

Keypad or Fingerprint?

THE QUICK VERSION

- 1 Choose a main way to open and a backup that fails differently.
- 2 Enroll each fingerprint two or three times, plus a backup finger.
- 3 Set a keypad code you can remember but others cannot guess.
- 4 Expect to use the code when fingers are cold or wet.
- 5 Keep fresh batteries and a backup code in your wallet.
- 6 Call Bill at (330) 200-8042 to set it up right.

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Keypad or Fingerprint — How Your Smart Lock Opens

Punch in a code, or touch a finger — which one is right for your household.

————— An Extended Guide · No. 1867 · SMART LOCKS —————

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What's Inside

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SUMMARY

The 60-Second Version

A good smart lock gives you several ways in: a keypad code, a fingerprint, the phone app, an automatic unlock as you walk up, and an old-fashioned key. You do not have to pick just one. The trick is choosing a main method and a reliable backup.

- Keypad code: the most dependable, works with gloves on and never needs charging.
- Fingerprint: fast and hands-free, but can get fussy with cold or dry fingers.
- App and auto-unlock: handy, but your phone must be charged and nearby.
- Physical key: the backup that always works when the battery does not.

GOOD TO KNOW

For most seniors I serve, a lit keypad is the everyday workhorse and a fingerprint is a nice bonus. I almost never set up just one way in.

If you are weighing a fingerprint lock, especially for an Ohio winter, read on, and call me at (330) 200-8042 if you want my pick for your door.

1. The five ways a smart lock opens

More choices than you may realize.

The first thing to understand about any smart lock is that it usually offers more than one way to open the door. People shop for a lock as if they must pick a single method, but a good lock lets you mix and match. That is a feature, not a complication.

- Keypad code: you punch numbers into a lit pad on the door.
- Fingerprint: you rest a finger on a small reader and it knows you.
- App: you tap a button on your phone to open the door.
- Auto-unlock: the lock senses your phone coming up the walk and opens on its own.
- Physical key: a plain metal key, kept as a backup on most models.

TIP

The healthiest setup has a main method you use daily and a backup that works even if the first one fails. A code plus a key, or a fingerprint plus a code, covers almost any bad day.

Not every lock has every method. Some have no keypad, some have no fingerprint, and the key-free models skip the keyhole entirely. That is why choosing the lock and choosing how you want to open it are really the same decision.

In this guide I will walk through each method honestly, with a hard look at how fingerprints really hold up through a Portage County winter. By the end you will know which main method suits your hands and your habits.

2. Why how you open matters most

This is the part you live with.

Here is something I tell every customer. The fancy features sell the lock, but the way you open the door every single day is what you actually live with. If that one thing is awkward for your hands, you will come to resent an otherwise fine lock. If it is easy, you will barely think about it.

- You will open your door several times a day, for years.
- Loaded arms, cold hands, failing eyesight, and a phone left on the counter are all real.
- A method that works nine times out of ten is a method that frustrates you weekly.
- The best method is the one that works when conditions are not perfect.

GOOD TO KNOW

I weigh reliability far above novelty. A fingerprint feels modern, but if it leaves you tapping a cold finger three times in January, the plain keypad was the better daily tool all along.

This matters even more as we age. Hands get drier, memory for exact spots gets fussier, and nobody wants to stand on a dark porch poking at a reader with a bag of groceries. A method that forgives those small troubles is worth more than any clever trick.

So as you read the next chapters, picture your own worst-case moment at the door, not the showroom. That is the test that counts.

3. Keypad codes, the dependable workhorse

The method I trust most.

A keypad is exactly what it sounds like: a lit pad of numbers on the outside of the lock. You tap in your code, the bolt turns, you are in. It is the oldest smart-entry method and still the one I trust most, especially for seniors, because almost nothing stops it from working.

- Works with gloves on, with dry hands, and in the cold.
- The pad lights up so you can see it on a dark porch.
- No phone, no charge, nothing to carry.

- You can give a different code to each person and delete it later.

