

Smart Locks for Renters

THE QUICK VERSION

- 1 Read your lease and get written landlord permission.
- 2 Pick a retrofit that keeps the outside key: August, Level Bolt, SwitchBot, or Wyze.
- 3 Bag and label the original thumb-turn you remove.
- 4 Install on the inside only, no drilling, and calibrate carefully.
- 5 Place the Wi-Fi bridge halfway to the router for steady control.
- 6 Call Bill at (330) 200-8042 if you want it set up right.

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Smart Locks for Renters — No Drilling, No Deposit Fights

Add a keypad or app without changing the outside of the door — take it with you when you move.

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1877 · SMART LOCKS —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

The trick for renters is a retrofit lock. Instead of replacing the whole deadbolt, it swaps only the little thumb-turn on the inside of your door, or clips over it. The outside of the door, including the keyhole and the key your landlord holds, never changes at all.

- No drilling, no new holes, and nothing changes on the outside of the door.
- Your landlord's key still works, because the outside cylinder is untouched.
- It comes off clean when you move, and the deadbolt goes back to normal.
- You take the smart lock with you to the next place.

GOOD TO KNOW

The main renter-friendly names are August, the Level Bolt, SwitchBot, and the retrofit-style Wyze. They all share the same idea: keep the existing deadbolt, add smarts on the inside only.

If you want help picking one that fits your door and your lease, call or text me at (330) 200-8042. I set these up for renters all over Portage County, from Kent apartments to Ravenna duplexes.

1. Why renters need a different lock

No drilling, no deposit fights.

Most smart-lock guides are written for people who own their home and can swap out the whole deadbolt. As a renter, you have two extra rules to live by. You usually cannot modify the door, and your landlord needs their key to keep working. Break either one and you risk your deposit or a fight at move-out.

The good news is that there is a whole family of smart locks built exactly for your situation. They are called retrofit locks, and they add smarts to the inside of your existing deadbolt without touching the outside. No drilling, no new holes, and nothing your landlord would object to.

- You keep the existing deadbolt, so there is nothing to drill and nothing to replace.
- The outside keyhole and the key stay exactly as they are.
- Your landlord, the super, or maintenance can still get in with their key in an emergency.
- When you move, you take the smart lock off and the door is just as you found it.

TIP

Keep the original thumb-turn piece you remove in a labeled bag in a drawer. On move-out day you put it back in two minutes, and the door is exactly as the landlord handed it to you.

This guide is about your situation as a renter, not about the fancy install options. If you own your home, my install and brand guides go deeper on replacing the whole lock. For a rental, the retrofit approach is almost always the right and the safe answer.

2. What no drilling really means

Retrofit, inside only.

The phrase no drilling gets used loosely, so let me be precise about what you actually want as a renter. You want a lock that changes only the inside of your door and leaves the outside completely alone. That is what retrofit means, and it is the heart of a renter-safe install.

- A retrofit lock either replaces the small inside thumb-turn or clips a motor over it.
- Nothing is drilled, and no new screw holes are made in the door.
- The outside cylinder, the keyhole, and the trim do not change at all.
- The whole job uses the hardware and holes your deadbolt already has.

WATCH OUT

No new drilling does not always mean no hardware change. Some locks still swap the outside piece. For a rental you want one that leaves the outside untouched, so read the product description carefully and, if in doubt, ask me.

Picture your deadbolt. On the outside is a keyhole. On the inside is a little knob or lever you twist, called the thumb-turn. A retrofit smart lock takes over that thumb-turn, so a motor twists it for you when your phone or a code says so. That is the entire change.

Because the outside never changes, the lock does not care that it is a rental. From the hallway side, it looks exactly like it always did. From the inside, there is a neat little motor unit where the plain thumb-turn used to be. That is the renter-safe design in a nutshell.

3. How a retrofit lock works

A motor turns the knob for you.

Understanding what the lock does inside your door takes the mystery out of it. A retrofit smart lock is really just a small, polite robot that twists your existing thumb-turn when you tell it to. Nothing more complicated than that.

