

A GUIDE TO SMART RENTING FOR TENANTS



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ABSTRACT

"A Guide to Smart Renting for Tenants" is a comprehensive resource designed to help renters navigate the complexities of the rental process with confidence and ease. From understanding lease agreements to managing ongoing property maintenance, this guide covers all aspects of renting. It provides practical advice on how to maintain a positive relationship with landlords, handle rent increases, and protect your security deposit, ensuring that tenants can make informed decisions throughout their tenancy.



In addition to essential renting tips, the guide also offers strategies for minimizing common issues such as property damage, disputes, and the stress of moving out. With a focus on proactive steps, such as thorough move-in inspections and diligent upkeep, tenants can ensure they leave their rental properties in top condition, maximizing the chances of receiving their full bond refund. This guide is an invaluable tool for both first-time renters and seasoned tenants looking to navigate the renting world more effectively.

LET'S GET STARTED

"A Guide to Smart Renting for Tenants" provides a thorough roadmap for renters to navigate the entire rental process, from the initial move-in to the final move-out. This guide is packed with actionable advice on understanding lease agreements, budgeting for rent and utilities, and fostering positive relationships with landlords. It emphasizes the importance of thorough inspections, documenting damages, and managing routine maintenance to ensure that the property remains in good condition throughout the tenancy.

The guide also focuses on key strategies for tenants to secure their full bond refund at the end of the lease. It covers essential topics such as deep cleaning, repairing minor damages, and preparing for the final inspection to avoid deductions. Additionally, it provides helpful tips for handling rent increases, negotiating lease renewals, and resolving disputes, offering renters the tools they need to make informed decisions and protect their rights. With this guide, tenants can approach their renting experience with confidence and clarity.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TERM "LEASE OR RENTING"

A lease is a contract outlining the terms under which one party agrees to rent an asset—in this case, property—owned by another party. It guarantees the lessee, also known as the tenant, use of the property and guarantees the lessor (the property owner or landlord) regular payments for a specified period in exchange. Both the lessee and the lessor face consequences if they fail to uphold the terms of the contract. A lease is a form of incorporeal right.

Understanding a Lease

Leases are legal and binding contracts that set forth the terms of rental agreements in real estate and real and personal property. These contracts stipulate the duties of each party to effect and maintain the agreement and are enforceable by each. For example, a residential property lease includes:

- The property address
- Landlord and tenant responsibilities
- The rent amount
- A required security deposit

- Rent due date
- Consequences for breach of contract
- The duration of the lease
- Pet policies
- Other essential information

Not all leases are designed the same, but all of them have some common features. These include the rent amount, the due date of rent, the expiration date of the lease. The landlord requires the tenant to sign the lease, thereby agreeing to its terms before occupying the property.



Types of Leases

Beyond residential leases, tenants who lease commercial properties have a variety of lease types available, all of which are structured to assign more responsibility on the tenant and provide greater up-front profit for the landlord.

Some commercial leases require the tenant to pay rent plus the landlord's operational costs, while others require tenants to pay rent plus property taxes and insurance. The four most common types of commercial real estate leases include:

- **Single-Net Leases:** In this kind of lease, the tenant is responsible for paying property taxes.
- **Double-Net Leases:** These leases make a tenant responsible for property taxes and insurance.
- **Triple-Net Leases:** Tenants who sign these leases pay property taxes, insurance, and maintenance costs.
- **Gross Leases:** Tenants pay rent while the landlord is responsible for other costs.

MOVING TIPS AND TRICKS FOR A FASTER, EASIER AND LESS STRESSFUL MOVE

Preparing for your move will help set you up for success. Dedicate an afternoon to creating an action plan. A good plan will ensure your move stays on track, relieve some of your stress and help you get through the entire moving process with little to no frustration. Here are the steps to get prepared.

Make a Checklist

A moving checklist may seem tedious, but it works. Writing or typing your to-do list helps commit it to memory so you do not waste precious time trying to remember what you have to do. This is especially helpful if you're moving abroad.

