

Making Lock Picks

As many of you know, I make and sell picks. Sometimes I pump them out real quick, others I get busy with school and family issues. So if you ever wonder about picks, I will follow through and I usually toss in some extra goodies. But that really isn't the point. The point is, I make picks and want to teach everybody else how to do so as well.

Background: I started making picks nearly two and half, almost three years ago. I got back into lock picking after a year of not touching a pick. I joined Reddit and immediately subbed to /r/lockpicking which I am now a moderator of. I found the forum through searching for how to make picks on Google, and wanted to make some Bogota picks like Raimundo. My first few sets were tragically bad but I got my technique down and now I make some pretty good tools.

Materials: You really only need files and materials, but this is the list of what I use.

- 1 Three inch bench grinder with buffing wheel
- 1 Round file
- 1 Flat file
- 1 Triangle file
- 1 Set of precision needle files (not completely necessary but nice to have for intricate cuts)
- 5 Sheets of sandpaper in varying grits which I will cover later
- 1 Dremel with cutting wheels (not needed but nicer on material wider than 1/4")
- 1 Pair of safety glasses because I don't want you blaming me for losing an eye

For what your actual tools are made of, that is up to you. I personally use a flat sewer rod that is 1/4" wide and .025" thick to make most of my picks. Feeler gauge is awesome if you want more material to work with and it comes in just about any thickness you would need. Packing straps also work. I scavenged enough to make about 200 picks and it works awesome, it comes in at around .015" thick which is perfect for slim picks. A site I use for feeler gauge and sheet metal is <http://www.zoro.com> which has a lot of great tools and materials.

Procedure: To start off I do not use any patterns, everything is done by eye. When I start I will turn my grinder to approximately 7.5k RPM if I work on anything thinner than .020" but go to a full 10k RPM on anything over that. When I make my tools I never wear gloves because that ruins the feel and you don't know when your steel is too hot. I also don't keep my metal quenched. With how often I take a look at the shape (usually after three passes on the wheel) the metal stays fairly cool, there is never discoloration and it is always cool enough to handle with bare skin.

To start I thin down from the handle to the shank and start about in the middle of my stock. I use my grinder for this, but you can use files if needed. I only thin down one side so it doesn't totally look like a popsicle stick. I do this because a lot of the pick I used that taper on both sides seemed to be somewhat weak. From there I will go and get a rough shaping of the tip. If I am making a special rake like a city, Bogota, snake, or any other wavy/saw style design I will thin the area that will be the tip down to approximately 1/8" wide and file the shape in using a round file (for valley cuts) and a triangle

(for undercuts, and I do a special technique to round the undercuts when I use it). Now that I have my final shape, I move on to polishing.

Also, I apologize for no photos. I am writing up this guide while I am in bed sick, so I can't get down to my shop. When I am better I will update the guide with pictures.

Polishing: I only recently started polishing picks, and it really makes a difference. I start by running the pick along my buffing wheel running at 10k RPM to knock off all the burs and rough edges caused by filing and grinding. I also knock off whatever coating there was on the metal before it became a pick. It is really just a thin layer of paint, but I like seeing a mirror finished piece of steel. After the wheel I move to my sand paper. The stuff I use is wet/dry paper but I only do it dry and have gotten some amazing results, so experiment as you please. I start using a 1000 grit paper on the pick to start the polishing process. I then move to a 1500, 2000, 3000, and finally 5000 grit to get a nice mirror finish. Some people recommend putting the paper between pages in a book and shoving the pick in and out. You can do that but I don't, a few pierced fingers builds character. Those grit could probably be traded down to something 1000 less for all of them, but I got a great one on eBay from a Chinese seller and got those five grits in massive sheets.

Finishing: To finish up making picks, you really need to choose your own adventure. You can add heat shrink tubing, wire wraps, preheat your oven to 500F and toss your pick in and take it out when the oven is up to temp. (thanks /u/kumaclimber), and a lot of other stuff. I know /u/ith, my partner in crime on the sub, adds some nice popsicle stick handles and dyes them. Beyond that, you just need to be creative. I usually just give my picks a one over on a Master No. 3, Schlage I pinned custom, and whatever other random lock I have.

If you took the time to read this, thanks. Let me know what you think and what I should add besides pictures. This is a method I have perfected over a couple months so if I wrote something that would seem like I assume you know something and don't, tell me and I can clarify for you and update this guide.

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Also as a side note, feel free to PM me on Reddit. If that is inconvenient for you, shoot me an email at fawkespickshop@gmail.com and I'll respond as quick as I can.