- The motor grips or replaces your inside thumb-turn.
- When you tap the app, use a code, or trigger auto-unlock, the motor twists the bolt open or closed.
- The outside keyhole still works by hand for anyone with a key.
- You can usually still twist the inside by hand too, if you ever want to.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because the motor only turns the bolt you already have, a retrofit lock needs a deadbolt that moves smoothly by hand. If your bolt sticks or you have to lift the door to lock it, that must be fixed first, and in a rental that is the landlord's job.

This is the beauty of the retrofit approach. You are not replacing security hardware or defeating the landlord's lock. You are adding a convenience on top of a lock that keeps doing exactly what it did. The deadbolt is the same deadbolt; it just has a helper now.

It also means the smart part and the security part are separate. If the smart lock ever fails or runs out of battery, the plain deadbolt underneath still works by key and by hand. You are never worse off than a normal lock, only better off when the smarts are running.

4. Your renter-friendly options

The four names to know.

A handful of locks are built for exactly your situation. They differ in how they mount and how they reach your phone, but they all share the renter-safe idea of leaving the outside of your door alone. Here is the short lineup.

- August: clips a motor over your inside thumb-turn, keeps your key, and is the classic renter retrofit.
- Level Bolt: hides inside the door and keeps your existing handle and key, the most invisible option.
- SwitchBot: offers a retrofit that drives your thumb-turn, with versions that mount on the inside.

- Wyze: has offered a retrofit-style lock that fits over the existing deadbolt; check the current lineup for what is available.

TIP

All four keep your landlord's key working. The choice between them comes down to how they mount, how they look inside, how they reach your phone, and the price. I will walk through each in the next chapters.

You do not need to memorize every model. The idea is the same across all of them: a motor on the inside, the outside untouched, and the lock comes with you when you move. Pick the one whose mounting and app you like best.

Brands update their lineups often, and a model that is on the shelf one season may be replaced the next. The renter-safe principle does not change. If you send me the exact model you are considering, I will confirm it leaves your outside hardware alone before you spend a dime.

5. SwitchBot, the easy retrofit

Mounts on the inside, keeps your key.

SwitchBot has become a favorite for renters because of how simply it mounts. The newer SwitchBot Lock Pro installs on the inside by taking over your thumb-turn, which means the outside cylinder and your landlord's key never change. It is a tidy, renter-safe design.

- The Lock Pro drives your existing thumb-turn, leaving the outside key working.
- It installs on the inside only, with no drilling and no change to the landlord's hardware.
- It runs on common AA batteries, commonly lasting six to nine months on a set.
- You can add a separate SwitchBot keypad near the door if you want codes.

GOOD TO KNOW

SwitchBot's original lock used strong double-sided tape to stick to the door. The newer Lock Pro moves to a sturdier mount that takes over the thumb-turn, which is the more reliable choice for a renter.

If you do end up with an adhesive-mounted SwitchBot, know that it comes off with a little heat. SwitchBot's own guidance is to warm the adhesive with a hair dryer until it loosens, pry the base off gently, and clean any leftover residue with alcohol wipes. That leaves the door clean for move-out.

WATCH OUT

The earlier adhesive-only SwitchBot had a reputation for occasionally falling off the door. If you want the most dependable renter mount, favor the Lock Pro style that grips the thumb-turn rather than relying on tape alone.

6. August, the classic renter retrofit

Keep your key, swap only the inside.

August is the lock that made the retrofit idea famous, and it is now part of the Yale family. You keep your existing deadbolt, your existing key, and the whole outside of your door. You only swap the thumb-turn on the inside for the August motor. That is the entire install, and it is why August is a renter favorite.

- Retrofit design: your outside key still works for the landlord and for you.
- Installs on the inside in minutes, with no drilling and no outside change.
- Auto-unlock can sense your phone and open the door as you walk up.
- Runs on the Yale Access app, since August is now under the Yale umbrella.

WATCH OUT

Some August setups use a small plug-in bridge for control from away from home, and reviewers note its Bluetooth range can be spotty in a larger apartment. Place any bridge within good range of the lock and the router.

August shines for renters precisely because it changes nothing a landlord would notice. The door looks and works the same from the hallway, the super keeps their key, and when you leave you pop the August off and screw the original thumb-turn back on.