Things to put on your checklist include:

- Contacting utility companies to schedule shut-off service
- Setting mail forwarding serves
- Ordering packing materials
- Any task or item you do not want to forget to do

As you complete an item, stay on track by crossing it off.

Set Your Budget

Moving can be expensive, but setting a budget can help you save money on your move. Your budget will help determine if you can afford a full-service move or if you need to make a DIY move. A realistic moving budget will ensure that your move will not cost you more than you can afford.



Hire a Mover or Plan a DIY Move

Once you set your budget, you'll know whether or not you can hire professional movers or if you'll make a DIY move. If hiring movers, start by getting referrals from friends and family. Compare quotes from several companies before you make a decision. For different types of moves you may want to consider a specialized moving service, if you're moving 150+ miles or out of state, researching the best cross country movers will give you more options.

For a DIY move, get pricing on trunk rentals and equipment. Also, recruit friends and family members to help you pack and load. (And make sure not to forget to offer lunch or dinner!)

Declutter

Moving is the perfect time to declutter. Sort through all your things and donate or throw away anything you no longer need. This step will save you packing time and give you more space on the moving truck.

Get Packing Supplies

Now that you have a better idea of the amount of things that you have to move, it's time to get moving boxes and packing supplies. Get more moving boxes than you think you will need. The last thing you want is to have to run out on packing day to find or purchase more. That will cause more stress and waste time.

Packing

The most time consuming part of the moving process is packing. However, following these packing hacks will help make the process less stressful and more efficient.

Pack an Essentials Bag

Packing day will be chaotic, so start the process by putting together your essentials bag first. Only pack the items you'll need access to during your move and right after you've arrived at your new place. Items in your essential bag should include:

- Important documents
- Medications
- Chargers
- Basic toiletries
- Changes of clothes
- Anything else you may need for the first few days in your new home
- [Keep Clothing in Your Dresser Drawers](#)

Don't empty your drawers. The clothes and nonbreakable items inside your dresser can be easily moved with this packing tip. Wrap the dresser with shrink wrap. The plastic keeps the drawers from falling out while in transit. When you get to your new home, unwrap the packing and it's ready to go.

Leave Clothes on Hangers

Leaving your clothes on hangers makes them easy to move and set up in your new home. Group them by five or six hangers (depending on how bulky the clothing is) and wrap them in large garbage bags.

Alternatively, use a wardrobe box, which includes a metal hanging bar, to hold several hangers with clothes. Then, when you get to your new home, move your clothes straight into your new closet.

Pack Your Bags

Luggage is made for packing and carrying, so use it to your advantage. Use suitcases to pack items that are not easily transported in boxes, or to keep valuables and bulky items safe.



Use Towels and Linens as Packing Material

Save money on packing materials by using your linens and towels as padding. Bubble wrap is expensive, and you will need a lot of it. Instead, use your towels and linens to wrap breakables such as dishes, frames, lamps and more.

Take Pictures

Snap photos of the complex wiring on the back of your entertainment systems so you remember how to set it up once it's moved. The same goes for anything you have to disassemble for the move. Also, it's a great idea to take photos of anything fragile or valuable just in case it goes missing or gets damaged while in transit. The images will be invaluable when you need to make an insurance claim.

Color Code Boxes

Save time setting up your new home with a little bit of planning. You can use markers or different colored stickers to color code your boxes. Start by assigning a color for each room. Then, label the boxes as you pack. When you get to your new home, you'll be able to quickly identify where each box belongs.

Moving Day---

Moving day will go fast and may present its own set of stressors and challenges. Follow these tips to help make it go smoothly.

Stay Hydrated and Eat Well

Pack a cooler with easy-to-grab drinks and food that will help keep your strength up throughout the day. Keep it in a spot where it won't be in the way, and make sure it doesn't accidentally get put on the moving truck.

