

GAINING ENTRY

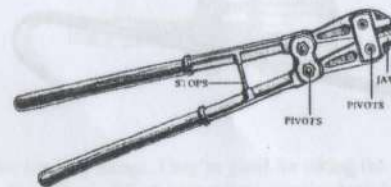
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intro

Hello! This is a zine about gaining entry to abandoned buildings. The information in this zine is based on experience squatting in Ireland. Some of the information here is specific to this region of the planet, though a lot of the information can be used anywhere. It might be a good idea to hide this zine in another zine, as this zine can be a bit incriminating. Some of the techniques here describe ways to damage locks and windows and stuff. It might not always be the best idea to damage the building you're trying to get into, but do what you want.

tools

bolt cutters/croppers



What they're used for:

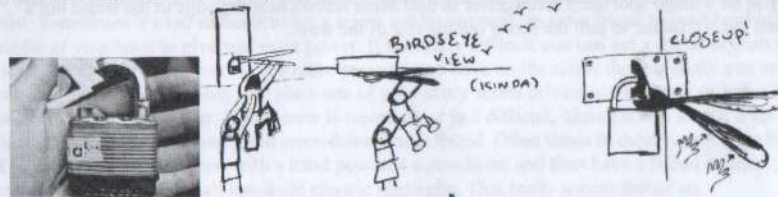
Bolt cutters are useful for cutting locks, chain fences and barbed wire. They are also useful for cutting the wire mesh that is sometimes installed over windows as a security measure.

Which ones to get:

Centre cut bolt croppers will work best for general squat use. There are other types of bolt croppers, but luckily this is the most common kind. Large bolt cutters are much better at cutting big locks. It's worth noting that at about 36 inches bolt cutters can get quite heavy. But that's ok, because it's easier to work big bolt cutters with a friend anyways. Small bolt cutters have their advantages as well. They're easier to pack away, much lighter and more suitable for some jobs. A small pair of bolt cutters are very useful for cutting small locks, barbed wire and chain link fences. If you're planning on cutting electrical cables (there's loads of useful metal wire in them) it's worth it to use bolt cutters with fibreglass handles.

How to use:

To use bolt cutters, you really want to make sure you get the lock as far into the jaws as possible. It's easier to use bolt cutters with two people. One person positions the lock deep into the jaws of the bolt cutters. The person holding the bolt cutters then props up one side of the bolt cutters to a wall or fence if possible, so that two hands can be used to close the jaws (see the picture below). The person who positioned the lock, or maybe a third person can then help the person holding the bolt cutters pull the handles together. If you're trying to be quiet, have someone ready to catch the lock/chain when it falls. If it's not cutting easily you'll probably want to stop unless you don't care about the bolt cutters, because putting too much tension on the levers (handles) will fuck up the metal in the jaws. Once you cut through the lock (or whatever), give the handles of the bolt cutters a twist if necessary to finish the job. Think about where you're going to make your cut before you're on-site with the bolt cutters. If you're cutting the lock itself you might need to cut the lock in two places. This is especially true for locks with octagonal shackles (pictured below). Maybe it's easier to cut the piece the lock is locked to. If you're cutting the chain, you'll probably have to make two cuts. Make sure cutting the chain is actually going to open the gate. If possible, analyze the lock without tools before you cut it so you know exactly what you're doing when you get there.



crowbar/prybar

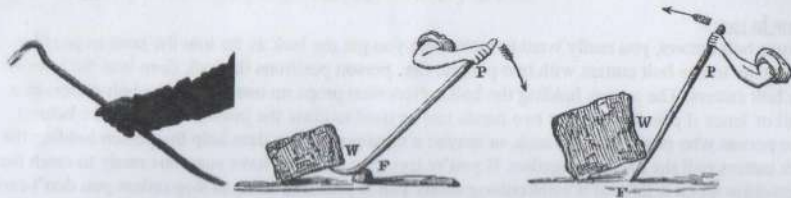


What it's used for:

Crowbars can be used for many things. They are regularly used to crack open windows/doors. They are also extremely useful for taking plywood off boarded up windows/doors. They're also useful for taking out nails/screws.

Which one to get:

When choosing a crowbar you want to basically get the longest crowbar you can get your hands on. The longer the crowbar, the more leverage it will have. It's important to think about the angle of the hook when obtaining a crowbar. Hooks that are close to 90 degrees (like the one in the picture below-left) are good for starting to open a door/window and beginning to rip off plywood. If the angle is too small you'll have trouble getting the crowbar in. Crowbars with a small angle hook (like the one pictures above) are particularly useful for taking out screws and nails. They're also really good to use once the door/window have already been started. This said it's ideal to have two crowbars. A crowbar with a 90 degree hook and one with a smaller angle hook, maybe around 45 degrees will do.



How to use:

To use a crowbar to pry open a door you first have to get the hook into the door. If it doesn't fit in the crack, hit the hook with a hammer, jamming it into the door. Then pull back on the crowbar with all your strength. Have a friend pull with you if necessary. When pulling off a plywood board, after you get the board up a little bit have a friend stick another crowbar in the section you just pulled up. Find some sticks, or metal pipe laying around (or bring some) to put in the sections of board you've lifted up. Go around the whole plywood board alternating crowbars until you get the whole board off. If you hit a tough spot use a screwdriver to pull some screws near the edge of the board out a little, and use a crowbar to pull the screw out the rest of the way.

screwdrivers

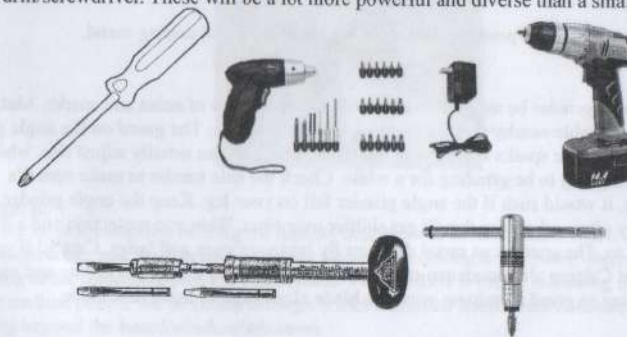


What it's used for:

Screwdrivers are useful for loads of things. They're good for taking the screws out of plywood boards to get into places. They're good for taking off the mortice lock face plate of a chiselled out mortice to mess with the levers (explained in further detail in the locks section). They're good for replacing yale locks, setting up blockades and countless other things.