There is one honest limit worth flagging. Because August hides on the inside, there is no outside keypad. Without your key, you open the door with your phone. If you want to punch in a code at the door, you would add a separate August keypad, which some renters do.

7. The Level Bolt, the invisible option

Hides inside, keeps your hardware.

The Level Bolt is the most hidden renter option of all. Instead of a visible motor on the inside, it shrinks the smart parts small enough to live inside the door itself. From both sides, your door looks completely unchanged, and your existing handle and key keep working.

- All the electronics hide inside the deadbolt bore; nothing shows on either side.
- It keeps your existing outside hardware and your key, so the landlord's key still works.
- You open it by phone app, a tap-in keycard, your key, or auto-unlock.
- It runs on a single small lithium battery tucked inside the door.

GOOD TO KNOW

The Level Bolt is the pick for a renter who wants zero visible change, even on the inside. Nobody can tell the lock is smart, which is lovely in a nice apartment where you want nothing bulky on the door.

The trade with the Level Bolt is that the install is a bit fussier, since parts seat inside the door, and it has no built-in keypad. You open it with a phone, a keycard, or your key. For a tech-comfortable renter who carries a phone, that is usually fine.

WATCH OUT

Because the Level Bolt works inside the door, it needs a deadbolt that turns smoothly. In a rental, if the bolt drags, ask the landlord to address it before you install, since you should not be forcing or modifying their hardware.

8. Wyze and the budget retrofits

A lower-cost way in.

Wyze is known for making well-priced smart-home gear, and it has offered a retrofit-style lock that fits over the existing deadbolt and keeps your key. For a renter on a budget, the lower-cost retrofits are worth a look, with a couple of honest cautions.

- A retrofit-style Wyze keeps your outside key working, the way all renter locks should.
- The appeal is the lower price compared with the premium names.
- Wyze leans heavily on its app, so you will spend time there setting codes and access.
- Lineups change, so confirm the current model is a retrofit before you buy.

WATCH OUT

Not every lock a budget brand sells is a retrofit. Some are full replacement deadbolts that swap the outside hardware, which is exactly what a renter must avoid. Check the description, and when unsure, ask me to confirm.

My honest take on the budget retrofits is that they can be a fine way to try out a smart lock without a big outlay, especially in a first apartment. Just go in knowing that the app and the build may feel a touch less polished than August or Level, and that support can be thinner.

If you go budget, lean on the same renter rules as always: keep the outside untouched, keep the original parts bagged for move-out, and confirm your landlord is fine with it. A cheaper lock that follows those rules is still a renter-safe lock.

9. Why the landlord's key still matters

Keep everyone able to get in.

The single most important thing about a renter lock is that your landlord's key keeps working, and I want to explain why that matters beyond just keeping the peace. It is often a legal and safety requirement, not only a courtesy.

- Many leases require the landlord or maintenance to be able to enter in an emergency.
- A retrofit lock keeps the outside cylinder untouched, so their key still turns it.
- This protects you if there is a fire, a burst pipe, or a welfare check while you are away.
- It also keeps you out of trouble, since changing the locks on a landlord is usually a lease violation.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because a retrofit drives your thumb-turn and leaves the cylinder alone, there is no conflict. The landlord's key and your smart features both work at the same time, each doing its own job.

Some renters worry that a landlord's key makes the smart lock pointless. It does not. The smart lock still gives you phone control, codes, auto-lock, and a log of comings and goings. The key is simply an emergency backup that the law and good sense both want in place.

If you are tempted to block the key or disable the cylinder, please do not. That is the one move that turns a renter-safe upgrade into a dispute. Keep the key working, keep your landlord comfortable, and enjoy the smart features on top.

10. What to check in your lease

Read before you install.

Before you put any lock on a rental door, spend five minutes with your lease. Most leases are fine with a renter-safe retrofit, but it pays to know the rules before you start, not after a disagreement.

- Look for any clause about altering the door, the locks, or the hardware.

- Check whether attachments, adhesives, or anything mounted on the door are addressed.
- Confirm there is no rule against anything mounted outside; a retrofit avoids this, but read anyway.
- Note any requirement to give the landlord a key or keep their access, which a retrofit satisfies.

