GENERAL

how to pick a deadbolt

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Introduction

When it comes to safeguarding your home, the first line of defense is often the door that separates your interior from the outside world. While a sturdy frame and weatherstripping are important, the lock you choose can make the difference between peace of mind and vulnerability. For many homeowners, **how to pick a deadbolt**becomes a crucial question: which model offers the best balance of security, usability, and cost? In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk you through every factor that matters—from the types of deadbolts and their ratings to installation tips and maintenance best practices. By the end, you'll have a clear roadmap to selecting the right deadbolt for your door, ensuring that your home stays safe and secure.

Why Choosing the Right Deadbolt Matters

Deadbolts are designed to provide a higher level of security than standard latch bolts. They are typically made from hardened steel, have longer bolts that extend deep into the door frame, and often feature additional security features such as reinforced pins or anti-drill plates. The right deadbolt can:

- Prevent forced entry by resisting drilling, picking, and kicking.
- Offer a reliable locking mechanism that is difficult to tamper with.
- Complement your existing door hardware and aesthetic.
- Provide peace of mind for you, your family, and your property.

Key Factors to Consider When How to Pick a Deadbolt

When you ask yourself **how to pick a deadbolt**, the answer isn't a single formula but a set of interrelated considerations. Below are the most important factors you should evaluate before making a purchase.

1. Door Type and Construction

Not every deadbolt is suitable for every door. The thickness, material, and construction of your door will determine the type of deadbolt you can install.

1. Wooden Doors – Most standard deadbolts work well with solid wood doors that are at least 1-1/2 inches thick.
2. Steel or Metal Doors – These often require heavy-duty deadbolts designed for metal frames.
3. Composite or Hollow-Core Doors – These may need a special installation kit or a lighter deadbolt to avoid damaging the frame.

2. Security Rating and Standards

In the United States, the **American National Standards Institute (ANSI)** and the **Underwriters Laboratories (UL)** set standards for lock performance. Look for deadbolts that meet or exceed the following:

- ANSI/BHMA Type 1 – Provides the highest level of security, suitable for high-risk areas.
- ANSI/BHMA Type 2 – Offers strong security for most residential applications.
- ANSI/BHMA Type 3 – Basic security level; not recommended for high-value or high-traffic doors.

3. Locking Mechanism: Single vs. Double Cylinder

Deadbolts come in two main varieties:

- Single Cylinder – Operated by a key from the outside and a thumbturn inside. Easier to use but can be a safety hazard if a child or pet can reach the interior thumbturn.
- Double Cylinder – Requires a key from both sides. Offers greater security but can trap occupants if the key is lost.

4. Bolt Length and Depth

Longer bolts provide a greater barrier against forced entry. A bolt that extends at least 1 inch into the door frame offers better protection than a shorter one. However, the bolt length must be compatible with your door's frame dimensions.

5. Key Control Features

Some deadbolts offer **key control**mechanisms that prevent the lock from being opened without the correct key. This is especially useful if you want to restrict access to certain individuals.

6. Additional Security Features

Modern deadbolts may include:

- Anti-drill plates or hardened steel inserts.
- Anti-pick pins or internal tumblers designed to thwart lockpicking.
- Reinforced strike plates that add an extra layer of resistance.

Types of Deadbolts You Can Choose From

Understanding the available deadbolt options will help you answer the question **how to pick a deadbolt**based on your specific needs.

Single Cylinder Deadbolts

These are the most common and cost-effective deadbolts. They feature a key cylinder on the outside and a thumbturn on the inside. Ideal for doors where quick access is needed, such as a front entry with a fire exit inside.

Double Cylinder Deadbolts

Double cylinder deadbolts offer maximum security because both sides require a key. They are commonly used on doors that face a balcony or a side yard where an intruder could easily reach the interior thumbturn.

Lock-Bolts with Electronic Keypads

Keypad deadbolts eliminate the need for keys entirely. They use a numeric code or biometric sensor to unlock. This type is perfect for tech-savvy homeowners who want a keyless entry system.