WATCH OUT

Pick a code you will remember but others cannot guess. Avoid your house number, your birth year, and anything written on your mail. Four to six digits is the usual range.

The keypad is also the most forgiving for people who do not always carry a phone. You never have to find it, unlock it, or charge it. You walk up, tap the numbers, and you are home. For a great many of my customers that is the whole appeal of going smart.

The one habit to build is wiping the pad now and then, because worn or smudged numbers can hint at your code over time. Some locks ask for a couple of random extra digits before your real code for exactly that reason, which is a clever touch.

4. Fingerprint readers, fast and hands-free

Lovely when it works.

A fingerprint reader is a small pad, often where your thumb naturally lands, that opens the lock when it recognizes your enrolled finger. On a good model it reads in a fraction of a second. When it works, it is the nicest way to open a door: no code to remember, no phone, just a touch.

- No code to memorize and no phone to carry.
- Very fast, often under a second, in good conditions.
- Each household member can enroll their own finger.
- You can remove a person's print instantly if they move out.

GOOD TO KNOW

Most of these readers are the capacitive type, the same kind on a phone. They read the tiny ridges of your skin, which is why dry, cold, or wet fingers can throw them off.

The appeal is real, and for younger hands in a mild climate a fingerprint is a joy. I enroll them happily. My caution is never that fingerprints are bad, only that they should not be your sole way in, because the conditions that trip them up are exactly the ones an Ohio winter brings.

So think of a fingerprint as a wonderful main method for much of the year, paired with a keypad code that carries you through the stubborn days. That combination gives you the best of both.

5. Enrolling your fingerprints well

Do this part slowly and it pays off.

Most fingerprint trouble starts at enrollment, not at the door. If you rush the setup, the lock has a poor picture of your finger and will second-guess you for years. Spend a few extra minutes here and your reads get far more reliable.

- 1 In the lock's app, choose to add a fingerprint and follow the prompts.
- 2 Press and lift your finger many times, shifting it a little each time so the reader sees every edge.
- 3 Enroll your most important finger two or three separate times, as separate entries, for a fuller picture.
- 4 Enroll a second finger too, on your other hand, as a backup.
- 5 Test it ten times at the door before you count on it.

GOOD TO KNOW

Enroll the finger you will really use at the door with a bag in the other hand. If you always arrive with groceries in your right hand, enroll a left finger, because that is the one that will be free.

It also helps to enroll when your hands are in their normal state, not freshly washed and damp. A clean, dry, room-temperature finger gives the best reference image.

If a particular finger reads poorly no matter what, do not fight it. Delete it and enroll a different finger. Some people simply have faint ridges, and a thumb may work where an index finger will not. This is normal and not a fault in you or the lock.

6. Fingerprints in an Ohio winter

The cold truth, literally.

This is the chapter I most want you to read before buying a fingerprint lock in Portage County. Cold is genuinely hard on fingerprint readers, and it is not a defect. The makers themselves say so. When your finger is cold and dry, the ridges flatten and the reader has a harder time getting a clean read.

- Cold weather dries the skin, which weakens the signal the reader needs.
- A reader can need a bit more from your finger in the cold, so a chilly finger may not register.

- Rain and snow on the pad can cause failed reads too.
- The fix is always the same: fall back to your keypad code.

WATCH OUT

Never buy a fingerprint-only lock for an outdoor door in this climate. On the coldest mornings you want a keypad code or a key ready, because the reader may make you work for it.

None of this means skip the fingerprint. It means set your expectations honestly. For maybe nine months of the year it will feel like magic, and on the hardest winter mornings you will tap in a code instead. That is a fine trade as long as you have the backup set up in advance.

A small trick: warming your hand in a pocket for a few seconds before you touch the pad often does the job. So does keeping the reader wiped clean of ice and grit.

7. Wet hands and working hands

Dishpan, garden, and winter all count.