TIP

If the lease is unclear, a short, friendly message to your landlord saves trouble. Something like: I would like to add an inside-only smart lock that does not change the door or your key, and I will restore it at move-out. Most landlords say yes to that.

A warning worth repeating: no new drilling does not always mean no hardware change. A renter-safe lock leaves the outside alone, but some products still swap outside parts. Your lease cares about that distinction, so make sure the lock you pick truly leaves the exterior untouched.

Getting written permission, even a quick text, is cheap insurance. It turns a gray area into a clear yes, protects your deposit, and means nobody is surprised at move-out. I always tell renters to do this first, before the lock even arrives.

11. Taking it off when you move

Reversible by design.

The whole point of a renter lock is that it comes off clean, and your deadbolt goes back to exactly how you found it. This is where the renter-safe design pays off, and it is worth knowing the drill before move-out day arrives.

- 1 Open the app and remove the lock from your account, so it is ready to set up fresh at your next place.
- 2 Unscrew the smart motor unit from the inside of the door.
- 3 Put the original thumb-turn piece you saved back on, using the same screws.
- 4 If the lock used adhesive, warm it with a hair dryer, peel the base off, and clean any residue with an alcohol wipe.
- 5 Give the inside of the door a wipe, and it is as it was.

TIP

This is exactly why I told you to bag and label the original thumb-turn the day you installed. With that part in hand, restoring the door is a two-minute job, not a scramble to find a matching replacement.

A thumb-turn swap, like August or SwitchBot Lock Pro or the Level Bolt, leaves no trace at all once the original part goes back. Reviewers rightly describe these as coming off in seconds with nothing left behind, which is just what you want for your deposit.

An adhesive-mounted lock takes a touch more cleanup, but heat and an alcohol wipe handle it. Either way, you walk away with your smart lock in a box, ready for the next apartment, and the landlord gets their plain deadbolt back.

12. Apartment Wi-Fi headaches

Why control from away can be tricky.

Apartments and duplexes bring their own Wi-Fi quirks, and they are the most common reason a renter's smart lock misbehaves. Knowing them ahead of time saves a lot of frustration.

- Many retrofit locks connect over short-range Bluetooth and need a small plug-in bridge to reach you from away.
- In a larger apartment, that bridge can be out of good range of the lock if it is plugged in too far away.
- Shared building Wi-Fi can be crowded and unpredictable, which affects the bridge's connection.
- The lock still works up close by phone, by code, or by key even when the away-from-home link is flaky.

TIP

Plug the bridge into an outlet roughly halfway between the lock and your Wi-Fi router, out in the open, not hidden behind a couch. That one placement fixes most apartment connection troubles.

If you are on a building-provided internet connection rather than your own router, control from away can be less reliable, because you do not control that network. In that case, lean on the lock's up-close features, which work over Bluetooth regardless, and treat the away-from-home control as a bonus.

Here in Portage County, I set up plenty of locks in Kent student rentals and Ravenna apartments where the Wi-Fi is less than ideal. A well-placed bridge almost always sorts it. If it does not, that is exactly the kind of thing I can diagnose on a quick visit or a remote screen-share.

13. Packages, guests, and deliveries

Letting people in without a key.

One of the best parts of a renter lock is handing out access without copying a key. For apartment life, where deliveries and guests come and go, that is genuinely useful.

- Give a visitor or a dog walker a time-limited code or digital key that expires on its own.
- Let a trusted friend in remotely with a tap on your phone while you are at work.
- Use auto-unlock so you are not fumbling for keys with your arms full of groceries.
- Check the history to confirm a guest arrived or a helper came as planned.

GOOD TO KNOW

On the locks that have no built-in keypad, like August and the Level Bolt, handing out a code means adding the brand's separate keypad accessory, or sharing a digital key or keycard instead.

For a renter who is often away at work or out for the evening, being able to let someone in from your phone is a real quality-of-life upgrade. No hiding a key under the mat, which is the least safe habit there is, and no racing home to meet a delivery.

WATCH OUT

Be thoughtful about letting a package into the actual apartment versus a lobby or porch. For most renters, I suggest keeping entry codes for people you trust and letting carriers leave parcels in a safe spot rather than inside your home.

