Antonio, I encounter keyless touchpads that were installed by DIY landlords or previous tenants. If there is no physical key override and the officer needs entry, we carefully bypass, open, and then replace with standard mechanical hardware or a known brand with a secure, documented reset procedure. When time allows, I factory reset and reprogram with the manager's chosen codes.

For Wi-Fi or Bluetooth models tied to accounts, the cleanest route is replacement. Account recovery takes too long and often requires cooperation from the former occupant. After possession is restored, the property manager can decide whether to put smart hardware back on the door. For buildings using Access Control Systems, the property team should deactivate codes and fobs in the control software while we re-key mechanical backups. I have seen an impatient manager tape a note over a keypad saying code changed, but they left the code active and someone walked back in an hour later. Digital access needs the same discipline as metal keys.

Safety, documentation, and the value of 10 extra minutes

A locksmith's best tools on writ day are not picks and pinning kits. They are a calm tone and a short checklist. I have walked into homes where the back door was propped with a broom, the strike plate was held by one screw, and the deadbolt barely reached the frame. Five extra minutes to fix that strike can prevent a break in tomorrow. I clear small problems while I am there, within reason, and I note any larger issues on the invoice so the property manager has a written to-do list for their handyman or contractor.

Photos help too. Snap the hardware before, the new cylinders after, and any unusual conditions. This protects you, the property, and sometimes the tenant if there is a dispute about damage. Note the officer's name and badge, the time the writ began and ended, and the addresses of any outbuildings or garages re-keyed. Keep it factual, short, and consistent. Good paperwork closes loops.

Costs, time windows, and what to expect in San Antonio

For a standard eviction re-key in San Antonio, expect a trip fee plus per-cylinder charges. Residential costs often land in the 85 to 150 dollar range for a basic visit that includes re-keying a couple of cylinders and cutting a small

set of keys. Each additional keyed cylinder can add 10 to 25 dollars. After hours or weekend work typically carries a surcharge of 25 to 75 dollars. Replacing worn hardware adds parts at 30 to 120 dollars per lock for solid, mid-grade gear. Restricted key systems, as noted earlier, raise parts costs but add real key control.

Time on site ranges widely. A tidy single family home with two keyed doors and cooperative weather might take 20 minutes. A triplex with four exterior doors and a padlocked laundry can take 45 to 90 minutes. Add more time if the owner wants reinforcement plates, latch guards, or strike upgrades.

During the summer, officers schedule writs early. Heat and afternoon storms complicate outdoor work, especially on steel doors and gates that expand in the sun. Plan morning appointments when possible.

The landlord's perspective and how a locksmith can help

Landlords and managers juggle legal timelines, tenant relations, turnover crews, and leasing. On writ day, they want quick, clean control of the property without drama. A prepared San Antonio Locksmith helps by:

- Confirming the hardware plan before arrival so there are no parking lot debates about re-key versus replace.
- Bringing common finishes to match existing knobs and levers where possible, so the property does not end up with a patchwork of brass, nickel, and bronze.
- Keying alike across all exterior doors so maintenance and leasing staff do not end up with a ring of random keys.
- Offering temporary solutions when perfection is not possible on the spot, like an improved striker to hold a soft door until a carpenter can repair the frame.
- Communicating clearly if a door is not code compliant, such as mixed thumb-turns that trap occupants, and recommending a remedy after possession is secured.

I once had a manager who carefully tracked every key but never re-keyed the garage man doors behind the home. After a break in through that forgotten door, we added the garage doors to her standard scope. No more problems in that neighborhood.

Multi-family, master keys, and turnover pace

In larger properties, the clock runs faster. A leasing team may want an apartment turned in 24 hours, with painters, cleaners, and maintenance queued. If the community uses a master key system, re-keying must be done to the correct change key so staff access continues. This is where an organized Austin Locksmith or San Antonio Locksmith with multi-family experience pays for itself. We maintain the biting lists, secure blanks, and pinning charts. We log each unit, track which managers signed out which keys, and produce tidy bundles for make-ready crews.

If the property transitions to a restricted or patented system, we phase it building by building to avoid chaos. During an eviction, if a unit is still on an old, compromised keyway, we can isolate that unit on a restricted cylinder for the handover, then schedule a full conversion later.