Cold is not the only thing that trips a fingerprint reader. Water and wear do too. If you have just washed dishes, come in from the garden, or your hands are chapped from the dry winter air, the reader may hesitate. Again, this is the nature of the sensor, not a broken lock.

- Very wet fingers can confuse a reader; dry your hand first.
- Very dry or cracked skin can read poorly; a dab of lotion sometimes helps.
- Calluses and worn ridges, common on hands that do a lot of work, can be harder to read.
- Cuts, bandages, and gardening grime all get in the way.

GOOD TO KNOW

If your hands take a beating from work or weather, lean on the keypad as your main method and treat the fingerprint as the occasional bonus. There is no shame in using the code.

This is where enrolling more than one finger pays off. If your working hand reads poorly, a finger on your other hand may sail right through. Having two or three enrolled gives the lock more chances to recognize you.

The bottom line across cold, wet, and worn hands is the same simple rule. A fingerprint is a delightful main method for most people most of the time, but it is never your only method. Keep that code handy and you will never be stuck.

8. The app and auto-unlock

Handy, with a catch.

Beyond the keypad and fingerprint, every smart lock opens from your phone. There are two flavors. The plain version is a button in the app you tap to unlock. The clever version is auto-unlock, where the lock senses your phone coming up the walk and opens the door before you reach it.

- App button: tap to lock or unlock from anywhere, which is great for letting someone in while you are out.
- Auto-unlock: the door opens as you approach, hands-free.
- Both need your phone charged, on, and with its location turned on for the lock's app.
- Auto-unlock can occasionally open a touch early or late, so I treat it as a convenience, not a guarantee.

WATCH OUT

If you do not always carry your phone to the door, do not rely on app or auto-unlock as your main way in. A phone left on the kitchen counter cannot open the front door.

The app really shines for remote moments. A neighbor needs to get in while you are at the doctor in Ravenna, and you tap once from the waiting room. That is a genuinely useful power that a keypad alone cannot match.

My advice is to enjoy the app for those away-from-home situations and keep a keypad code or fingerprint as your at-the-door method. Phones are wonderful until the battery hits zero at the worst moment.

9. The physical key, your quiet backup

Old-fashioned and still priceless.

Most smart locks, though not all, keep a traditional keyhole as a backup. I am a fan of this, because a metal key works when everything electronic has failed: dead battery, frozen reader, a glitch, a storm that took out your Wi-Fi. The key does not care about any of it.

- Works with no battery and no phone.
- Covers you during the rare electronic hiccup.
- Keep a copy with a trusted neighbor or in a lockbox, not under the mat.

- The key-free Yale and the hidden Level models skip the keyhole, so they need a backup code instead.

GOOD TO KNOW

If you choose a key-free lock with no keyhole, you must set up and memorize a backup code, and ideally keep a spare set of batteries at home. The backup code becomes your key.

Some folks worry a keyhole is a weak point a burglar can pick. In practice, for a home, a good deadbolt and a strong frame matter far more than the keyhole. If picking truly worries you, a key-free model removes it entirely, as long as you respect the battery.

Whichever you choose, the principle holds: always have one way into your home that does not depend on the lock's battery. I cover lockouts in depth in my battery backup guide.

10. Which brands do fingerprint well

Not everyone offers one.

If a fingerprint is on your wish list, you need to shop the right brands, because not every lock has a reader. Here is the honest layout of who does fingerprints and who does not.

- Eufy: fingerprint is a core feature across much of its line, and the value is excellent.
- Lockly: fingerprint specialists; some models store a large number of prints.
- Yale Assure Lock 2 Touch: adds a fingerprint reader to the modular Yale.
- Kwikset Halo Touch: a capacitive fingerprint lock many people like.
- Aqara: offers fingerprint models popular with smart-home folks.

WATCH OUT

The plain Schlage Encode does not have a fingerprint reader; it is a keypad lock. If a salesperson tells you otherwise, double-check the exact model before you buy.

Among these, I most often fit Eufy for customers who want a fingerprint without a premium price, and the Yale Touch for folks who want a fingerprint with a clean, modular, key-free face. Both read quickly in good conditions.