Which one to get:

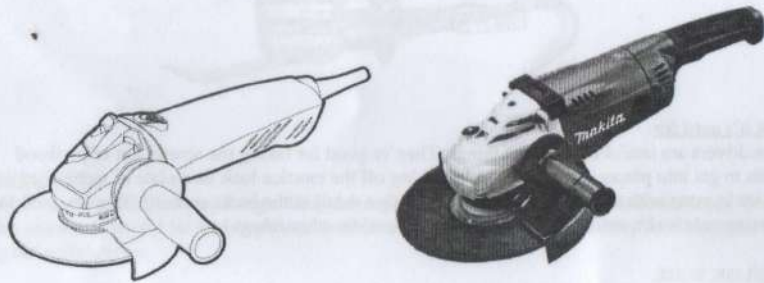
A good screwdriver is essential! It is important to have both a good phillips head (pictured below, left) screwdriver as well as a good flathead (pictured above). Some screwdrivers will start to deform if you put too much pressure on them and they're made out of shitty metal. So get a good one (or 2 or 4). Short screwdrivers with a fat handle (pictured above) are easier to use than the longer type, and will also pack away quite well in a pocket. Flathead screwdrivers are necessary to change yale locks. It's also worth looking into a t-bar screwdriver (pictured below) with solid screw bits, because you'll get more leverage using one of these than from a traditional screwdriver. If it's an option, find or steal a small portable screwgun. It probably won't have much torque (twist power), but it's useful for quickly removing screws that have already been started. Better yet, get a full sized portable drill/screwdriver. These will be a lot more powerful and diverse than a smaller screwgun.



How to use:

To unscrew really difficult screws, you need to put a lot of forward pressure on the screwdriver and twist. Sometimes it's too difficult to get a screw out by yourself, so get a friend to push hard in the middle of your back to give you extra power. If it's really difficult you can get a friend to push your friends back. This really works. The more pressure you have on the screw the less likely you are to strip it. If it's still not coming out, place one of your shitty screw drivers in the screw and give it a hard whack with a hammer. If the screw is rusted in, or just difficult, hitting it will loosen it up. Then go at it again with your good screwdriver and a friend. Often times to quickly remove a bunch of screws, I'll start the screw with a hand powered screwdriver and then have a friend unscrew the screws I started with a small handheld electric screwgun. This really speeds things up.

angle grinder



What it's used for:

A portable angle grinder is one of the most useful squat tools. You can use them to cut through padlocks, deadbolts, mortice locks and many other things. You can also use them to carve out a mortice lock from the inside of a house. You can use it to grind up things made from aluminium to make aluminium powder, which you can then use to make thermite (though be really careful cause this can be very dangerous!).

Which one to get:

Get a portable angle grinder if possible. Get a cutting blade made for cutting metal.

How to use it:

When using an angle grinder be aware that it's going to make a lot of noise and sparks. Make sure there's nothing flammable nearby that the sparks could light on fire. The guard on the angle grinder is the thing that blocks the sparks from flying into your face. You can usually adjust this, which is a good idea if you're going to be grinding for a while. Check the side handle to make sure it's screwed in tightly. It would suck if the angle grinder fell on your leg. Keep the angle grinder cutting discs on a cool dry place otherwise they'll get shittier over time. Wear eye protection and a dust mask if you want to. The sparks can metal dust can fly into your eyes and lungs. Careful if you're cutting aluminium! Cutting aluminium can cause a chemical reaction used in thermite and explode shit! If you're trying to grind aluminium wipe the blade clean first, or use a new blade.

hatchet/hammer



What it's used for:

Hatchets are useful for smashing windows, splitting wood, hacking away at a door to remove a mortice lock and loads of other things.

Which one to get:

When picking a hatchet you basically want something heavy enough to smash a window with ease, but most hatchets will do that. The only other thing to consider is whether or not the hatchet has a nail remover. The nail remover is not really necessary, but it's nice for chopping salvaged firewood. The hatchet above has a nail remover built into the blade. The hatchet below has a nail remover built onto the end of the hatchet which I think is nicer for everyday use. Hatchets are nice because they can just as well be used as a hammer.



How to use it:

You get the most leverage by holding the hatchet near the end of the handle. When trying to break through something, pull the hatchet back quite far and then swing towards the object as though you were trying to hit something past the object itself. This method is called following through, and is the same method people use to smash through bricks with their hands. Just concentrate on hitting something beyond the board/window/whatever.



sledgehammer



What it's used for:

Sledgehammers are useful for smashing out concrete blocks. They're also useful for smashing windows, and making holes in just about anything.

Which one to get:

A 12 pound sledgehammer is probably your best bet. According to a squat zine I can no longer find to cite or give credit to, a 12 pound sledgehammer can make a door sized opening through concrete cinder blocks in about 7 and a half minutes. According to a book called "Intrusion Detection Systems" by Robert Barnard:

"Using a 12-pound sledgehammer, a person-size hole was made in an 8-inch-thick hollow core cinder block wall in less than 2 minutes. Another hollow core concrete block wall, having blocks laid in line and No. 8 reinforcing bar and mortar in each core, was penetrated in less than 4 minutes. Even a brick-veneered hollow core concrete block wall with reinforcing wire and concrete filled cores was penetrated in less than 3 minutes with a 10-pound sledgehammer."

Anyhow, sledgehammers work.

How to use it:

Use the follow through method described on the previous page.

splitting maul



What it's used for:

Splitting mauls are like a sledgehammer mixed with an axe. It's useful for smashing through wooden things, such as plywood, doors and roofs. They're also essential for chopping logs into firewood.

Which one to get:

Eight pounds is a pretty standard weight for a splitting maul. I don't have any other recommendations on mauls as most will probably do just fine.

How to use it:

If you're going through something vertical, like a door, use the follow through method mentioned above. The thing about a maul though is that it's quite heavy and you really want to try to let the weight of the maul do the work. So swing far back and try to use the momentum of the maul to get through, that way you don't tire yourself out. If you're chopping something like a roof, or a log, the technique pictured below will keep you from getting tired out.

1. Start with the maul on the ground and your hands together at the top of the handle
2. While keeping the maul vertical, lift the maul with your left hand, sliding the maul head up until it is stopped by your right hand. Kind of like reloading a shotgun.
3. Lift your right hand over your head while simultaneously pushing the maul up with the left hand until your hands are together and the maul is extended (almost) vertically over your head. As you bring your hands together your left hand should be firmly gripping the handle, pushing upwards, while your right hand is loose so the maul can slide up.
4. Focus on the cut you're trying to make and bring the maul down onto the object, letting the maul do most of the work.
5. Repeat.



chisel/hammer



What it's used for:

A chisel/hammer are extremely useful for taking out a mortice lock from the inside of a house. They can also be used as improvised flathead screwdrivers, but don't do this cause it might mess up your chisel!

