

GROUP TEST

LOCKS

Letting your bike out of your sight? You'll need a lock. Journalist **Dave Atkinson** tries to break into four decent ones

LOCKS NEED to be tough. I attacked those featured here using a basic armoury of readily available tools: a 1.5m wrecking crowbar, a set of 600mm bolt cutters, and a decent hacksaw. You could buy these in any tool outlet for a total of about £60. All four locks survived five minutes of attack. Cheaper locks – especially cable locks – can often be cut well within that time, sometimes in seconds. At the other end of the scale, power tools will breach any bike lock...

For now, the standard solid shackle lock – a D-lock or U-lock – still offers the best combination of security and ease of use. (See bit.ly/1qwJCWb for tips on preventing breakage with a bottle jack.) Heavy chains are also very secure but not so portable, so they're a good option for a shed or garage where your lock stays put. Other types of lock can offer good performance in specific situations.

Many locks are rated under the Sold Secure scheme. For bicycle locks there are Bronze, Silver and Gold standards, which require the lock to resist increasingly harsh treatment. Germany uses a standard called VDS, the Netherlands ART, and Sweden SSF. Manufacturers will often rank a lock on their own scale too.

KEYS

Locks normally come with two or three keys. Keep the spares safe and check the lock manual for instructions on what to do if you lose your key. Many locks offer a key replacement service.



OUTER COVER

Most locks have an outer cover that's designed to stop the business parts of the lock from scratching your frame. This can be a simple plastic or fabric sleeve over the shackle/cable/chain, or something more fetching.



MOUNTING OPTIONS

Most, though not all, locks will come with some means of attaching the lock to the frame. Check that the mount will work with your bike. Some large shackle locks won't fit inside the main triangle of a small frame if you also want to carry a water bottle.

YOUR THOUGHTS?

WRITE TO US: Cycle Letters, CTC, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford GU2 9JX

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DESIGN

Solid shackles and heavyweight chains are generally the most secure – and also the heaviest. Cables are much easier to attack but good for securing parts of your bike as a complement to a shackle lock, or as a secondary defence if your bike is parked somewhere reasonably safe like a locked bike store. Lightweight chains and link-plate locks, with plates held together by rivets, generally fall somewhere between the two.

LOCKING MECHANISM

Most thieves are either opportunists or use brute force attacks but if a lock mechanism is vulnerable, then your bike is too: we've seen beefy-looking locks where you could knock out the lock cylinder with a screwdriver and a tap from a hammer. Make sure it's well protected.



1) ONGUARD BRUTE 260

£54.99 todayscyclist.co.uk

OnGuard do a wide range of locks, and the Brute is their top shackle lock. A 260mm hardened shackle gives you plenty of room for the frame and both wheels (assuming you remove the front wheel), and the shackle locks into the mechanism on both sides and at both ends for extra security. It's Sold Secure Gold rated and OnGuard give it a 97 on their scale from 1 to 100. Twisting the lock with the wrecking bar put a few cracks in the plastic but I couldn't bend it, although I did manage to bend the stand it was locked to. The hacksaw had little effect on the shackle and the lock is very well protected too. Once I'd finished with it, it was perfectly functional, if a little battered.

● **Sturdy and dependable shackle lock with four-point locking system and plenty of room inside**



2) KNOG BOUNCER

£38.99 todayscyclist.co.uk

Knog's funky Bouncer is one of a growing number of small shackle locks. They have their benefits: they're easy to carry, fitting in a jeans pocket for example, and generally pretty secure. The downside is that you can only easily lock your frame as it's not a big enough shackle to fit in a wheel too. This one stood up well. I gave it five minutes of persuasion with the wrecking bar and then went after it with the hacksaw. I did manage to make some inroads into the shackle with the saw but it didn't pop, although the plastic and rubberised cover was a mess by the end. If you need a lock you can carry to the pub or sling in a saddle bag or rucksack, it's one to consider. It doesn't come with a frame mount and is rated Sold Secure Bronze, but it punches above its weight. If you like the style but want a tougher lock, Knog offer the Strongman, which is 15mm longer, 300g heavier, and Sold Secure Gold.

● **Diminutive but solid lock that'll fit in your pocket but should still keep your bike safe**

3) ABUS BORDO GRANIT X-PLUS

£99.99 zyro.co.uk

With a Sold Secure Gold rating and the highest rating on Abus's own scale, you'd expect the Bordo Granit X-Plus to deliver, and it does. The link plate design is used throughout the Bordo range but unlike the cheaper Bordo locks, which easily succumb to a pair of bolt cutters, this is a tough cookie. Neither the cutters nor the saw did much damage, and Abus have fixed an earlier flaw in the design, which meant that the lock mechanism could fall out if a plastic plate under the barrel was damaged in an attack. The link-plate design means it's a bit more versatile than a shackle lock and it folds down a lot smaller for portability. On the minus side, it's expensive: you can get the same level of protection from a good shackle lock at half the price.

● **Clever design makes the Bordo less intrusive when carried but it's more expensive than a shackle lock**



4) SQUIRE STRONGHOLD G3 CHAIN

£89.99 raleigh.co.uk

With a 900mm chain, hardened 10mm links, and a tough padlock, the Stronghold G3 chain is a very solid locking solution. The 10mm links are more than a match for the types of boltcutters a thief would normally carry about town; my 600mm cutters are about as big as you can easily conceal, and they didn't make much of an impact on the chain. The padlock is tough too, all metal with a super-hard shackle that the hacksaw barely scratched. Save for a few rips that the fabric covering the chain sustained when I was trying to twist the lock off, it pretty much looked good as new after five minutes of abuse. Chains are heavy and more difficult to carry, especially if you don't have a bag: this one is best for a static location such as a shed or bike store at work.

● **Very secure and weighty lock. Not easily portable so better for keeping in a single location**

