

Tenant Responsibilities

Being a good tenant is more than just paying your rent on time. The following is a list of things landlords consider important for tenants to do.



1) On Time Rental Payment: Paying your rent on time is the most important attribute of a good tenant. If possible, arrange for a direct deposit to your landlord on or before the date the rent is due. Electronic payment is more than convenient – it removes the risk of late payment. If you mail your rent payment, mail at least 5 days prior to the due date to avoid late receipt of payment and incurring late charges.

2) Maintain the Property: Another important tenant responsibility is keeping the property clean and free of damage. These cleaning and maintenance duties are called “reasonable care of the property” and you are required by law to perform them. Examples include:

- Keep the bathroom and kitchen areas clean and neat by sweeping and mopping regularly and free of trash which can lead to pest and rodent problems.
- Fire prevention is achieved by keeping the stove area free from grease and the dryer lint filter clean.
- Outdoor maintenance of the lawn/vegetation is important for HOA restrictions and if a pool exists, you are responsible for keeping it clean and monitoring guests use of it.

3) Notify Landlord of Property Issues Promptly: Pay attention to the landlord rules and responsibilities that will be part of your lease agreement. If a repair is necessary follow the landlord’s prescribed way of addressing it. Always report a needed repair ASAP. You will be responsible for your actions that cause damage and could be charged for the cost of eventual repairs. Examples include:

- Flushing feminine hygiene products or diapers that cause a clog and overflow
- Continual water leak left unreported can cause dry rot damage

4) Always Get Landlord Permission Before Starting Home Improvement Projects:

If you want to make an improvement to the property such as adding new carpet, painting, planting flowers or a garden, get the landlord’s permission **in writing** prior to starting. A landlord may be willing to reimburse you for the cost of the materials, or even the labor, but **never assume** that the landlord will allow the changes you want to make, or that he or she will reimburse you for costs or labor. Most importantly, never deduct for the cost of any items or any changes that you make from your monthly rental amount without prior permission in writing. If the landlord does agree to allow you to

make any improvements, keep copies of any receipts for materials. Any changes you make will become the property of the landlord.

5) Do Not Let Others Live Off-Lease: Never allow any person who is not listed as a tenant on the lease to live on the property. When you let someone move in to share the rent and expenses, you must first have written permission from the landlord. The agreement will note who is approved to live/stay in the property and what the time frame is for guests who may be visiting. You are responsible for the rent and any actions of your guests.

6) Honor Your Contract: Under the law, a lease is a binding contract. You are not excused from honoring a lease simply because you do not understand it or did not read it. All the terms of a lease will affect your living environment and how you use the property. Always make sure you include your Realtor on any changes or concerns **before** you sign a lease. He/she is working for you to help you understand the agreement. Do not rely on verbal statements. All promises should be in writing.

7) Be a Good Pet Owner: If you are allowed to keep pets under the lease agreement, be sure to control your pets. Irresponsible pet ownership can lead to an increase in your pet deposit and even termination of your lease. Following these simple guidelines will help you:

- Keep your pets from becoming a nuisance or a danger to others.
- Clean up after your pets and treat them in a humane manner.
- Promptly repair any damage that your pet has caused or pay a professional to do the repair. If the damage is so extensive that it cannot be repaired without seriously altering the property, you must contact the landlord and make arrangements. In most states, you will have to pay to repair the damages, even if there is a pet deposit.

8) Be Lawful: It is your responsibility as a tenant to keep the premises free of illegal activity (drugs, etc.) Your landlord can evict you immediately for violation of the law, whether you participated in the illegal activity or not.

9) Ending the Lease: Notify your landlord **in writing** at least 60 days prior to terminating your lease or per the lease agreement. There will be a move out procedure if a Property Management company is managing the property and they will give you that information when the time arises.

These are some of the most important tenant responsibilities. A good relationship with your landlord can lead to a good reference and favorable credit reporting. It is always a good idea to be a responsible tenant – your performance can follow you for years.