14. Roommates and shared access

Everyone gets in their own way.

If you share a place, a smart lock makes roommate life smoother. Instead of one key floating around and getting copied at the hardware store, each person gets their own access that you can manage from the app.

- Give each roommate their own digital key, code, or keycard.
- When a roommate moves out, remove just their access without changing anyone else's.
- The history shows who came and went, which quietly settles the did-you-lock-it question.
- Auto-lock means the door is never left unlocked because someone forgot.

TIP

Decide upfront who the main admin on the app is, usually whoever is most comfortable with the phone. That person adds and removes access, so there is no confusion about who manages the lock.

The classic renter headache is a roommate who moves out with a key still in their pocket. With a smart lock you simply switch off their access, and the problem is solved without re-keying or arguments. That alone is worth the upgrade for a shared house.

Just remember the lock belongs to whoever bought it and takes it with them when they move. Sort out ahead of time, in a friendly way, whose lock it is, so there is no confusion when the household changes.

15. Which renter lock is right for you

A short matchmaker.

Let me boil the choices down to the kind of plain matchmaking I do at the kitchen table. Find yourself in this list and you are most of the way to a decision.

- Want the classic, easy retrofit with auto-unlock: August.
- Want the most invisible option with nothing showing: the Level Bolt.
- Want a straightforward inside mount with the option of a keypad: SwitchBot Lock Pro.
- Want the lowest cost to try smart locks: a retrofit-style budget lock like Wyze.
- Want to keep your landlord perfectly happy: any of them, since all keep the outside key working.

GOOD TO KNOW

For most renters, I lean toward August or the SwitchBot Lock Pro, because they mount simply on the inside, come off clean, and have mature apps. The Level Bolt is my pick when you want nothing to show at all.

Notice that the right answer depends on how much you want to show, whether you want a keypad, and your budget. There is no single best renter lock, only the one that fits your door, your lease, and the way you come and go.

If you are still torn, that is normal. Send me your apartment door details and the models you are weighing at (330) 200-8042, and I will give you one clear pick that fits your situation.

16. Installing it yourself

A screwdriver and ten minutes.

The lovely thing about a renter retrofit is that you can often fit it yourself with a single screwdriver. There is no drilling and no outside work. Here is the general shape of a thumb-turn swap, which is the most common renter install.

- 1 Unscrew and remove the existing inside thumb-turn, keeping the screws and the piece in a labeled bag.
- 2 Fit the lock's mounting plate in its place, using the same screw holes.
- 3 Attach the smart motor unit to the plate until it clicks or seats firmly.
- 4 Load the batteries, then open the app and follow the steps to pair and calibrate.
- 5 Let the lock learn the fully locked and fully unlocked positions, then test it several times.

WATCH OUT

Do the calibration step carefully. The lock needs to learn exactly how far your bolt travels. A rushed calibration is the top cause of a retrofit that half-locks or strains. Follow the app and let it find both ends of the travel.

If your deadbolt sticks or drags before you start, stop and tell your landlord. You should not be sanding, filing, or adjusting their door. Once the bolt turns smoothly by hand, the motor will handle it happily. A stiff bolt is a landlord fix, not a renter one.

If the app steps make you nervous, you do not have to go it alone. I set these up for renters regularly, and I can do it in person or guide you over a remote screen-share while you hold the screwdriver. Either way it is a quick, tidy job.

17. Batteries and keeping power

Plan ahead, never get stuck.

Retrofit locks run on batteries, and the type varies by model. SwitchBot and August style units commonly use AA batteries or a small rechargeable pack, while the Level Bolt uses a single small lithium cell. All of them warn you before they die.

- Many retrofits run six to nine months, or longer, on a set of batteries.
- The app warns you well ahead of time, usually weeks before the battery is empty.
- Cold weather and a weak signal both shorten battery life.
- Your key is always the power-free backup, so a dead battery is never a true lockout.

TIP

Keep a fresh set of the right batteries in a drawer so a swap is a two-minute job. Change them the week the app first warns you, not the morning they die.

For renters this is extra reassuring, because the whole system sits on top of a plain deadbolt. Even if the smart lock goes completely dead, you and your landlord both still open the door with a key by hand. You are never locked out by a battery.