Which one to get:

There are a lot of different types of chisels, but conveniently enough, the best type of chisel is called a mortice chisel! They're usually used to chisel out sections of a door frame to make space for the mortice, but they're just as good at taking mortice locks out!

How to use it:

There are a couple ways to take out a mortice lock (see "mortice deadlock/deadbolts" in the locks section for a more detailed explanation with pictures). Probably the quickest way is to chisel the doorframe (not the door) to remove the strikeplate. You chisel around the deadbolt section of the mortice, and you also have to remove the wood at the top and bottom of the strikeplate where the screws hold the plate into the doorframe. Another method is to use an angle grinder to cut around the section of the door that houses the mortice lock itself. You can then chisel away down to the lock and unscrew the lock to lift up the levers manually.



car jack



What it's used for:

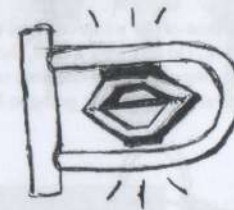
You can use a car jack to open kryptonite (or other brand) ulocks. You can also make a car jack prybar (super crowbar) with just a jack and a steel rod. Maybe you cracked open a window but it only budes a few inches (because there are security pegs in the door). You can put the car jack in the window to finish the job. Car jacks are designed to lift a car, so there is a lot of leverage power here.

Which one to get:

Scissor style car jacks are the most useful type. They are small enough to carry in a backpack and can fit in a lot more places than other types of jacks. A car jack with a slight indent in the top section is recommended. This indent will make the jack less likely to slip when placed between a ulock, or when using the jack as a pry bar (depicted below).

How to use:

To open a ulock, place the car jack in the middle of the "U" and start opening the jack. The picture below shows a ulock being opened with a scissor style car jack. Also, here is a picture of the car jack prybar method mentioned earlier.



compressed air cans/fire extinguisher



What they're used for:

You can use a can (or 2) of compressed air to freeze locks. After the lock is frozen you smash it with a hammer and it breaks apart. There is also a theory that you can use compressed air cans to freeze the wood of a door frame, then hit the wood with a chisel and hopefully it all comes out in big chunks. Never tried that though. I think it might be possible to freeze a wooden door with a fire extinguisher, then kick through it. You can probably also use a fire extinguisher to freeze a lock, then you smash the lock with the fire extinguisher to open it.

Which one to get:

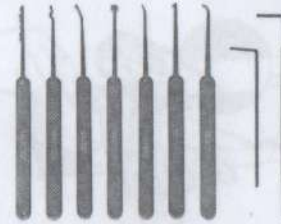
I'm not sure which brand of compressed air is best for this. Maybe they're all the same since it's the CO2 that pressurizes the can which is used to do the actual freezing. It might be worth looking into getting a small refillable CO2 tank like the ones used in paintball guns. If you could attach a hose to that I think you could have yourself a portable lock freezer. Something like the picture above.

How to use it:

If you're using compressed air cans like dust-off or whatever, turn the can upside-down and squirt the CO2 liquid or whatever it is at the lock. Do this with 2 cans, then smash the lock hard with a hammer. Also, be aware that some fire extinguishers are one time use only. Meaning once you pull the pin on a fire extinguisher to activate it you're not going to be able to reuse it.



lock picks



What they're used for: Opening locks

Which ones to get:

If you don't know how to lock pick get a professional set. Or at least a machine made rake and pick. You can make your own torsion wrench. You can also make your own picks out of street sweeper bristles (they're called bogota picks, look them up). But if you don't know what you're doing it's shitty to try to pick locks with homemade picks when you don't even know if a professional could get a lock open with your pick. Learn how to pick locks first, then make your own picks, or give them away or whatever. You can try making a shim out of an aluminium can which will open up some padlocks. Look up how to do this online, there's loads of information on it. You can also make bump keys by filing down keys with a triangle file. There's a lot of information on lock picking online and in books, so I'm not going to cover lock picking.



drill

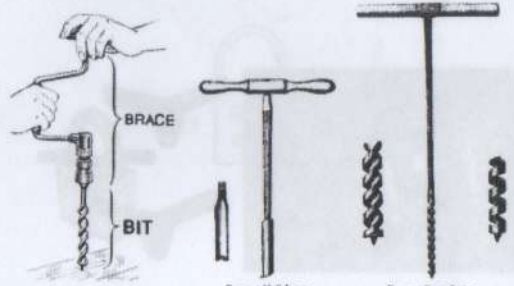


What it's used for:

Drilling holes for deadbolts, drilling spy holes in doors, drilling key/cylinder holes, screwing/unscrewing things

Which one to get:

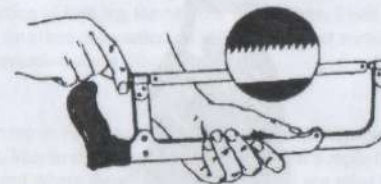
Get a good portable drill if possible. One that can also be used as a portable screwgun. If possible, find a portable drill with hammer-action. Hammer action is useful for drilling into concrete. The bits you use are really important. For metal you want to use metal bits, titanium-coated if possible (they'll be gold colored). Auger bits are really useful for cordless drills (pictured below, top-left). Auger bits can cut large holes with a small amount of torque (twist power). If you're trying to drill through concrete (for blockades), use masonry bits with a hammer-action drill. If you don't have any drill bits you can cut off the head of a screw and use that as a drill bit, then run the drill in reverse. I'd say it's worth it to get a hand-powered drill (manual drill), because they're quieter and don't rely on electricity. A few hand-powered drills are pictured below.



How to use it:

Just make sure you use the right bit for the right material, otherwise you'll likely break the bits.

hacksaw blade



What it's used for:

Cutting locks

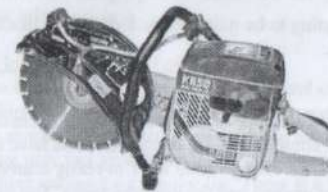
Which one to get:

Get a tungsten carbide hacksaw blade if possible.

