

Your Rights & Duties as a Tenant: Moving In



Know Your Rights and Duties as a Tenant

Knowing your rights is an important tool you can use when working out differences with your landlord. This information is intended as a guide to help you handle the kinds of problems that might come up between you and your landlord.

Do not let your landlord scare you into thinking that he or she knows all the laws, and that as a tenant you must do whatever your landlord wants you to do. You might even think that your landlord has all of the rights, and you have none. Wrong! You have rights and if you know what they are, you can protect yourself. This flyer will start to explain your general rights as a tenant.

You might have more options than you think, and an attorney can help you to determine what they are.

Be sure to get a copy of your written lease. If you do not have a lease, be sure the landlord provides you with his or her name and address. It is very important that you know when to pay your rent and where to send it, as well as what utilities you are required to pay and what the landlord will pay.

Moving In

Most tenants sign a written lease when renting an apartment or house. Signing a lease is recommended, but it is not required. Even if you do not sign a lease, you still have most of the same rights as a tenant who has signed a written lease. A lease is the name for a rental agreement contract. Leases are most often written by the landlord and may include terms in their favor. However, having a written lease can protect you, too, because it is a record of your agreement, including important details like when, where, and how to pay rent, for example. A court will not enforce some of the things a landlord has written into your lease if they go against Ohio law.

Before signing a lease, be sure it shows:

- The amount of rent
- The date that rent is due
- The landlord's name and address
- When the lease begins and ends
- Who is responsible for utilities, appliances, lawn and snow care, and other maintenance
- The deposit amount (if any)
- Pet deposit or fees (if any)



Remember: Anything in writing is the best protection because the landlord will not be able to deny something they agreed to in writing. If you do not have a lease in writing, try to have a witness with you at the time your oral agreement is made who can later tell a judge what was said.



Caution: If repairs are needed, it is best NOT to sign the lease or to move in until the repairs are made. If you must move in before repairs are made, make a list of repairs that are needed. Sign and date the list and ask the landlord to sign and date the list and ensure it states the landlord will make the repairs. Keep a copy for your records.

Be sure to check:

- **Water** - Look for enough water pressure and be sure there are no leaks coming from the faucets and toilets.
- **Electric** - All outlets and lighting fixtures should be covered and work properly. No electrical wiring should be exposed.
- **Windows and Doors** - Make certain they open, close and lock properly.
- **Appliances** - If provided by the landlord, appliances should be clean and in good working order.

Always keep a copy of any papers you give the landlord and ask the landlord to sign and date your copy.

Be sure to ask the landlord if they have received any notices of housing code violations.

Be careful if the landlord promises to pay you or reduce your rent if you get repairs made. Be sure that the amount the landlord agrees to pay to you is clear. Get the promises in writing. Make sure it is signed and dated by both you and the landlord. Keep a copy of any written promises, text messages or emails for your records.



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