Through an Ohio winter, batteries drain faster, so I tell renters to top up or swap in the fall before the cold. A fresh set going into winter is the simplest way to avoid a surprise on a frigid morning when you are rushing to work.

18. Security in a rental

As safe as the lock you had.

A fair question is whether a retrofit lock is as secure as your plain deadbolt. The honest answer is that it is at least as secure, because the deadbolt itself does not change. You are adding convenience on top of the same bolt, not replacing the security.

- The outside deadbolt and cylinder are untouched, so the physical security is exactly what it was.
- A digital code or key can be switched off, unlike a metal key that gets copied and lost.
- Auto-lock closes the common gap of a door left unlocked by mistake.
- The lock keeps a log of entries, a quiet security you never had with a plain key.

GOOD TO KNOW

In a rental, the weakest point is often a flimsy door frame or strike plate, which is the landlord's to improve. A retrofit lock does not make that worse; it just adds smart control to whatever bolt is there.

Some renters worry that a smart lock is easier to hack than a key. In the real world, anyone trying to get into an apartment goes for the door or a window with force, not a phone app. Use a real password on your lock account and you are far safer than with a key under the mat.

The retrofit approach is also security-neutral for the landlord, which is part of why it keeps everyone comfortable. Their lock and key work exactly as before, and you simply gain codes, logs, and auto-lock on top.

19. Privacy and your data

What the lock knows.

People rightly ask what a smart lock knows and where that information goes. For a renter, it is also worth knowing that the lock is yours, on your account, not the landlord's.

- The lock logs when the door opened and by which code or person, in your account.
- That history lives in the lock's app, reached through your password.
- A lock has no camera or microphone; it records times and access, not sound or pictures.
- The landlord's key use does not show up in your smart history, since the cylinder is separate.

GOOD TO KNOW

Because the smart lock runs on your own app account, your landlord has no window into your comings and goings. The account and its history belong to you, the renter.

The practical privacy steps are simple. Use a real password on your lock account, do not reuse it from another website, and turn on the extra sign-in code if the app offers one. Those three habits cover the great majority of the worry.

When you move out and remove the lock from your account, your history goes with it. The next tenant starts fresh with the plain deadbolt, and your data does not linger on a door you no longer live behind. That clean break is another quiet benefit of the renter-safe design.

20. Common renter mistakes

Save your deposit.

Over the years I have seen renters trip on the same handful of things. None are hard to avoid once you know them. Here is how to dodge each one.

- Buying a full replacement lock instead of a retrofit, which changes the outside and upsets the landlord.
- Blocking or disabling the key cylinder, which is usually a lease violation and a safety problem.
- Throwing away the original thumb-turn, leaving nothing to restore at move-out.
- Forgetting to ask the landlord, then having an awkward conversation later.
- Placing the Wi-Fi bridge too far from the lock, so control from away keeps dropping.

WATCH OUT

The biggest mistake is assuming no drilling means renter-safe. It does not always. Confirm the lock leaves the outside hardware and key untouched, which is the real test for a rental.

The other quiet mistake is overbuying. You do not need the fanciest lock with a dozen features in an apartment you may leave in a year. A simple, reliable retrofit that keeps your key and comes off clean is usually the smartest renter buy.

If you want a second set of eyes before you spend, send me the model and a photo of your door at (330) 200-8042, and I will tell you if it is truly renter-safe for your place. That quick check beats a deposit fight later.

21. Plain answers to common questions

The ones renters ask most.

The same questions come up every time I set up a lock for a renter. Here are the short, honest answers so you are not left wondering.

- Do I need my landlord's permission: usually yes in writing, and for a renter-safe retrofit most landlords happily say yes.
- Will my landlord's key still work: yes, a retrofit leaves the outside cylinder untouched, so their key turns as always.
- Can I take it with me: yes, that is the whole point; you remove it and restore the original thumb-turn.
- Does it damage the door: no, a thumb-turn swap leaves no marks, and adhesive mounts clean off with heat and alcohol wipes.

TIP

If a salesperson pushes you toward a full replacement deadbolt for your apartment, pause. For a rental you almost always want a retrofit that keeps the outside alone. Replacement is an owner's choice, not a renter's.