How to use it:

It's easiest to use a hacksaw blade with a handle, but in most cases it'll make more sense to use just the blade itself rather than a whole hacksaw since a blade can manoeuvre in-between door cracks and such. Make a handle for your hacksaw blade out of bicycle inner-tube if you want.

concrete saw



What it's used for:

Concrete saws are crazy. They're really expensive, so it seems like the only option here is to steal one or find someone who just so happens to have one. You can cut pretty much anything with it. Think of it as an angle grinder on steroids. They're usually gas powered, which means they're portable. They have a big cutting blade and can get through mortice locks, or anything easily.

Which one to get:

Whichever one you can get your hands on

How to use it:

Carefully

oxy-acetylene torch



What it's used for:

Oxy-acetylene torches are amazing. They can cut through just about anything. You can also use these for general purpose welding, such as welding super strong blockades. I heard a story from an ex-black panther about a prison break they did with a portable oxy-acetylene torch. They just cut right through the prison bars. The problem was that they ran out of oxygen when the job was almost finished. So if you're going to do a prison break with one of these practice first to see what your torch is capable of. Though some things you can't predict so bring a backup.

Which one to get:

Get a small portable kit. It's going to be quite heavy. I'd get one like the picture above and then make my own backpack for it.

How to use it:

Know what you're doing. There are a lot of safety procedures necessary when using an oxy-acetylene torch. Follow them. These things are dangerous. You have to get the pressure just right or the canisters can explode (possible exaggeration but I'm really scared of these things). There is a certain order for turning on the oxygen and the acetylene tanks. You have to get the pressure just right. There is also a proper way to stop using them. I think you need to shut off the oxygen first since that's what's flammable, but read into it if you're going to use an oxy-acetylene setup. There are nozzles designed specifically for cutting, and nozzles designed for welding. Always wear eye protection because if you don't an oxy-acetylene torch can make you go blind! For real!



how to find a house

Cycle around

If you're lucky, you can find empties just by cycling around the area you're interested in living near. It's good to get in the practice of looking for empties all the time. Look at all the windows in the building, are any of them smashed or boarded up? Check the next section of this zine ("making sure it's empty") for more information about this.

Read the obituaries

It's kind of grim, but one way to find empties is to search old newspapers or the internet for people who have died in the past. Maybe it's a good idea to try to find people that died a couple years ago, rather than recently. Find out where they lived if possible and see what the condition of their house is like. It may have been passed on to the next of kin, but there is a chance the inheritors of the house don't want to do anything with it. If there is no next of kin there is a possibility a bank owns the house.

Lookup property tax info

In some places it's possible to find a website that will tell you who hasn't paid property taxes, and for how long. In Ireland this isn't too helpful, since there are a large number of people who refuse to pay property taxes. However, in some places if someone hasn't paid property taxes for a long time there is a chance they don't care about the property, and there is a possibility it's empty and slated for foreclosure by the banks (the foreclosure process can take years). Anyhow, this sort of thing can be useful where applicable.

Census directory

In Ireland there is a book called the Thom's directory which contains business and residential listings taken from the census. Basically it tells you who lives where. And if nobody lives at the property it will be listed as "Vacant" (meaning squat it). There are likely other directories for other countries that will contain similar information

Ask (check "town hall" or other local government buildings)

In some places it's possible to go into local government buildings and simply ask for a list of abandoned properties. I've had friends do this, basically saying they were doing an art project and wanted to know where all of the abandoned properties were. If you ask the right person at the right place with the right story someone may just give you a list of all potential squats. You can also try to find the right office and e-mail them asking for a similar list. There is a website called "abandoned Ireland" which showcases the work of a photographer (Tarquin Blake). This person just goes around taking pictures of abandoned places. Here is a quote from the website:

"I'm trying to document abandoned buildings across Ireland," he says. "And the buildings that I'm interested in are those which have either historical, architectural or social importance. I feel they're important places, which are basically just left there falling down. There's nobody interested in trying to preserve them. So what I'm trying to do is just get a record of them, as they stand today."

You could use something like that as an excuse for why you need to find abandoned buildings.

Flickr

The website flickr.com is a website loads of people use to put their pictures online. If you search flickr for things such as "abandoned (your country, county or whatever)" you may find pictures of abandoned houses/buildings. If you're lucky it'll even say where it is in the picture caption. If not, you can create a flickr account and send a message to the person who put up the picture asking for specifics. You may also ask them if they know of any other abandoned properties in the area.

Google (streetview/earth/maps/search)

Google has a lot of scary tools/services they provide and many of them are useful for squatting. If you go to maps.google.com, in some places it's possible to use "street view," which will basically just show you pictures of all of the houses/buildings on a road. You can use this to find potential squats by searching for boarded up houses, holes in windows, loads of graffiti on a place, etc. You can also use google search to find abandoned places just by typing things like " 'abandoned building' (country/area)." It's a good idea to figure out how to use quotation marks properly when searching for stuff on google. In the search bar, if you put two words together in quotes, google will keep the words together when searching. I can't really explain what I mean that well, but learn how to use quotation marks correctly when searching google and it will help you find squats more efficiently.

Foreclosure listings

I'm not going to go into too much depth about foreclosure stuff, but basically there are websites that will tell you if a house has been foreclosed, meaning the bank likely owns it and it's a squat possibility. The banks own loads of property. Sometimes they sell the property, sometimes they just forget about it. Some banks maintain online lists of foreclosed property they own. You can also call the bank and ask them where you can find a list of their foreclosed properties.

making sure it's empty

ring the doorbell/knock

If there's a doorbell, ring it. Why not? If someone's home just ask if your friend "blah" is home. This may save you from breaking into a house that's actually not abandoned. Also, you might want to consider knocking to the neighbours. Sometimes it's better not to do this, but if it feels right you might want to ring and ask for your friend "Jane." When they say you have the wrong house, make small talk and laugh, maybe ask them if they know anything about the abandoned house next door. Then when you do move in and your friend Jane moves in too, you can go introduce yourself and bring them a cake or something. Then they'll be like "oh this is the Jane you were talking about." And then everyone will laugh and the cops will never show up at your front door. Maybe not, but at least you'll be on a good page with your neighbours and possibly find out info about your house.

boarded up

Does the house look abandoned? If there are boards all over it and the windows are smashed it's pretty likely it's empty. But just because there are boards over the window doesn't always mean it's abandoned.