Whichever brand you pick, judge the fingerprint on the same winter test from earlier in this guide. A reader that is fast in the showroom still has to earn its keep on a frozen January morning in Atwater, and the honest answer is that it will lean on your backup code now and then.

11. How many prints and how many codes

Enough for the whole household.

A common question is whether a lock holds enough fingerprints and codes for a family, visitors, and helpers. The good news is that nearly all of them hold far more than a household needs. The exact numbers vary by brand and model.

- Keypad codes: many locks hold dozens to a couple hundred unique codes.
- Fingerprints: capacities range widely, from around twenty prints on some locks to many more on others.
- You can name each code and each print in the app so you remember whose is whose.
- You can delete any of them the moment a person no longer needs access.

GOOD TO KNOW

For a typical home you will use a small handful of codes and prints. The high capacities matter mostly for busy households with many regular visitors and helpers.

The number that really matters is not the maximum, it is whether you can give each person their own code or print rather than sharing one. Separate entries let you see who came in and remove one person without disturbing the rest. That is worth far more than a huge capacity you will never fill.

If you juggle several helpers, caregivers, or family members, I have a whole separate guide on setting up codes with names and time windows. It pairs nicely with this one.

12. When a read fails, the fallback

Plan for it and it is a non-event.

Let us talk plainly about the moment a fingerprint will not read or you blank on your code. If you have set the lock up the way I recommend, this is a two-second non-event. If you have not, it is a cold, frustrating minute on the porch. The difference is all in the planning.

- 1 Fingerprint will not read: tap in your keypad code instead.
- 2 Keypad acting up or forgotten code: use the app button on your phone.
- 3 Phone dead and code forgotten: use your physical key.
- 4 Key-free lock with no key: use your memorized backup code.
- 5 Truly stuck: call me and I will walk you through it or come out.

TIP

Write your backup plan on a card and keep it in your wallet, not on the door. Knowing you have a fallback turns a stressful moment into a shrug.

The whole reason I insist on at least two methods is this moment. One method alone is one bad day from a lockout. Two methods, chosen so they do not fail for the same reason, mean you are essentially always covered.

And if you ever do get stuck, do not force or yank the lock. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042. A calm fix beats a broken lock every time.

13. Keypad versus fingerprint, head to head

The honest scorecard.

Let me put the two main methods side by side the way I would at your kitchen table. Neither is a winner for everyone, but the pattern is clear once you see it laid out.

- Reliability in cold and wet: keypad wins clearly.
- Speed and hands-free ease in good weather: fingerprint wins.
- Nothing to remember: fingerprint wins.
- Works with gloves and loaded arms: keypad wins.
- Giving temporary access to a visitor: keypad wins, since you can hand out a code.
- Feeling modern and effortless: fingerprint wins.

GOOD TO KNOW

This is why I so often set up both. The keypad is the dependable base, and the fingerprint is the daily luxury that carries most of the load when the weather is kind.

If I had to name a single method for a senior in Portage County who wanted just one, I would choose the keypad every time. It never lets you down for the reasons that matter here: cold, gloves, no phone, failing light. The fingerprint is the treat on top, not the foundation.

But you do not have to choose just one, and I would gently push you not to. A lock that offers both lets you enjoy the fingerprint while always having the code in your back pocket.

14. Senior-friendly considerations

Little things that make a big difference.

Smart locks can be wonderful as we age, but a few details separate the ones that help from the ones that frustrate. I set these up with older hands and eyes in mind, because that is most of who I serve.

- A lit keypad with large, well-spaced numbers is easier at night and with tired eyes.
- A clear beep or click tells you the door really locked, which quiets that nagging doubt.
- Auto-lock relocks the door for you, so you never leave it open by mistake.
- A simple code beats a fingerprint if your skin reads poorly, and that is perfectly fine.

WATCH OUT

Set a gentle auto-lock delay, long enough to carry in the groceries but short enough that the door never sits open. I tune this to how you actually move.

