Choosing Between a Rekey, Keypad, and Smart Lock Upgrade

Start with the right question: what do you need from a lock?

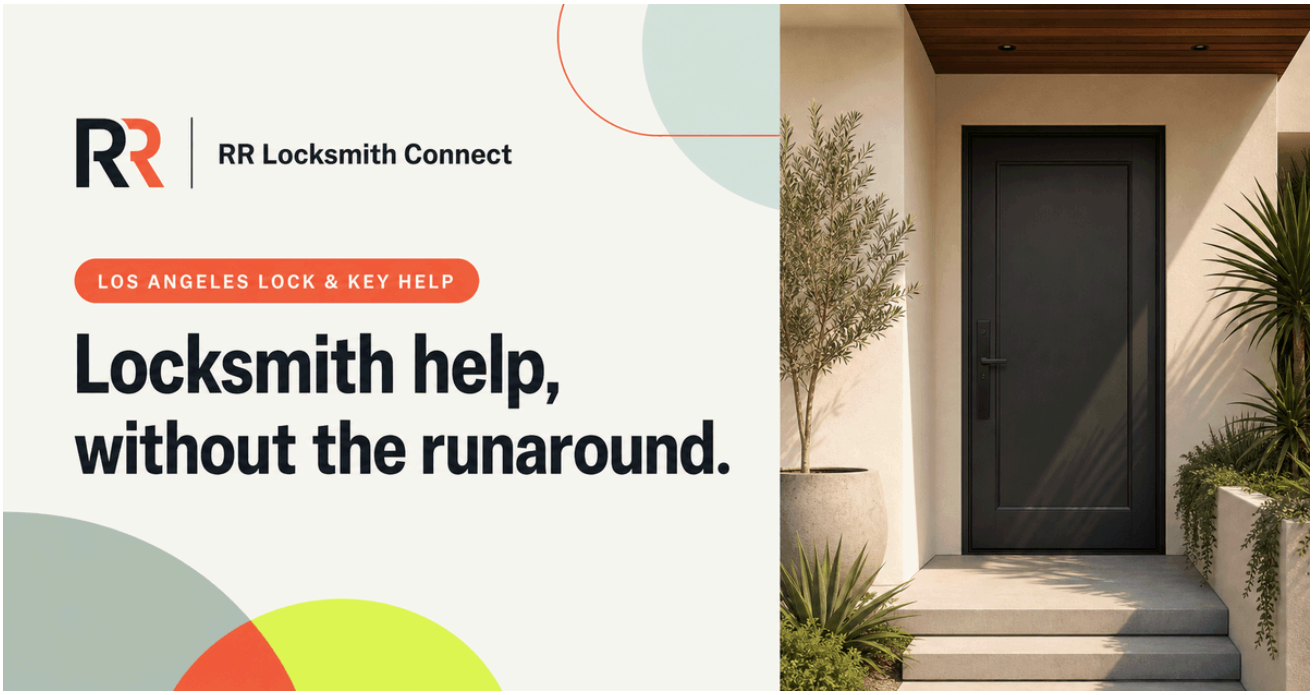
When you stand in front of a door and think about changing the lock, the first choice is not about brands or prices. It is about the kind of security and convenience that fits your daily life. Three common options exist: a simple rekey, a keypad lock, or a full smart lock upgrade. Each solves a different problem. A rekey changes the internal pins so old keys no longer work, but the lock hardware stays the same. A keypad lock replaces the whole assembly with a unit that opens with a numeric code. A smart lock adds wireless connectivity, letting you control entry from a phone or voice assistant. The best choice depends on who uses the door, how often you need to grant access, and whether you want to manage keys at all.

Step 1: Assess your current lock and door condition

Before you decide on an upgrade, look at the existing lock and door. A rekey works only on a lock cylinder that is in good shape. If the deadbolt turns stiffly, the strike plate is loose, or the latch does not align with the frame, a rekey will not fix the underlying mechanical problem. In that case, you need a new lock assembly anyway, which makes a keypad or smart lock a more practical investment. Check the door material as well. A solid wood or metal door supports most lock types. A hollow-core door may not hold the weight or the drilling required for a smart lock. Also note the thickness: some smart locks require a door thickness between 1.375 and 1.75 inches. If your door is thinner or thicker, you may need a special mounting kit or a different model. For a keypad lock, the same considerations apply, though most keypad units are less bulky than smart locks.