garden is overgrown

If the garden/yard looks really overgrown there's a possibility no one's going in or out of the house. But this isn't always the case. Look at the grass. Does it look like someone's walked on the grass recently? Maybe the person just doesn't care if their garden is overgrown. Maybe they prefer an overgrown garden cause plants are really cool! In some places neighbours put social pressure on each other to mow their lawn. In some places it's actually a requirement of moving in that you mow your lawn regularly. These are probably not good places to live though anyways.

tape the lock/put string around the gate

You can put clear tape (or any tape) on the lock to see if anyone is using the lock. If the tape is broken or removed chances are the house is still being used. If there is a gate, close it and tie a piece of yarn or string around the bottom of the gate to see if it's snapped next time you check the house. This would indicate someone's using the gate.

check the letterbox

If there's a letterbox, look inside it with a headlamp or torch/flashlight. Can you see tons of mail on the ground inside? If so, it's probably empty! Smell inside the letterbox too, does it smell like an abandoned house?



follow the electricity lines to see if they're cut

With some houses you can see the electricity lines running into them. Follow those lines. Are they cut anywhere? If they're cut, there's no electricity, which probably means no one lives there. It also means it might be a pain in the ass to hook up the electricity again.



google the address (streetview/earth/search)

Search google for the address of the house in quotation marks. Maybe add the word abandoned if the first search doesn't bring up anything interesting. Find the address of the house on google maps and bring up street view to see what the house looks like on google. Google streetview will tell you what year the pictures were taken. Has the house's appearance changed since those pictures were taken? Also, you can download google earth for free. With google earth's streetview you can change the year of the source images to see how the house's appearance has changed over the years.



planning entry

Say you just found an empty and are thinking about squatting it. There are a few logistical things to keep in mind when you're at the place and thinking about how to get in. Here are a few of them.

How is the building secured?

First figure out how the door is locked. Is there a mortice lock on the door? Give the door a push near the keyhole to see if it budes. Look through the crack in the side of the door if there is one. Is there a bolt going through it? How many locks are on the door? What kind are they? Is there a yale lock? Is there a deadbolt on the door? If so how is it attached? Can you just unscrew it? A lot of times deadbolts installed on the outside of a door can just be unscrewed because they're improperly installed. Is the door/window secured by more than just a lock? If there is a board over the door, give it a pull to see how easily you can fit a crowbar in there. If there's a board over the door, how is it attached? With screws? How many are there? What kind are they (Phillips/flathead)? Do the screws look stripped? What about the window? Try to lift it up to see if it opens or if there's any slack. Try to push on the window. Maybe it's falling out of the frame and will pop out easily.

Tools

How will you cut the lock? Are your bolt cutters big enough for this lock? Have you tried opening a lock of this size with your bolt cutters? If not, practice somewhere else, somewhere less sketchy. Are you planning on replacing the cylinder in the yale lock after you get in? If so you'll probably need a flathead and phillipshead screwdriver. And you'll probably need a hacksaw blade or bolt cutters to cut the metal rod on the cylinder that goes into the lock part. What tools will you need to bring back to open the place? When you're at the potential squat keep a mental note of all the tools you'll need to bring back. Also, where will you put the tools when you're done with them? One of the worst things is to get caught breaking in with tools. Is there somewhere you can hide the tools after using them? Maybe you'll want someone there whose only job is to cycle off with the tools.

Is there an easier way in?

Often times when you're at a place it's easy to focus on the door or window, trying to plan out all of the details on what tools you'll need and other stuff. Take a step back and look at the place. Is there an easier way in? Can you go around to the back yard? Often it will be much chillier to work on a back window or something than right out in the open on a busy road.

What if you're spotted?

If you're caught breaking in or cops roll up, is there a quick escape route that will put you out of sight fast? What's the story? Often times cops will separate people and ask them leading questions to try to get you to lie. It's useful to talk about this ahead of time so that everyone has the same story. Questions you're likely to be asked are "what are you doing?," "where are you coming from?," "where are you going?." If you say you're going to your friend's house, they'll likely say "where does your friend live," and then when you answer that they'll ask you another question based off your last answer trying to catch you in a lie. So it's good to give vague answers. Maybe things like "I'm going for a cycle and taking a break." Or whatever. Be creative (if you want to).

Talk about the action beforehand

One lesson I've learned the hard way is that it's really important for me to talk about actions beforehand. What are you comfortable with? What is everyone else that's doing the action with you comfortable with? There are different styles of breaking in. Some people prefer to smash a window and cycle away, then come back in a couple days. Other people like to do the whole job at once: break in, remove the mortice, change the locks, smoke a joint (or not), whatever. I find that when I'm high I get paranoid about breaking in, whereas a beer can take the edge off. This will be

different for everyone. It's worth talking about drug intake with people you're breaking with to find out what everyone's comfortable with. Also, it's shitty to go to a place with the idea that you're gonna crack the window, change the lock and go, and then your friends are telling you "it's fine, we have all the time in the world." I don't like to be at a place any longer than absolutely necessary, especially with tools. It's important to talk about what you're going to do, how long you're going to be there, etc, so that everyone involved in the action is on the same page. It's good to talk out the action beforehand anyways because going through the action out loud part by part is kind of setting the story for exactly what the break in is going to look like. Like a well thought out and cleanly executed plan. Ninja style. Or not if you don't want to do it like that. Wing it, I don't care. The important thing is that everyone feels comfortable with what's gonna go down.

Timing

Maybe the break in makes more sense at night time. Maybe it's better to do this place wearing a high visibility jacket and a hard hat in broad daylight. Maybe it's best to crack the squat on a Monday morning when everyone's at work. Maybe there's a big sports game coming up and security is more likely to be watching the game than the surveillance monitors. You get the idea.

Stepping back

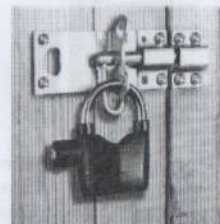
You want there to be tons of squatters, right? The best way to make this happen is to encourage others to crack squats so you all can have lots of places to live! When planning the break in it's useful to keep in mind who's going to do what. If you're the person that usually crowbars open the door, changes the locks, cuts the lock with power tools, whatever, let someone else do it this time. The best way to learn is by experience. Often just offering a tip can turn into you doing the job for them with them watching. Don't let this happen! Let them do it so they get good at it! The more people that are efficient at cracking squats the better. Make space for people who might be too shy to speak up. This can look like "Hey I noticed you haven't really gotten a chance to use the angle grinder yet. Would you be interested in cutting the mortice this time?" Be aware of gender imbalances. Cracking houses can become a macho thing, and macho things are shit. Ask if any female-bodied people are interested in using the power tools for this crack. If they haven't used them before, a good time to give tips is before you're actually on-site. But that's only if they want tips. Try to be encouraging and empowering to others so we can make a huge squatter's network and take over giant buildings with hundreds of squatters!