Smart Deadbolts

Smart deadbolts integrate with home automation systems, allowing you to lock and unlock remotely via a smartphone app. They often come with features like auto-lock, status notifications, and temporary access codes for guests.

High-Security Deadbolts

These are built to meet the highest security standards, often featuring reinforced steel, anti-drill plates, and complex lock cylinders. They are ideal for high-value homes, commercial properties, or any location that requires top-tier protection.

How to Pick a Deadbolt: Step-by-Step Guide

Below is a practical, step-by-step method to help you decide which deadbolt is right for you.

1. Assess Your Door and Environment

   Measure the door thickness.
2. Check the frame for compatibility.
3. Consider the door's exposure (front, back, side).

- Use ANSI/BHMA ratings to gauge the threat level.
- Decide between single or double cylinder based on safety and security.
- High-security deadbolts can cost $100–$250.
- Standard single-cylinder models typically range from $30–$80.
- Look for manufacturers with a reputation for quality (e.g., Schlage, Kwikset, Yale).
- Read customer reviews and professional evaluations.
- If you need to restrict access, choose a deadbolt with key control.
- Test the bolt's smoothness and resistance.
- Verify that the key cylinder is robust and not easily pickable.
- Ensure the deadbolt's mounting hardware matches your door's frame.
- Check if you need additional hardware like a reinforced strike plate.
- Follow manufacturer instructions or hire a professional locksmith.
- After installation, test the lock in various scenarios.
- Lubricate the key cylinder and bolt.
- Replace worn-out parts promptly.

Installation Tips for a Secure Deadbolt

Proper installation is as critical as choosing the right deadbolt. Even the best lock can fail if installed incorrectly. Here are key installation tips:

1. Use a Reinforced Strike Plate

Standard strike plates can be easily forced open. A reinforced strike plate with a steel plate behind it adds significant resistance to forced entry.

2. Ensure a Tight Fit

The bolt should fit snugly into the door frame. A loose fit can allow an intruder to pry the bolt out.

3. Install a Deadbolt in the Correct Position

Most deadbolts should be installed at least 6 inches above the floor to prevent ladder or stick use. For double-cylinder deadbolts, consider a higher placement to avoid accidental lockouts.

4. Check the Key Cylinder

After installation, insert the key and turn it multiple times to ensure it moves smoothly. A stiff key can indicate a problem with the cylinder or the lock's internal mechanism.

5. Test the Lock's Security

Once installed, try opening the lock from both sides using a standard key. Ensure the bolt engages fully and that the lock remains secure when the door is closed.

Maintenance and Longevity of Your Deadbolt

Regular maintenance extends the life of your deadbolt and keeps it functioning reliably. Follow these best practices:

- Lubricate the Key Cylinder – Use a graphite-based lubricant; avoid oil-based products that attract dust.
- Inspect for Wear – Check the bolt and strike plate for signs of wear or damage every six months.
- Replace Key Cylinders – If a key starts to slip or the cylinder feels stiff, replace it before it fails.
- Test the Lock Periodically – Open and close the lock at least once a month to ensure smooth operation.
- Keep the Door Frame Clean – Remove dirt and debris that could interfere with the bolt's movement.

Choosing a Reputable Brand

When searching for the best deadbolt, brand reputation matters. Some of the most trusted manufacturers include:

- Schlage – Known for high-security deadbolts and smart lock integration.
- Kwikset – Offers a range of affordable and easy-to-install deadbolts.
- Yale – Provides a mix of traditional and modern lock solutions.
- Medeco – Specializes in high-security deadbolts with anti-pick technology.
- August Home – Focuses on smart deadbolts that integrate with home automation.

Cost Considerations

The price of a deadbolt can vary widely. Here's a quick breakdown:

Type	Typical Price Range
Standard Single Cylinder	$30–$80
Double Cylinder	$40–$120
Smart Deadbolt	$80–$250
High-Security Deadbolt	$100–$300

Keep in mind that installation costs can add $50–$150, depending on whether

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