Step 2: Decide how many people need access and how often

The number of users and the frequency of access changes which lock type makes sense. For a single-family home where only a few people have keys, a rekey is the cheapest and fastest way to restore security after a lost key or after moving in. It keeps the same lock hardware and takes a locksmith maybe 15 minutes per cylinder. For a rental property with multiple tenants or short-term guests, a keypad lock shines. You can assign a unique access code to each person and change it between tenants without swapping hardware. There is no need to collect keys or make copies. A smart lock goes further by letting you revoke access remotely, set temporary codes for a contractor, and see a log of who entered and when. For a busy household with kids who lose keys, a keypad or smart lock eliminates the lockout problem entirely.



Step 3: Consider power and connectivity

A keypad lock runs on batteries. Most models last one to two years on a set of AA or lithium cells. When the battery gets low, the lock gives a warning beep or a flashing light. If the battery dies completely, you still need a physical key backup or a 9-volt battery jump to power the lock temporarily. A smart lock also uses batteries but adds wireless communication via Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, or Z-Wave. That extra radio drains power faster, especially if the lock connects to Wi-Fi constantly. Some smart locks use a hub to reduce battery drain. All of them need a stable Wi-Fi network near the door. If your router is far from the front door, the connection may drop, and remote access becomes unreliable. A keypad lock does not need internet at all, which makes it more reliable in older buildings or where Wi-Fi is spotty. Always check the battery backup options. A lock with a physical key override gives you a fallback even if the electronics fail. Some keypad models have a hidden key slot; others use a jump terminal on the bottom for a 9-volt battery.

Step 4: Evaluate installation complexity

Rekeying is the simplest job. A locksmith removes the cylinder, replaces the pins and springs, and reassembles it. You keep the same lock and keyhole. No drilling, no new holes in the door. For a keypad lock installation, the process is more involved. You remove the old deadbolt and replace it with the keypad assembly. Most keypad locks fit the standard 2-1/8-inch bore hole and 1-inch latch hole, but not all doors have those dimensions. You may need to enlarge the bore hole or drill a new hole for the latch. The keypad unit also requires a strike plate that aligns perfectly with the latch. If the frame is misaligned, the lock will bind or the latch will not

throw fully. Smart lock installation is similar to keypad installation, but you also need to pair the lock with a phone app and possibly a hub. That step can take longer if the app needs firmware updates or if the lock does not connect on the first try. For all three options, the most common mistake is skipping the alignment check after installation. If the deadbolt does not slide smoothly into the strike plate, the lock will wear out quickly and may jam.

Step 5: Think about long-term maintenance and flexibility

A rekey gives you no new features. You still carry a physical key, and if you lose it again, you need another rekey. For a landlord or property manager with frequent tenant turnover, that cost adds up. A keypad lock reduces maintenance because you only change the code between tenants. The hardware itself lasts years with minimal attention, usually just a battery change. A smart lock adds software updates and potential compatibility issues. When a phone operating system updates, the lock app may stop working until the manufacturer releases a patch. Some older smart locks lose support entirely. If you want a lock that works reliably for a decade without fuss, a keypad lock is the middle ground: more convenient than a rekey, less complicated than a smart lock. If you want remote access and integration with a home automation system, a smart lock is worth the extra attention to battery and network health.