Have a Plan Set for Young Children and Pets

Arrange for offsite babysitting and pet sitting moving day. All the activity will stress out your animals, and the kids will most likely be bored. Save yourself from the stress by making alternative arrangements for them.

Finishing Packing At Least the Day Before

Moving day will be busy enough, so start early with the packing and try to wrap it up before the movers show up to load the truck. Your focus needs to ensure all items make it on the truck and keep the progress moving.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT EVERY TENANT SHOULD KNOW

As a tenant, it's crucial to understand both your rights and responsibilities to ensure a smooth and fair renting experience. These rights and responsibilities are typically outlined in your lease agreement and are governed by state or territory laws. Here's a detailed overview of what every tenant should know:



1. Tenant Rights

Right to a Habitable Living Space

Tenants have the right to live in a property that meets certain standards of safety, cleanliness, and functionality. This includes:

- Working plumbing, heating, and electricity.
- Secure windows and doors.
- No exposure to mold or other hazards.

Landlords are obligated to ensure the property is habitable and maintain it in a condition that meets health and safety codes.

Right to Privacy

Tenants have the right to privacy in their rental property, meaning the landlord cannot enter the property without prior notice. The general rule is that:

- Landlords must provide notice (usually 24-48 hours) before entering the rental property for inspections, repairs, or other valid reasons.
- Emergencies may be an exception, where the landlord can enter without notice to prevent harm or damage.

Right to Non-Discriminatory Treatment

Tenants are protected against discrimination by landlords based on race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected characteristic. This applies to:

- Initial renting processes (such as application acceptance).
- During the tenancy (such as renewal or eviction processes).

Right to Fair Rent and Rent Increases

Tenants have the right to:

- Fair rent as agreed upon in the lease.
- Limits on how often and by how much rent can be increased, which is usually regulated by state law. Most places require a certain notice period (e.g., 60 days) for rent increases, and they must be within legal limits.

Right to a Written Lease Agreement

While verbal agreements may be valid in some places, tenants should always request a written lease that clearly outlines terms like:

- Lease duration.
- Rent amount and payment details.
- Maintenance responsibilities.
- Rules regarding guests, pets, and other property-specific conditions.

Right to Request Repairs

Tenants have the right to request necessary repairs for issues affecting the safety, health, or habitability of the rental property. If the landlord fails to respond in a reasonable amount of time, tenants may:

- Contact local authorities for enforcement.
- In some cases, tenants may be allowed to repair the issue and deduct the cost from rent, but only if this is specified in the lease or allowed by law.

2. Tenant Responsibilities

Responsibility to Pay Rent on Time

Tenants must pay rent on the due date as outlined in the lease agreement. Failure to pay rent on time can lead to:

- Late fees or additional charges.
- Eviction if the rent remains unpaid for an extended period.

Tenants should communicate with the landlord if they are having financial trouble to avoid penalties or eviction.

Responsibility to Maintain the Property

Tenants must keep the property in good condition, ensuring it is clean and free of damage. This includes:

- Regular cleaning (floors, kitchen, bathrooms, etc.).
- Basic maintenance (changing light bulbs, replacing batteries in smoke detectors, etc.).
- No significant damage to walls, floors, appliances, or other fixtures.

Minor wear and tear is generally accepted, but tenants should avoid actions that cause damage beyond normal use.

Responsibility to Respect the Property's Rules

Tenants must follow any rules set forth in the lease agreement, such as:

- Restrictions on pets or smoking.
- Rules regarding subletting or having guests.
- Adherence to property-specific rules (e.g., no loud music, noise restrictions).

Responsibility to Report Maintenance Issues

While tenants are not responsible for fixing major repairs, they are responsible for reporting any issues promptly to the landlord to prevent further damage. This includes:

- Plumbing leaks or water damage.
- Electrical issues (e.g., faulty wiring).
- Structural problems (e.g., broken windows or doors).