I also turn off the features that add confusion rather than help, like fussy settings you will never touch. A lock with three clear ways to open it, set up and explained, beats a lock with a dozen features you are afraid to tap.

And I write it all down. On install day I leave a simple card by the door with your codes labeled, how to add a new one, and my number. No menus to memorize, no manuals to dig through.

15. Setting it up so you never get locked out

The habits that keep the door open to you.

A smart lock almost never locks you out on its own. The rare trouble comes from a dead battery nobody noticed or a single method everyone relied on. A few simple habits make a lockout nearly impossible.

- 1 Set up at least two ways in that fail for different reasons, like a code and a key.
- 2 Change the batteries the week the app first warns you, not the day they die.
- 3 Memorize a backup code and keep it written in your wallet, never on the door.
- 4 If you have a key-free lock, keep spare batteries at home.
- 5 Give a trusted neighbor a code or a spare key for the just-in-case.

WATCH OUT

The classic lockout is a key-free lock with a dead battery and a forgotten backup code. If you choose key-free, respect the battery and the backup code, because they are your only ways in.

I also show every customer where the emergency contacts live on their lock. Many have a spot on the bottom to touch a nine-volt battery for a jump of power, or a slot for the backup key. Knowing that before you need it changes everything.

For the full treatment on batteries and lockouts, see my dedicated guide. The short version lives here: two ways in, fresh batteries, and a backup code you actually remember.

16. Caring for the reader and keypad

A little upkeep goes a long way.

Both the keypad and the fingerprint reader live outdoors and take the weather. A minute of care now and then keeps them reading cleanly and keeps your code private. This is easy, and it is the kind of thing I remind my Support Plan customers to do with the seasons.

- Wipe the fingerprint pad clean of grit, ice, and oily smudges so it reads your finger, not the dirt.
- Wipe the keypad too, both to keep it reading and to stop worn numbers from hinting at your code.
- Check the weather seal around the lock each fall before the cold sets in.
- Keep snow and ice from packing onto the lock face after a storm.

TIP

A soft, slightly damp cloth is all you need. Skip harsh sprays and scrubbing pads, which can haze the reader and wear the finish.

If your fingerprint reads have slowly gotten worse over a season, do not assume the lock is failing. Clean the pad first, then re-enroll your main finger fresh. Nine times out of ten that restores it to like-new.

And if the keypad numbers are visibly worn in a pattern, that is a quiet security hint. Change your code and give the pad a wipe. Small habits, big peace of mind.

17. My honest recommendation

What I would do on your door.

After thirty years of hands-on work and a lot of Ohio winters, here is where I land. For most of the homes I serve, I set up a lit keypad as the everyday main method and add a fingerprint when the customer wants that extra ease. The keypad never lets you down, and the fingerprint is a treat for the kind months.

- Want the simplest, most dependable door: a keypad lock, code plus key.
- Want hands-free ease and do not mind a backup code in winter: a fingerprint lock, with a keypad too.
- Hands that read poorly or take a lot of wear: keypad as the main, fingerprint optional.
- Do not carry a phone to the door: skip app-only and key-free, choose a keypad.

GOOD TO KNOW

Notice I never recommend a single method. The magic is a main method you love plus a backup that covers its weak spot. That combination is what makes a lock feel effortless.

If you want a fingerprint, I will happily fit one and show you how to enroll it well. I will just make sure you also have a code set, because I would rather you never spend a cold minute coaxing a reader on your own porch.

Tell me how you live and how your hands behave, and I will give you one clear recommendation for your door.

18. Programming a keypad code, step by step

What you will see when you add one.

Adding a code sounds technical, but it is just a few taps, and you only learn it once. Let me walk through the shape of it so the first time is not a mystery. The exact wording differs by brand, but every app follows this same path.