Step 6: Match the upgrade to your specific situation

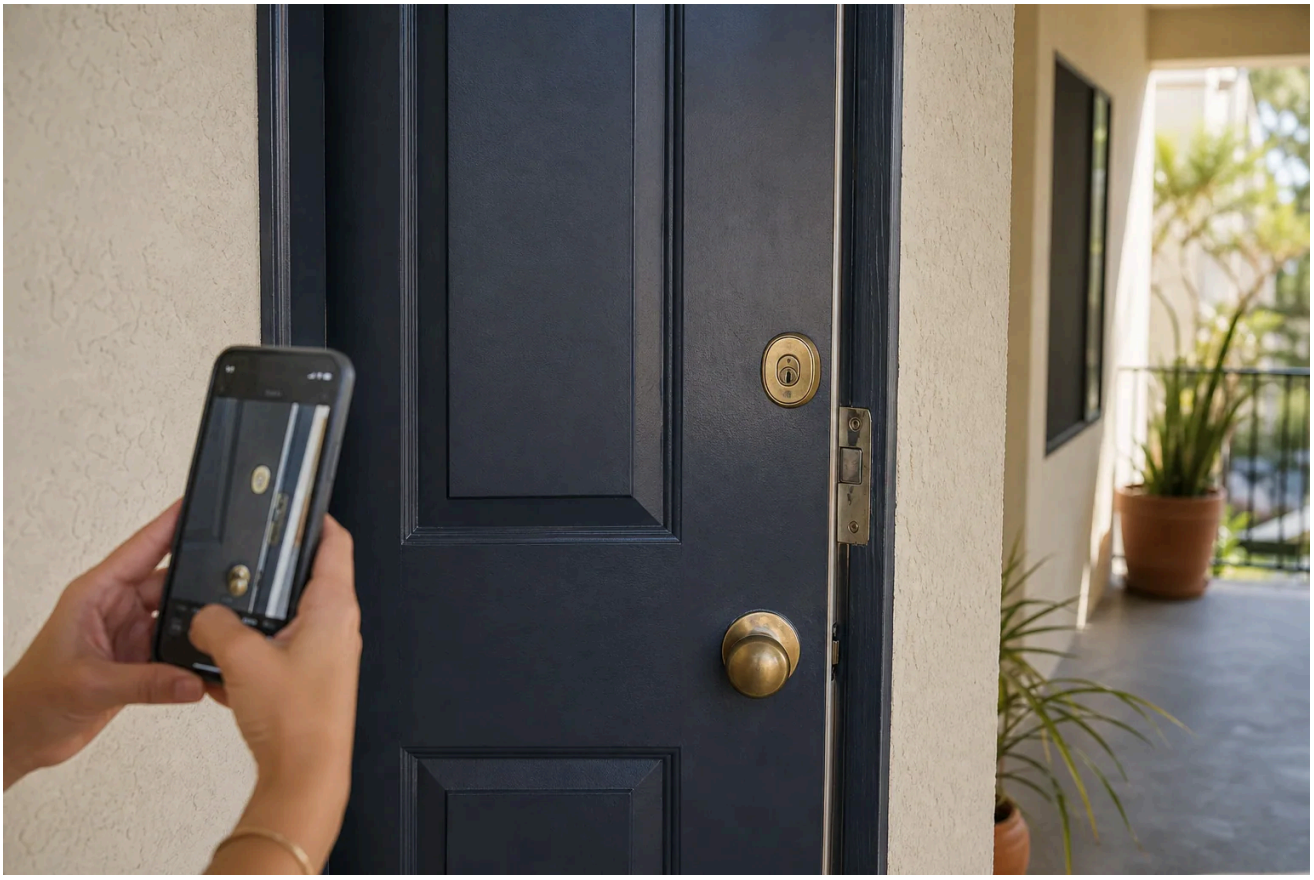
Here is a way to decide quickly:

- Choose a rekey if the lock hardware is in good shape, you only need to invalidate old keys, and you want the lowest cost.
- Choose a keypad lock if you want to stop carrying keys, give codes to multiple people, and prefer a simple, reliable device that does not depend on Wi-Fi.
- Choose a smart lock if you want to control access from anywhere, set temporary codes, and integrate with a smart home system.

Each path has trade-offs. The rekey is fast but solves only the key problem. The keypad lock installation changes how you enter your home daily, but it requires a bit of work to install and a battery change every year or two. The smart lock offers the most flexibility but introduces complexity in setup and ongoing maintenance. If you are unsure which option fits your door and your habits, a professional locksmith can inspect the door and tell you what will work. Services like RR Locksmith Connect can help you find available providers in Los Angeles who handle all three types of upgrades. That way you do not guess the size of the bore hole or the type of strike plate you need.

Step 7: Plan for the future

Think about what you might want a year from now. If you are in a rental and plan to move, a keypad lock is easy to remove and take with you. If you own the home and want to sell later, a smart lock can be a selling point, but only if it works with common home automation platforms. A rekey adds no resale value but costs almost nothing. If you choose a smart lock, pick one that supports a standard like Matter or Z-Wave so it works with more than one ecosystem. Avoid proprietary systems that lock you into a single brand. For a keypad lock, look for one with a metal body and a weather-resistant finish if the door is exposed to direct sun or rain. Plastic keypads crack in the Los Angeles heat over time.



No matter which route you take, test the lock thoroughly before relying on it. Close the door, turn the key or enter the code, and make sure the latch engages fully without sticking. If the door feels loose or the deadbolt scrapes against the strike plate, fix the alignment before you finish the job. A misaligned lock is the most common source of failures, and it is easy to correct by adjusting the strike plate or tightening the hinges.