Responsibility for Paying Utilities (Unless Otherwise Agreed)

Tenants may be responsible for paying utilities such as water, electricity, gas, or internet unless the lease specifies that the landlord will cover them. It's essential to:

- Understand which utilities are included and which are the tenant's responsibility.
- Keep utility accounts in your name (unless otherwise arranged).

Responsibility to Provide Proper Notice Before Moving Out

Most leases require tenants to give a certain amount of notice (often 30 or 60 days) before moving out. If tenants leave without proper notice, they may:

- Be liable for rent during the notice period.
- Forfeit their security deposit.

Responsibility to Maintain Insurance

While tenants are not responsible for insuring the landlord's property, it's wise to have renter's insurance to cover:

- Personal belongings in case of theft, fire, or damage.
- Liability coverage in case someone is injured in the rental property.

3. Resolving Disputes

If issues arise between tenants and landlords, communication is key. However, tenants also have the right to:

- Seek legal advice or mediation services if disputes occur over issues like unpaid rent, eviction notices, or bond deductions.
- File complaints with local housing authorities or rental boards if a landlord is not meeting their obligations.

POST PANDEMIC LANDLORD-RENTER RELATIONSHIPS IN AUSTRALIA

The post-pandemic landlord-renter relationship in Australia has undergone notable shifts, driven largely by changes in the economy, government policies, and tenant expectations. The COVID-19 pandemic created a temporary upheaval in the rental market, with many tenants experiencing financial hardship due to job losses or reduced hours. In response, state governments introduced temporary rent reductions, eviction bans, and financial relief measures, which helped maintain stability during the crisis. However, as the economy gradually recovered, these measures phased out, leading to a new dynamic in the rental sector.

Landlords and tenants now face a market that is experiencing rising rents, low vacancy rates, and increased competition, especially in major cities. Many tenants, having faced financial uncertainty during the pandemic, are more cautious and may seek longer-term leases or demand more flexibility from landlords in areas like lease renewals, rent increases, and maintenance responsibilities. On the other hand, landlords are seeking to recoup financial losses from the pandemic, often leading to higher rents and stricter lease terms.

There has also been an increased focus on the need for clear communication between landlords and tenants. As more renters work from home, there has been a growing demand for properties with specific features, such as reliable internet and quiet, dedicated workspaces. This has prompted some landlords to invest in upgrades to make their properties more attractive to potential tenants.



Moreover, the pandemic highlighted the importance of tenant rights, with many renters now more aware of their legal protections, especially regarding rent payments and evictions. As a result, there has been a greater push for rental reforms to provide long-term stability and fairness for both parties. In summary, post-pandemic landlord-renter relationships in Australia reflect a balancing act between rising rents, tenant security, and the evolving needs of both parties.

MOVING OUT: THE EXIT STRATEGY

Moving out of a rental property can be a stressful process, but with proper planning and organization, it can go smoothly. The key to a successful move-out is having a clear exit strategy that ensures you meet all the requirements of your lease agreement and secure your full bond refund. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you prepare:



1. Review Your Lease Agreement

Before you start packing, revisit your lease agreement to understand any move-out requirements. Some landlords may have specific instructions or conditions related to the return of keys, cleaning, or repairs. Be sure to take note of:

- Notice period: How much notice do you need to give before moving out?
- Inspection schedule: When will the landlord conduct the final inspection, and what should you expect?

- Bond refund conditions: What needs to be done to ensure you get your full bond back?

2. Create a Move-Out Checklist

A detailed checklist will keep you on track and help prevent any last-minute surprises. Include tasks like:

- Notifying utility providers and redirecting mail.
- Organizing professional cleaning or deep cleaning the property.
- Repairing minor damages, such as holes in walls or broken appliances.
- Packing and organizing your belongings well in advance.

3. Conduct a Thorough Inspection

Before the final inspection, do a self-inspection to make sure everything is in good condition. Look for:

- Cleaning: Every surface, appliance, and corner should be spotless. This includes carpets, walls, windows, and bathrooms.
- Repairs: Fix any minor damage like nail holes, broken light fixtures, or scuffed floors. If needed, consider hiring professionals for repairs.
- Emptying the Property: Ensure the property is completely vacated. Don't leave any items behind.

