

5 Things You Should Understand About Your Lease

A lease is a legally binding contract that sets the terms for your occupation of a rental property. Understanding what is in a lease will help you prepare and move quickly when you find the right rental.



1 How to Pay Rent

The lease should include the following:

- The monthly rent due.
- What day the rent is due.
- The methods of acceptable payment.
- The allowable grace period for late payment, if any.
- Fees due with late payments.

2 What Utilities or Appliances Are Included

Your lease should indicate which utilities are included as part of your monthly rent, and whether you are expected to cover those costs. Common utilities include electricity, water and trash. In addition, you'll want to know what, if any appliances and furniture are included in the lease.

3 Who Is Responsible for Maintenance

Your lease should also include who is responsible for regular repairs and maintenance on included items, as well as where to submit service requests when applicable.

In some leases, the landlord may be required to complete all repairs and maintenance, no matter how small. In others, the landlord may only be responsible for major appliances or repairs while you're responsible for everything else. If the rental property has a yard or outside area, you may be responsible for further upkeep as well.

4 The Property Rules

The lease should stipulate acceptable use of the property, including whether subletting is allowed.

The landlord may also include policies for items such as maximum occupancy, eviction, quiet hours, smoking, parking, pets, landlord right of entry or maintenance worker access. Understanding these policies from the start will help you avoid any surprises down the road.

5 Rules for Lease Termination

Not only should your rental agreement detail how long you'll live at the property, but it should also outline your responsibilities when the term of your lease comes to an end.

Landlords often require a notice to vacate, which is a formal lease termination letter, between 30 and 60 days before your departure — or some other timeframe noted in the lease.

Your lease should also spell out any financial penalties for breaking the agreement before its full term. Sometimes the landlord will charge a fine equal to one or two months' rent. Alternatively, you may be required to pay the rent for the remainder of your lease term. Breaking your lease may also result in you forfeiting your security deposit, if you paid one.



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