Is it going to work?

Is this place worth it? What's the neighbourhood like? Is it super upscale, where dirty (or clean) squatters going in and out is going to cause a big commotion? Maybe if it's a higher class place your neighbours are just going to drink loads of wine and talk about their quirky new neighbours at drunken dinner parties. Or maybe your neighbours are really cool and they want to start squatting too. Is the place right next to the police station? Does the neighbourhood have those annoying suburb neighbourhood watch signs everywhere? Is the area heavily patrolled by cops? What's the crime like in the area? Do cops have better things to do than kick out squatters, or are they bored and willing to stop and interrogate any kid/person with a backpack?

locks

padlock bolt (or just bolt)

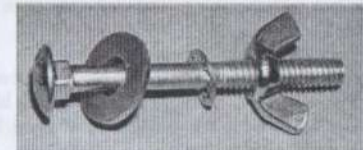
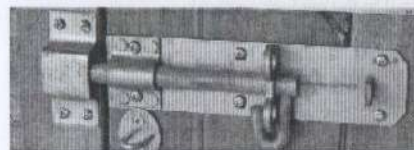


How to get around this lock:

Door bolts are often installed incorrectly, meaning they're often quite easy to get past. There are two parts to a door bolt. There is the part that goes onto the door (which includes a sliding bolt and a couple hoops you can put the lock on to stop the bolt from sliding). Then there is the part that the bolt slides into. Look at how each of these parts are attached. Sometimes you will find that they are just affixed with screws, meaning you can simply unscrew the bolt. Take a look at the image above for instance. To get past this lock you'd simply unscrew either part of the lock with a flathead screwdriver and you're in in about 30 seconds. For the lock below, I'd unscrew the part of the lock on the left (with a phillips head screwdriver), because there are only 4 screws holding it in place. Once you unscrew those screws the door will just open provided there are no other locks on the door. If you can't unscrew the bolt there are a couple other options. You could cut the bolt with an angle grinder or oxy-acetylene torch, but this is a bit overkill. You're better off cutting the lock, or the section that the lock attaches to with bolt cutters or an angle grinder. This will be much quicker. Another option is to put a crowbar into the "U" shape of the lock and pry the whole bolt off the door. You could also chisel away some of the wood near the top of the section the bolt goes into. Then use a crowbar to pry out the carriage bolts (described below).

How to install this lock:

To correctly install a door bolt you need to drill through the door and use carriage bolts (pictured below). A carriage bolt is basically a bolt with a head that can't be unscrewed. Right below the head there is a square bit which fits into the square holes on the bolt. You can see from the image at the top of the page that whoever installed this lock left the square hole empty. That's where the carriage bolt would go. The bolt goes all the way through the door. On the inside of the door you place a washer on the bolt (the circlery thing pictured below). The washer makes it more difficult to pull out of the door. Next to the washer you can put a lock washer (ask for one at any hardware store). This will make the nut (the thing that screws onto the bolt) less likely to loosen. Finally you put a nut on the end of the bolt. Wingnuts are awesome (pictured below, right) because you can undo them with your hand, making it quick to remove the bolt if you get evicted and want to reclaim your lock.



padlock



How to get around this lock:

Padlocks are used on all sorts of things. There are number of ways to get past them. Sometimes you can cut them with bolt cutters. If it's a really good padlock, bolt cutters might not do the trick. You can also use a shim to open them. You can make a shim from a soda can. You can also pick or rake the lock if you know how. You can also cut them with an angle grinder quite quickly. You can cut them with a hacksaw blade. You can freeze a padlock with compressed air cans and then smash it with a hammer. If it's a small padlock you can put a screwdriver through the "U" and quickly pull down to force the lock open. If it's bigger you can do the same trick with a crowbar.

folding lock



How to get around this lock:

Usually these locks are on wooden doors. You can chisel the wood away at the top of the lock and then put a crowbar in to pry it off. Or you could cut the lock with an angle grinder, or whatever other tools are available to you. You could put a crowbar through the lock "U" and pry down, pulling the whole lock out of the door. If you can't do it with one person have your friends pull too. If you can't get it still, find a steel pipe and put it on the end of the crowbar to get more leverage. Or use a car jack with the crowbar (described in more detail in the car jack section).

How to install this lock:

If you are going to use a folding lock use really long screws. Long screws make it much more difficult to pry the lock off. If you find a folding lock big enough it should have square holes for carriage bolts (described in the padlock bolt section). If you use carriage bolts and a big folding lock these locks might not be that bad.

ulock



How to get around this lock:

The quickest way to cut a u-lock is probably with an angle grinder. Ulocks come in a variety of different qualities, so it's hard to know how difficult the lock will be. The company "Kryptonite" makes exceptionally strong ulocks these days. But some of their older locks (and other older ulocks) can be beaten with a bic pen. If the cylinder (the place you put the key into) takes a circular key (like the one pictured below), you just cut off the end of the pen, hollow it out and stick it into the cylinder and twist. If it's one of the larger ulocks you can stick a scissor style car jack in the middle of the "U" and pop it open. I doubt you could cut a kryptonite u-lock with a hacksaw. I've heard it's possible to use a long 2x4 (two by four -- a big piece of wood) as a lever to pry some ulocks off, though I haven't tested this.

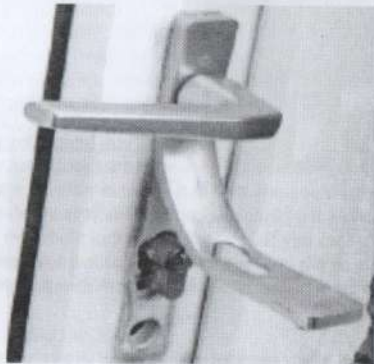
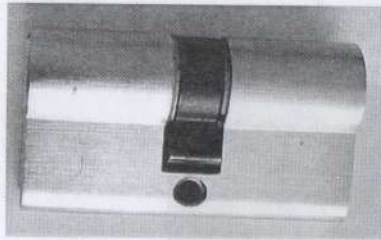


lock snapping



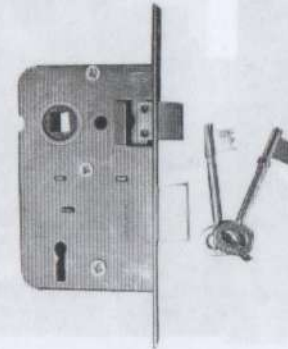
How to get around this lock:

There are certain cylinder locks that are prone to a technique called lock snapping. If the cylinder is sticking out of the key hole a bit far and is shaped like the one above there is a chance this lock is prone to lock snapping. To snap the lock, basically you just hit it with the bottom side of a hammer head (see the picture below). In some cases you can pry up the lock housing with a screwdriver or vise-grips (locking pliers) (pictured below). This reveals the cylinder making it easier to snap.