4. Hire Professional Cleaners (Optional but Recommended)

For a hassle-free move-out, hiring professional end-of-lease cleaners can ensure your property is spotless and reduce the risk of disputes over cleaning. They are trained to meet the high cleaning standards expected by landlords and can handle deep cleaning tasks like:

- Carpet steam cleaning.
- Oven and window cleaning.
- Full bathroom and kitchen sanitation.

5. Handle the Final Inspection

On the day of the final inspection, be present to discuss any concerns the landlord may have. Ensure that the property is in the same condition as when you moved in and that any required repairs or cleaning have been done. This is your chance to clarify any issues before the landlord conducts the inspection.

6. Return Keys and Documentation

Make sure you return all keys, garage openers, or access cards to the landlord. Also, if necessary, provide proof of any repairs or cleaning you have completed. This shows your commitment to leaving the property in good condition.

7. Request Your Bond Back

Once you've completed all the steps, request your bond refund. In some areas, landlords are required to return the bond within a specific period (e.g., 30 days), assuming no deductions are necessary. If there are any disputes regarding the bond, it may be resolved through a tenancy dispute resolution service.

8. Stay Organized and Communicate

Good communication with your landlord throughout the process is essential. If you're facing any challenges in meeting the move-out requirements, let them know early on. Staying organized, keeping track of all communications, and meeting your responsibilities will help ensure a smooth transition out of the property and a successful bond refund.

By following these steps and having a solid exit strategy, you'll be in a much better position to leave the property on good terms and secure your full bond return.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON REASONS FOR BOND DEDUCTIONS?

Most people are required to pay a security deposit besides the first month's rent at the start of their tenancy. The rental bond will likely be returned to the renter at the end of the tenancy. However, there is a catch, i.e. in order to get the deposit back without deductions, individuals need to ensure the property is in the same

condition as it was when the tenancy started. During the end, a thorough inspection will be conducted, and if any issues are found, there will be deductions.

Ensuring tenants get their security deposit back in full involves more than just sweeping and vacuuming the floor. They must fix damages and deep clean the entire property, which requires hiring professional end of lease cleaners Melbourne to ensure the best results. But, to eliminate any disputes later on, it is important to be aware of things that increase the chances of security deposit subtractions. Here are the common reasons for bond deductions. Avoid them to get the entire rental bond back.



1. Property Damage

One of the major reasons tenants do not get their bond back is the presence of property damages that were not there during the start of the tenancy. Causing damage and not fixing it is the easiest way to lose out on the money. Remember that such issues are very different from normal wear and tear. Here are a few examples of damage:

- Carpet stains
- Missing outlet covers
- Numerous large holes in the walls

- Water damage to the floors
- Cracks in the kitchen countertop
- Broken doors, windows, and bathroom vanity

It is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the home in good condition. Therefore, ensure there is no visible damage besides normal wear and tear. If there is, fix it as soon as possible.

2. The Rental Home is Unclean

young man playing game sitting at home

Leaving the property without deep cleaning is another common way to guarantee rental bond deductions. In most cases, landlords will subtract some money from the security deposit, particularly if they need to hire professionals to get the property back into its original condition. Renters are unlikely to get their security deposit back if the property contains any of the following:

- Pet messes
- Pests
- Mould and mildew growth
- Stains
- A lot of dirt and dust

Even though just a little dust is unlikely to have any effect, too much of it can certainly reduce the chances of getting all the money back. Because some of the tasks are difficult, it is better to hire budget end of lease cleaners Melbourne.

3. Unpaid Utilities and Rent

An agreement is made at the start of the tenancy, i.e., the tenant will pay rent in exchange for living in the rental home. So, in case the renter has unpaid rent when moving out, the landlord can make deductions to the rental bond. Landlords who are permitted to charge additional fees due to late payment of the rent can deduct it from the deposit as well.