Another common one: will it fit my door. If you have a standard deadbolt with a normal inside thumb-turn, almost certainly. A quick photo of the inside of your door lets me tell you for sure, and which models fit best.

And the big one, is it worth it for a rental. For most renters, yes. You get phone control, codes for guests and helpers, auto-lock, and a log, all without touching the door or your deposit, and you carry it to your next place. That is a lot of convenience for a reversible

upgrade.

22. When to Call Bill

Your local help, start to finish.

You can buy and fit a renter lock yourself, and plenty of folks do. Where I earn my keep is making sure you pick one that is truly renter-safe, that it calibrates right, and that your codes and app are set up so you actually enjoy it. I have been doing hands-on tech work for more than thirty years, and I set these up for renters all the time.

- Not sure which lock is renter-safe for your door: I will confirm it leaves the outside untouched.
- Want it installed and calibrated right the first time: that is a quick, tidy visit.
- Control from away keeps dropping in your apartment: usually a bridge placement fix.
- Want your codes, guest access, and app explained in plain words: I do that on every setup.

GOOD TO KNOW

My first visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars. A remote screen-share, where I walk you through setup or fix a setting without coming out, is forty-nine dollars. And my Support Plan is thirty-nine dollars a month for folks who want me on call all year.

I serve Atwater, Ravenna, Kent, Streetsboro, Aurora, Hudson, Stow, Mogadore, Tallmadge, and the rest of Portage County, including plenty of apartments and rentals. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or email bill@billshometech.com. My booking assistant Sophie can get you on the calendar if I am out on a job.

If I have helped you and you are happy, a quick review means the world to a local one-man shop. You can leave one at g.page/r/CSFv0jbCfFINEAE/review. Thank you, and good luck in your place.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this near the door. It is the one-glance version of the whole guide.

- Pick a retrofit that changes only the inside and keeps the outside key.
- Main names: August, Level Bolt, SwitchBot Lock Pro, budget Wyze.
- Bag and label the original thumb-turn for move-out.

- Get written landlord permission before you install.
 - Keep the landlord's key working, always.
- 1 Read your lease for door and lock rules.
 - 2 Confirm the lock leaves the outside untouched.
 - 3 Swap only the inside thumb-turn, no drilling.
 - 4 Calibrate carefully so the bolt fully locks.
 - 5 Restore the original part when you move out.

TIP

Place any Wi-Fi bridge halfway between the lock and the router, out in the open, for steady control from away.

WORDS TO KNOW

Plain-English Word List

Retrofit lock — A smart lock that swaps only the inside thumb-turn and keeps your existing deadbolt, cylinder, and key.

Thumb-turn — The small knob or lever on the inside of your deadbolt that you twist to lock and unlock.

Cylinder — The outside part of the deadbolt with the keyhole; a retrofit never changes it.

No drilling — An install that makes no new holes; for renters it should also mean no change to the outside hardware.

Bridge — A small box you plug into an outlet that relays the lock's short-range signal to your Wi-Fi for away-from-home control.

Auto-unlock — A setting where the lock senses your phone approaching and opens the door for you.

Auto-lock — A setting that relocks the door on its own after a set number of seconds.

Calibration — The setup step where the lock learns exactly how far your bolt travels to lock and unlock.

Keycard — A small card or fob you tap to the lock to open it, used by some renter locks like the Level Bolt.

Guest code — A number or digital key you give a visitor or helper, which you can set to expire or switch off.

Lock history — The in-app list showing when the door opened and by which code or person.

Reversible install — An install that comes off clean, restoring the door to how you found it for move-out.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Retrofit vs replacement

Why renters choose retrofit

Retrofit (renter-safe)	Replacement (owners)
• Changes only the inside • Keeps the outside key • No drilling, no new holes • Comes off clean at move-out	• Swaps the whole deadbolt • New outside hardware and keys • Not renter friendly • Harder to reverse

Renters want retrofit; replacement is an owner's choice.

Illustration — a schematic; details vary by device and setup.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Renter install

A screwdriver and ten minutes

**No drilling, outside untouched, and it reverses at move-out.**

Illustration — a schematic; details vary by device and setup.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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