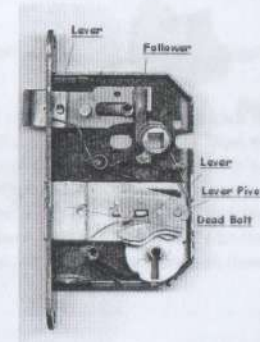
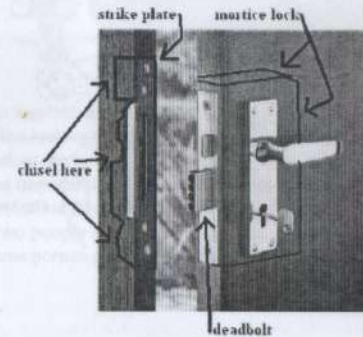
tricks

mortice deadlock/deadbolts

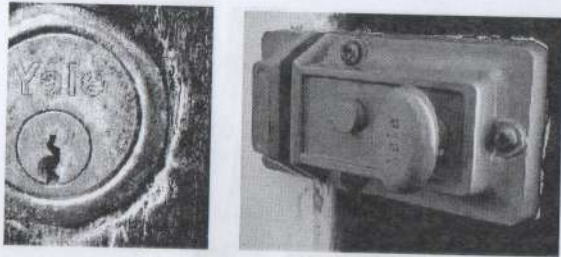


How to get around this lock:

Mortice locks/dead bolts are a pain in the ass. Especially when they're in metal doors. Basically the way they work is that you turn a key or knob and a strong metal bar (called the deadbolt) goes across the door into what's called a strikeplate (pictured next page, top-left) locking the door shut. Some deadbolts are easy to cut with an angle grinder. If your angle grinder blade is not large enough though you might have trouble cutting it. Some deadbolts have extra strong reinforcements that your angle grinder might have trouble cutting. It's impossible to know how tough the mortice is until you try cutting it. If you can't get through with the angle grinder try using a hacksaw blade (preferably a tungsten carbide hacksaw blade cause they're really fucking strong). If you can avoid cutting a mortice/deadbolt and find another way into the building do that. If you can find another way into the building (or if you're in a really chill area and have loads of time) it's easy, though time consuming to chisel the strike plate out of the door frame to bypass the mortice lock (pictured on the next page, top-left). It's also possible to chisel away the wood that covers the mortice lock itself, then unscrew the faceplate on the lock and lift the levers manually to move the deadbolt. I think it's much quicker though to chisel the door frame and strike plate rather than the mortice lock and door. Sometimes people leave a key in the mortice lock, thinking that someone trying to break in won't be able to turn the key since it's on the inside of the door. Have a look inside the key hole. Is there a key in it? If so, you can use a hollowed out bic pen to turn the key.



yale lock/pin and tumbler lock

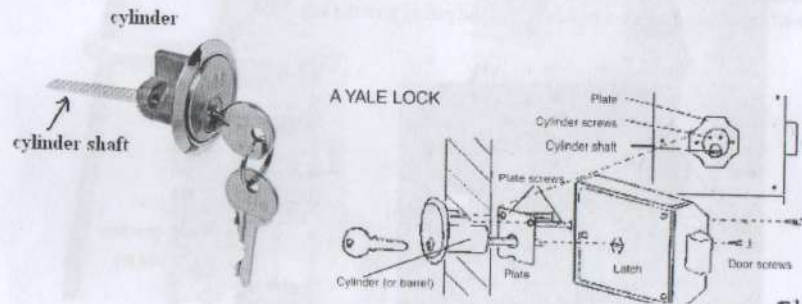


How to get around this lock:

Getting past yale locks is quite easy compared to other locks. Sometimes you can just kick the door in. Other times you can just pop the door with a crowbar. If that doesn't work try the back to back to foot method discussed in the tricks section.

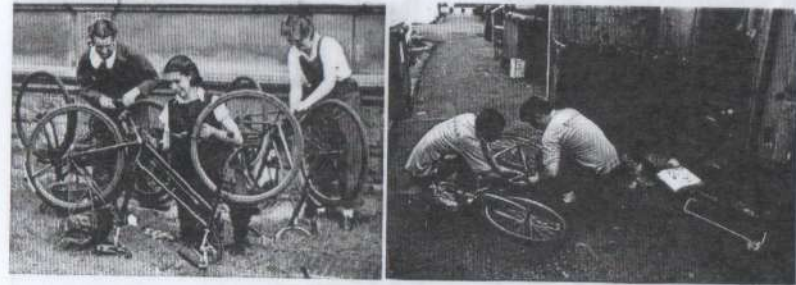
Installing this lock:

One of the first things to do when you get a new place is to change the locks. Yale locks are really good for this because usually all you have to do is replace is the lock's cylinder (pictured top-left, and bottom-left). When changing the cylinder you're going to need a phillips head screwdriver to remove the latch (pictured top-right). Next you'll probably need a flathead screwdriver to remove the plate screws. From there you take out the cylinder and place a new one the hole. Next, tighten the new plate screws, securing the new cylinder. Make sure you don't put the faceplate in upside-down! From there, put the latch in place again and see if the latch will fit over the new cylinder shaft. If it doesn't, you might have to trim a bit of metal off the shaft to make it fit. To do this use a hacksaw blade or bolt cutters. Snapping the cylinder shaft with pliers is inaccurate, so avoid this. When cutting the cylinder shaft be careful, because if you cut too much of the shaft the key won't turn the lock and you'll have to get a new cylinder.



tricks

bicycle distraction



One really useful trick when breaking into a place on a really busy road is to flip your bicycle upside-down and pretend to be working on it. You can even take your wheel off (quick release bolts are good for this) so it looks like an involved project. Meanwhile, while there's no traffic two people can each grab a crowbar and pop open a window. This distraction is nice because if people are nervous you can just pretend to be talking about what's wrong with the bike and then people will probably start laughing and being silly and making up things they think could be wrong with the bike. Then everyone looks less sketchy. Cause you're just fixing a flat, right?

kicking in a door



The most important part of kicking in a door is placement of the kick. You want to kick the door as close to the lock as possible. This is going to be the side of the door furthest away from the hinges. Also, look at the hinges. Does the door open inward or outward? If it opens outward it's going to be almost impossible to kick in. Kick with your heel, and kick as though you're trying to kick past the door (follow through method). Flying kicks probably won't work. You can try kicking the door in with two people at the same time, though I'm not sure how well this will work. Maybe it's better to have one person pushing on the door as hard as they can while the other person delivers the kick.