Similar to unpaid rent, unpaid utilities are also a common reason behind bond money deductions. Many tenants move out without paying their previous month's

electricity, water and gas bills. In such cases, landlords deduct money from the security deposit to cover the outstanding utility bills.



4. Unapproved Changes

Unapproved changes like painting are another reason behind bond deductions. Remember that landlords are required to repaint the property every few years for basic maintenance. In that case, they cannot deduct money from security deposits. However, if the tenant paints over the original colour without permission, then they won't get their entire rental bond back.

Firstly, tenants must follow the terms outlined in the lease agreement. Breaking it is never recommended. If the agreement does not specify if they can repaint, it will be better to ask the landlord. This is because many landlords let individuals paint as long as they are ready to return the walls to the original colour before the tenancy ends. If they fail to do so, landlords will use the rental bond to get the walls repainted. In a few cases, property owners do not permit the renters to paint, and tenants should follow the rules to avoid any inconvenience.

Tip: Keeping the property clean is also a part of lease agreements, so hire expert end of lease cleaners Melbourne who use a checklist to deep clean a rental home.

5. Leaving Behind Large Items

Generally, tenants should take the items they brought when they moved in. Leaving one or two small items, such as kitchenware, is unlikely to have any effect. However, failing to move heavy stuff like furniture may result in subtractions from the rental bond. This is because the landlords will need to hire a rental vehicle to remove these items, which is a major inconvenience and costs money. So, it is best that tenants sell, donate, or just move the large items. After that, do not forget to deep clean the property with the help of cheap end of lease cleaners Melbourne to get the bond money back in full.

In most cases, deductions will be unlikely if the tenants pay all the bills and rent and leave the properties in the same condition as they were during the start of the tenancy. Remember to focus primarily on the things mentioned in this article when preparing to move out.



BONUS TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME RENTERS

- 1. Understand Your Lease:** Read your lease agreement thoroughly before signing. Look for details on rent, notice periods, pet policies, and maintenance responsibilities.
- 2. Budget Wisely:** Beyond rent, factor in costs like utilities, internet, and renter's insurance. Set aside money for a security deposit and moving expenses.
- 3. Document the Property's Condition:** Take photos or videos of the property during move-in to document any existing damages. This can protect your bond at the end of the lease.
- 4. Communicate with Your Landlord:** Maintain open communication for repairs, issues, or lease questions. Good relationships can make your renting experience smoother.
- 5. Get Renter's Insurance:** Protect your belongings against theft, fire, or damage. It's affordable and can save you money in the long run.
- 6. Know Your Rights:** Familiarize yourself with local tenant laws to understand your rights regarding repairs, rent increases, and evictions.
- 7. Be a Good Neighbor:** Respect noise levels, shared spaces, and property rules to build a positive community relationship.
- 8. Plan for Moving Out:** Start preparing early by giving proper notice, cleaning thoroughly, and fixing minor damages to ensure you get your full bond back.

These tips will help you navigate your first renting experience smoothly and confidently!

CONCLUSION

Renting a property can be an exciting yet challenging experience, especially for first-time tenants. By understanding your rights and responsibilities, you can navigate the renting process with confidence and avoid common pitfalls. Being proactive in areas like thoroughly reviewing your lease agreement, maintaining open communication with your landlord, and keeping the property in good condition will not only make your rental experience smoother but also increase

your chances of getting your full security deposit back. Remember, smart renting is about being informed, prepared, and proactive.



As the rental market continues to evolve, staying aware of your legal protections and adjusting to changes can ensure a positive renting experience. Whether you're seeking flexibility, affordability, or a long-term home, approaching the rental process with knowledge and planning will set you up for success. By following the tips and strategies outlined in this guide, tenants can enjoy a stress-free tenancy, maintain a good relationship with their landlords, and truly make their rental property feel like home.

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