Access control and credential hygiene

Access Control Systems [locksmith near me](#) add speed, audit trails, and the option to revoke access instantly. During an eviction, the property should deactivate the resident's fob or card the same morning. Door controllers take effect immediately. The weak spots are often secondary areas: the side gate with a keypad that still uses the

contractor default, the pool gate whose strike buzzes but does not latch, or the mechanical override cylinders that have not been re-keyed in years.

On properties with cloud-managed systems, a brief call with the integrator can confirm the resident's credentials are disabled, the unit's keypad has been updated, and any shared codes have been cycled. On small systems run by the manager's office, write down which codes changed and when. Treat digital access like keys. If you would not hand out a stack of metal keys without a log, do not hand out codes with no record.

Edge cases worth planning for

Some problems only show up once. Plan for them and they become routine.

- Detached sheds, meter rooms, and hose bib locks. Decide in advance whether those are part of the scope, then stock the right padlocks keyed alike to the house or to a maintenance key.
- Garage door remotes. If the opener is old but still functional, clear remotes and reprogram with the owner's new clickers. If the unit is ancient and missing safety sensors, recommend replacement rather than spending time on it during a writ.
- Window locks. A locksmith can fix simple sash locks, but if the frame is rotten or the catch is missing, note it and move on. The priority is securing primary doors.
- Dogs, cats, and aquariums. If an animal is inside, the officer sets the tone. I have held a door closed with my foot while a very determined cat tried to bolt. Small details, like checking for pets before you open a back door, prevent headaches.

A quick coordinator's checklist for writ day

This lightweight list helps property managers and owners keep the moving parts under control without overcomplicating things.

- Bring the writ and a photo ID, and text the locksmith and officer if you are running late by more than 10 minutes.
- Decide in advance what to do with personal property and communicate that plan to the officer and vendors.
- Confirm which doors and outbuildings are in scope, and whether to re-key or replace worn hardware.
- Have a plan for digital access: deactivate fobs, change codes, and reset smart locks or schedule replacement.
- Collect keys on site, label them immediately, and note where any master keys will be stored.

San Antonio and Austin differences that change the day

The mechanics of a re-key are the same on both sides of the I-35 corridor, but workflows differ. In Austin, tight parking and dense multi-family properties mean more Access Control Systems and fewer traditional deadbolts on primary entrances. Coordination with building management is often more formal. Traffic can add 20 minutes each way, which matters when an officer gives you a narrow window. Working as an Austin Locksmith, I expect longer walks from parking to the unit, more frequent smart locks, and a higher chance that the property has a credential system that needs updates the same morning.

San Antonio has more single family writs within city limits and on the edge of the county, with a mix of older homes where the door frames have shifted over the years. Carry longer screws for strike plates and reinforcement plates that spread the load. Expect more variety in existing hardware and finishes. Bexar County constables are generally brisk on scene and appreciate a vendor who does not fumble with parts or process.

Training staff and preventing repeat visits

An ounce of preparation reduces calls after a re-key. I encourage property teams to walk one or two units with me when they are new to the role. We cover simple items like how to check for a properly throwing deadbolt, how to spot a misaligned strike, and how to test a keypad code. We also talk about documentation. Who holds the master? How many keys get issued to leasing? Where do vendor keys live and how often are they audited?

A basic key audit every quarter keeps surprises away. If six people carry master keys, make sure six keys exist, not eight. If a contractor leaves the job, confirm the return of credentials the same day. These small habits prevent bad days.

Final thoughts from the curb

Eviction work is human. There is a legal framework, yes, but there are also people who arrive anxious, upset, or just tired. A locksmith's steady approach makes the day safer and calmer. Show up early. Speak plainly. Work quickly but do not hurry. Fix what you can in the moment and document the rest.

Whether you manage a handful of homes on the South Side, run a hundred unit complex in Alamo Heights, or oversee mixed-use spaces along Broadway, the right process turns a stressful appointment into a predictable one. And if your portfolio spans up to Austin, find partners who can move comfortably between mechanical keys and Access Control Systems, who speak the language of both a San Antonio Locksmith and an Austin Locksmith. The locks change, the names change, but the craft stays the same: give lawful owners clean, working keys and a secure door before the patrol car pulls away.

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