Sweet Apple
HOME MANAGEMENT

Keys and codes

How to let people into your house — cleaners, contractors, family, a neighbor — without handing the house over. The rules we follow for every home we look after.

> Over a few years, a house accumulates people who can get in: the cleaner from 2019, the dog-walker, the contractor who "left the key under the mat." Nobody means harm. But nobody's keeping the list, either.

The five rules

1. **Keep the list.** Every key, every code, every lockbox — who has it, and since when. If you can't name everyone who can open your front door, that's the first thing to fix. (A table for it is below.)
2. **Codes beat keys.** A keypad lock on the door you use for workers lets you give each person their own code and delete it when the job is done. The cleaner's code, the painter's code, the daughter's code — each one separate, each one revocable. A good one costs $150–250 installed.
3. **Never a key under anything.** Not the mat, not the pot, not the fake rock. A lockbox with a code, mounted out of sight, if you must leave a physical key.
4. **One code is temporary; the others are not.** Give workers a temporary code and delete it the day the job ends. Family codes stay. Never give a worker the family code or the alarm code.
5. **Rekey when the list gets fuzzy.** Moved in and don't know who the seller gave keys to? A contractor's crew came and went? A locksmith rekeys a house for $150–300 and the list starts over.

The alarm

- Most systems allow **separate user codes**. Give the cleaner and any regular worker their own, so the log shows who disarmed it and when.
- The master code is yours. Never write it on this page, in the home file, or anywhere in the house — write *where* it's kept (a password manager, a sealed envelope with a family member).
- Tell the alarm company who's authorized to cancel a false alarm, and keep that list short.

The garage

- The garage keypad is a door into the house. Change the code after any job where someone used it, and when the house changes hands.

- The opener remote in the car is a key. If the car is sold, repaired, or valeted, that remote goes with it — clear the remotes from the opener and re-pair yours. It takes two minutes with the manual.
- The emergency release cord: fine as it is, but a zip tie through the latch stops the coat-hanger trick without disabling it.

Letting a worker in when you're not home

- Temporary code, set the morning of, deleted that evening.
- A note of what's off-limits (rooms, the study) and where the shutoffs are if they need them.
- If anyone will be there alone for more than a day, a camera at the door you gave them — pointed at the door, not the interior — settles any question later.

The list

WHO	WHAT THEY HAVE (KEY / DOOR CODE / GARAGE / ALARM / LOCKBOX)	SINCE	STILL NEEDED?

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We never keep a key or a code to a member's home unless asked to, and when we do, it's on this list.