- 1 Open the lock's app and find the section for codes, often called Access Codes or Users.
- 2 Tap to add a new code and type the four to six numbers you want.
- 3 Give the code a plain name, like your own first name or Guest.
- 4 Choose whether it works always or only on certain days and times.
- 5 Save it, then walk to the door and test the new code before you rely on it.

TIP

Always test a brand-new code at the door before you need it. A code that did not save, or did not reach the lock over a weak signal, is better found out calmly than on a cold porch.

Some locks also let you add a code right at the keypad using a master code, without the app at all. That is handy in a pinch, but I find the app easier because you can name the code and see it in a tidy list afterward.

On most touchscreen locks you wake the pad with a tap before the numbers light up, then enter the code and press a button, often the lock symbol, to finish. I show every customer their lock's particular rhythm, because once you feel it once, it is second nature.

Changing or deleting a code follows the same path: find it in the list, and tap to edit or remove. That is the whole skill, and it is the one screen you will use most.

19. Touchscreen pads versus push buttons

Two kinds of keypad, each with a trade.

Not all keypads are the same, and the difference is worth a moment because it changes how the lock feels under your fingers every day. There are two main styles: a smooth touchscreen and old-fashioned raised push buttons.

- Touchscreen pads are flat glass that lights up when you wake them. They wipe clean easily and look sleek.
- Push-button pads have real buttons you press, with a clear click and feel.
- Touchscreens can be harder to read in bright sun and need a deliberate tap to wake.
- Push buttons give a satisfying feel that some older hands find easier to trust.

GOOD TO KNOW

Neither style is better for everyone. Touchscreens hide your fingerprints better after a wipe; push buttons give feedback you can feel without looking, which helps in the dark or with tired eyes.

For customers with less feeling in their fingertips, I often lean toward the push-button style, because the click confirms the press landed. For customers who want the cleanest look and do not mind a firm tap, the touchscreen wins.

One shared tip for both: a touchscreen can hold a smudge pattern over the worn numbers, and push buttons can wear shiny on the used digits. Either way, a worn pattern quietly

hints at your code, so wipe the pad now and then and change the code if the wear gets obvious.

When you shop, press the display model if the store has one. Half a minute of your own finger on the pad tells you more than any review about whether that style suits your hands.

20. Where your fingerprint is stored

Local, not in the cloud.

A fair worry about fingerprint locks is where your fingerprint goes. The reassuring answer, on the reputable brands, is that it never leaves your front door. The lock does not keep a picture of your finger, and it does not send anything to a company server.

- The better locks store fingerprints on the lock itself, not in the cloud.
- What they keep is not a photo of your print but a coded math pattern that cannot be turned back into a fingerprint.
- That pattern stays on the lock, so even the app maker never sees your actual print.
- You can delete an enrolled finger at any time, which wipes its pattern from the lock.

GOOD TO KNOW

On brands that store prints on the lock, like several of the fingerprint models I fit, your fingerprint data cannot be leaked from a company's website, because it was never there to begin with.

This is a real point in favor of a fingerprint lock, not against it. The fingerprint stays more private than, say, a code you might write down or share. It lives in one place, the lock, and it answers to no one but your own finger.

If this matters to you, ask before buying whether a given model stores prints on the lock or in the cloud, and favor the ones that keep them local. Reputable brands say so plainly in their materials.

And remember you are always in control. Enroll a finger when you want the convenience, delete it when you do not, and the lock forgets it entirely. That is more control than a copied metal key ever gave you.

21. Codes a peeper cannot steal

A clever trick on many keypads.

One quiet worry with a keypad is someone watching over your shoulder as you tap your code, on a porch or through a window. Several locks have a neat answer to this, and it is worth turning on.

- Many locks let you type a handful of random extra digits before or after your real code.
- As long as your true code appears somewhere in the string, the lock opens.
- A watcher sees a long jumble and cannot tell which digits are the real ones.
- Some fingerprint-brand locks go further with a keypad whose numbers move position each time.

TIP

Turn this feature on if your lock has it, especially on a door that faces the street or a shared hallway. It costs you nothing and it defeats the most common way a code gets stolen.

