



MA Attorney General's Office *Student Renters Guide*



We've got your back! 617-727-8400 | www.mass.gov/ago
Call our office with any questions and concerns about your tenant rights.



Know your rights as a Massachusetts tenant!

1

Before You Sign

- TALK to the landlord, neighbors and other tenants about the unit.
- ASK the landlord questions – how much is the rent, who pays utilities, etc.
- LOOK at the apartment.



2

Signing the Lease

- READ IT CAREFULLY! You're bound by it.
- Make sure you understand the terms you sign.
- Don't agree to something that's not in the lease.
- Make sure the lease says who is paying for each utility. Unless you agree in writing to pay for a utility, the landlord must pay for it.
- Get all of the landlord's promises **in writing** (email conversations are in writing!).
- Keep a signed copy of your lease – your landlord has 30 days to give you a copy.
- The most a landlord can charge you when you move in is: 1) First month's rent 2) Last month's rent 3) Security deposit up to the amount of the first month's rent 4) Cost of a new lock
- You have the right to get a receipt every time you give the landlord money.



3

Moving In

- If you pay a security deposit, you are entitled to a "statement of condition" that lists any problems with the unit at the time you move in.
- Even if you don't pay a security deposit, write down all the things in the unit that need repair – otherwise the landlord may hold you responsible.
- Take photos to document the apartment's condition.



4

Living in Your Place

- You have the right to a safe and habitable unit. The landlord is responsible for keeping your unit in good condition.
- If you have problems with conditions, you should report them to the landlord, preferably in writing.
- If the landlord refuses to make repairs, you have the right to get a free inspection by a local health inspector.**
- It's illegal for the landlord to retaliate against you for asking for repairs or for calling the health inspector.



5


Moving Out

- You have the right to get your security deposit back, plus interest – the landlord is only entitled to deduct for unpaid rent, or damage you caused beyond "reasonable" wear and tear.
- If the landlord doesn't return all of your deposit, the landlord must tell you in writing what the money was used for.
- A landlord can never force a tenant to move out without going to court first.**



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