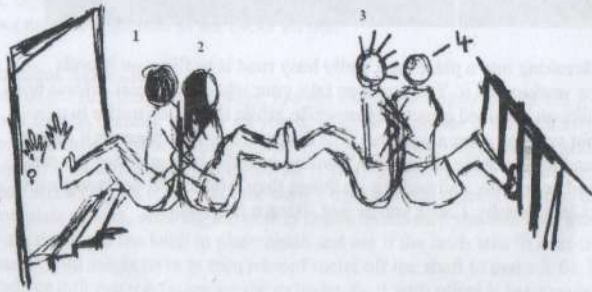
tape the window/blanket over a window

Smashing a window doesn't make as much noise as you might imagine. What makes the most noise is the glass falling to the ground. You can quickly duct tape the window, put a small blanket over it and smash it with a hatchet. The blanket will dampen the noise, and the duct tape will keep the glass from falling all over the place.

clear out all the glass

After you've broken a window clear out all the glass. You can do this really quickly. Clearing out all the glass disguises the recently broken window by making it look like it's open, not smashed. It also makes it less likely that you'll cut yourself going in and out of the window, leaving blood on the scene, or making noise as you leave by knocking out more glass.

back to back to foot method for opening doors



There is a really nice technique for getting into a place if you have a few people. Basically, one person sits on the ground with their feet up on the door close to the lock. This person sits back to back with another person and they lock arms. A third person then pushes the second person's feet with their feet. A fourth person (if you have four people) then locks arms and sits back to back, or better yet pushes their shoulder up against the door and leans on it with all their weight. Then all at once everyone pushes and the door pops open. This technique is useful because it doesn't require any tools and the door will pop open quite quietly.

hardhat/high vis

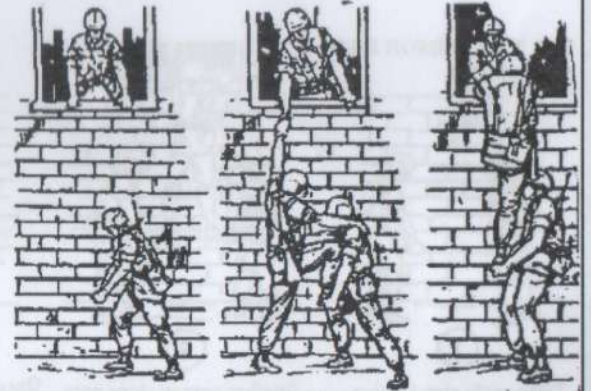
Some break-ins are easier to do in broad daylight. If you can, get your hands on a hardhat and high visibility jacket, some work boots and pretty much anything else to make you look legit. Use traffic cones with caution tape and an angle grinder for extra effect. Go with two people in uniform with hardhats to make it look ever more legit. Here's an example of some good/bad ideas for this method.

"So we tried our best to be new people & gender considerate for this crack, which was cool, but in the end 6 people came, which was too many. We got all the locks changed super fast, as we'd planned out all the doors. But... We didn't hide dreadlocks, & we didn't match high vis', plus it was about 6pm. Soo, someone called the cops, who called the owner. We'd already sorted out friends to come outside if/when police came, & they could ring us. So we spoke to the owner on the phone (he was really cool), and after a big discussion, we decided to leave. Now he has a big friendly sign on his door asking people not to squat there as he's doing it up for his wife and kid (which is true :))

climbing techniques

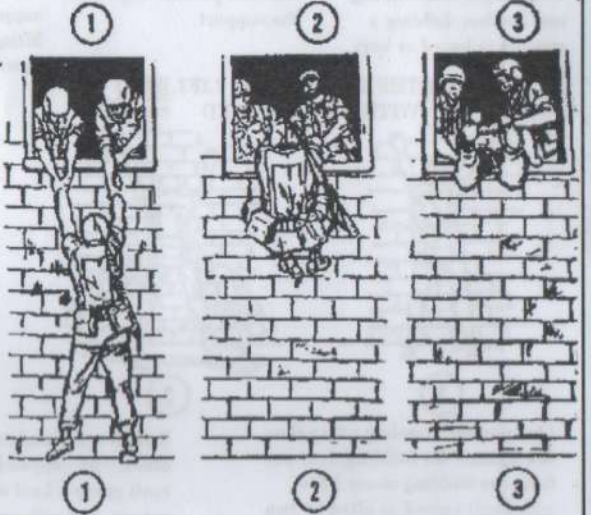
THE BOOST

One person with their back or side braced against the building, hands cupped, allows another person to raise one foot up into their cupped hands, and then lifts them up and into the entrance. (It helps to place your cupped hands on your knee for more support)



THE TWO PERSON PULL

When the first two people are inside the building and the other person seeks entrance, the two already inside may assist the others by pulling them up into the building

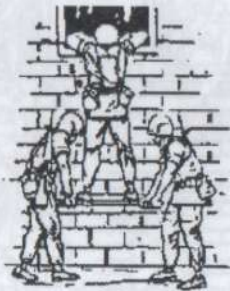


**THE TWO-PERSON LIFT,
SUPPORTED**



①

Two people stand facing one another, holding a support (a board or bar)



②

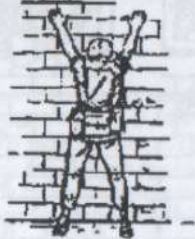
Another person steps onto the support.



③

Once both feet are on the support, the support is raised, lifting the third person upward and into the entrance.

**THE TWO-PERSON LIFT,
WITH HEELS RAISED**



①

One person, standing with palms flat against the building, feet out from the building about 2 feet with heels raised, is lifted by two people.



②

Two people bend over facing each other, with cupped hands. They each grasp a heel of the third person, and with one quick move lift them up and into the entrance.



③