The moving-number keypads take it a step further. Each time the pad wakes, the digits sit in different spots, so even a careful watcher learning where your fingers landed gains nothing. Lockly is the brand best known for this scrambling pad.

Even without a special feature, a little care helps. Shield the pad with your other hand as you tap, the way you would at a bank machine, and wipe the pad so worn numbers do not narrow down your code for anyone studying it later.

These touches matter most on busy or exposed doors. For a quiet rural door in Atwater with no one watching, they are a nice extra rather than a must. I set them up when the door calls for it and skip the fuss when it does not.

22. Batteries, cold, and the power jump

Keeping the door powered through winter.

Both keypads and fingerprint readers run on batteries, and an Ohio winter is hard on them. A little understanding here keeps you from ever being surprised by a dead lock on a frozen morning.

- Most of these locks run several months to a year on a set of batteries.
- Cold weather, a weak Wi-Fi signal, and heavy daily use all shorten that life.
- The app warns you well ahead, often weeks before the batteries truly give out.

- Use fresh name-brand alkaline batteries, not rechargeables, unless the maker says otherwise.

WATCH OUT

Rechargeable batteries put out slightly lower voltage and can make the lock believe it is dying when it is not. Stick with ordinary alkaline unless your lock's maker specifically approves rechargeables.

My rule is simple: change the batteries the week the app first warns you, not the morning they die. Many of my customers set a calendar reminder each fall, before the cold, and replace them on schedule rather than waiting to be caught out.

If you ever are caught with a lock that will not wake, do not panic. Many locks have two small metal contacts on the underside where you can hold a nine-volt battery, the rectangular kind, to give the keypad just enough power to enter your code and get in. I show every customer where those contacts are.

And always keep one way in that needs no battery at all, whether a physical key with a trusted neighbor or a known backup. Power trouble is the number one cause of a lockout, and it is the easiest of all to plan around.

23. Plain answers to common questions

The ones I hear at every door.

Here are the quick questions that come up most when folks are weighing a keypad against a fingerprint, with the short honest answers.

- Can I have both on one lock: yes, several models give you a fingerprint and a keypad together, which is the setup I most often recommend.
- Does cold really stop a fingerprint: it can slow or block one on the harshest mornings, which is why you keep a code as backup. It is chemistry, not a defect.
- How many fingers should I enroll: at least two, on different hands, and enroll your main finger a couple of times for a fuller picture.
- Will a wet finger work: often not well, so dry your hand first or use the code.

GOOD TO KNOW

There is no single right answer to keypad versus fingerprint. The right answer is usually both, with the keypad as the dependable base and the fingerprint as the daily ease.

Another frequent one: can grandchildren or an aide have their own fingerprint. Yes, each person enrolls their own finger, and you can remove any one of them later without disturbing the others, just as with separate codes.

And the worry I hear most from careful folks: what if it fails and I am stuck outside. That is exactly why I insist on at least two ways in that fail for different reasons. Set up that way, a failed read is a two-second shrug, not a crisis.

If your own question is not here, that is what I am for. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and ask. I would rather answer a plain question than have you guess and buy the wrong lock.

24. When to Call Bill

Set up right, explained in plain words.

You can buy and even install one of these locks yourself. Where I help is making sure it is set up so it works for your hands, enrolling fingerprints the careful way, choosing your methods so you are never locked out, and explaining the whole thing in plain English. I have been doing hands-on tech work for more than thirty years.

- Want fingerprints enrolled so they actually read well: I take the time to do it right.
- Reader getting fussy in the cold: I will tune it and set up a solid backup.
- Not sure whether to go keypad or fingerprint: I will match it to your hands.
- Want your codes and methods explained on a simple card by the door: I do that on every visit.

GOOD TO KNOW

My first visit is a flat ninety-nine dollars. A remote screen-share to fix a setting is forty-nine dollars. My Support Plan is thirty-nine dollars a month for year-round help, including seasonal battery and reader checkups.

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

If I have helped you, a quick review means a lot to a local one-man shop. You can leave one at g.page/r/CSFv0jbCfFINEAE/review. Thank you kindly.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

The one-glance version. Keep it near the door.

- Everyday dependable: keypad code.
 - Fast and hands-free in good weather: fingerprint.
 - Away from home: app button.
 - Battery dead: physical key or backup code.
 - Winter: expect to use the code when fingers are cold.
- 1 Set up two ways in that fail for different reasons.
 - 2 Enroll each fingerprint two or three times, plus a backup finger.
 - 3 Change batteries the week the app warns you.
 - 4 Wipe the pad and reader each season.
 - 5 Keep a backup code in your wallet, not on the door.

TIP

A warm finger reads far better than a cold one; a few seconds in your pocket does the trick.

WORDS TO KNOW

Plain-English Word List

Keypad — The lit number pad on the lock where you tap a code to open the door.

Access code — A number you set for yourself or a visitor to open the lock on the keypad.

Fingerprint reader — A small pad that opens the lock when it recognizes an enrolled finger.

Capacitive sensor — The common type of fingerprint reader that senses the ridges of your skin, and can struggle with cold, dry, or wet fingers.

Enroll — The setup step where you teach the lock your fingerprint by pressing it many times.

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.

Backup code — A memorized code that lets you in when a fingerprint or app fails; essential on key-free locks.

Key-free lock — A lock with no keyhole, which relies on codes, fingerprints, or the app instead of a metal key.

Lockout — Being unable to get in, usually from a dead battery combined with no backup method.

Weather seal — The gasket around the lock that keeps rain and snow out of the electronics.

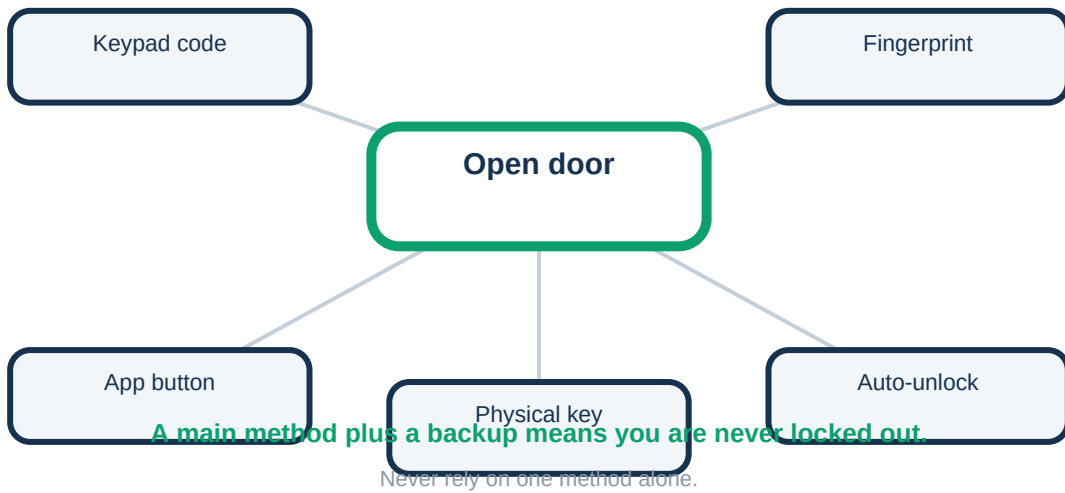
Nine-volt jump — Touching a nine-volt battery to contacts on some locks to power the keypad long enough to enter when the main batteries are dead.

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Ways to open your door

Pick a main method and a backup



AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Keypad vs fingerprint

The honest scorecard

Keypad code	Fingerprint
• Works in cold and with gloves • No phone or charge needed • Easy to hand out to visitors • Lit for dark porches	• Fast and hands-free • Nothing to remember • Can fail when cold, dry, or wet • Needs careful enrollment

Keypad for reliability, fingerprint for ease; many folks use both.

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

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.