

ECHO Fair Housing Unit Resource Booklet



*Rights and Responsibilities
of Landlords and Tenants
in Minnesota*

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Introduction

A safe place to live is very important. It is a shelter from Minnesota's cold winters, a space for families to play and grow, and a place to call home.

You have the **right** to live anywhere you want, as long as you can afford the rent and follow the terms of the **lease**.

According to the **Fair Housing Act**, you cannot be **denied** housing because of your race or national origin, your gender or religion, having a disability, having a family or being on public assistance.

Wherever you choose to live, you and your **landlord** have both rights and **responsibilities** to keep your home a safe place to live. This guide will give you information about your rights and responsibilities as a **tenant** in Minnesota. It will also give you tips for successful renting.

This book only **summarizes** rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants. To learn more, visit the websites listed in the resources section at the end of this booklet.

Focus on Academic Vocabulary:

What does **summarize** mean?

Definition: When you summarize something you retell the information using fewer words.

Can you **summarize** this page with a partner?

Inspecting the Apartment Before Renting

When you are looking for an apartment, it is your **responsibility** to **inspect** the apartment. You should do this before you sign a **lease**. Ask the **landlord** to **walk through** the apartment with you. Look at everything very carefully. For example, turn on the lights in every room, check for hot water, flush the toilet, open all the windows, and turn on the appliances. Also, look for any **damage** like cracked windows, stained carpets or broken appliances.

It is a good idea to use a **checklist** to write down any problems you find. Also, take pictures of any damage you see. Ask the landlord to sign the checklist after your **walk through**. Keep a copy of this checklist and the pictures. Then, you can ask your landlord to fix any problems before you move in.



Moving In Checklist

It is important to inspect the apartment before signing a lease. If you don't do this the landlord could blame you for the damages.

You should always communicate with your landlord in writing. That way, if there is a problem later you will have a **record** of your conversation.



Text messages CANNOT be used in Minnesota Courts. They cannot be used as evidence. It is a better idea to write a letter to your landlord and keep a copy.



The Lease

The **lease** is an agreement between the **landlord** and the **tenant**. **Usually**, it is a signed paper that explains the **rules** for renting the home.

It is a good idea to get a lease in writing. You have a **right** to have a copy of the lease signed by you and your landlord. Before you sign a written lease, make sure to read all papers carefully.

After you sign, you and the landlord are agreeing to follow the rules of the lease. Usually, a lease will include rules like

- the amount of the **security deposit**
- the days of the month that rent is due
- how much time you must give before you move out
- parking rules
- who pays for the cost of utilities including heat, lights and water
- how repairs are made
- pets



Summarize the rules for a lease in your own words.

Key Tenant and Landlord Responsibilities and Rights:

You and your **landlord** have both **rights** and **responsibilities** to keep your home a safe place to live. Here is a list of your responsibilities as a **tenant**.

As a tenant you must:

- pay the rent on time.
- follow the **rules** in the **lease**.
- pay for **damages** that are more than normal wear and tear on the apartment.
- give proper written notice when you want to move out.
- tell the landlord if something is broken right away.
- keep the apartment clean.
- help keep the hallway and laundry room clean

In addition to this list, you should also be a good neighbor. This means that you must always follow the rules in your lease and have **respect** for your neighbors.

What do good neighbors do?

When you are a tenant, you are a neighbor to the people near you. Good neighbors keep their yards clean and pick up trash. Also, good neighbors never pick plants, fruits or vegetables that they did not grow. Good neighbors keep music quiet and put cigarette butts in the proper container. If you do not follow the rules, it can cause problems. It is important to be a respectful neighbor and tenant.



What does it mean to be a good neighbor?

Give two examples from this page.

Key Tenant and Landlord Responsibilities and Rights:

Your **landlord** has **responsibilities**, too. Here are some of your **rights** as a **tenant**. These are **rules** that your landlord must follow.

Your landlord must:

- keep your apartment in good condition. This means, they need to fix things.
- let you know before coming into your home, unless it is an emergency. You have the right to privacy.
- give you his or her name and address.
- let you know before ending your **lease** or raising your rent.
- get rid of pests like bedbugs and mice.
- return your **damage** deposit, after you move out (in the mail within 21 days) if there is no damage to the apartment.

Your landlord CANNOT:

- shut off your utilities or lock you out of your apartment.
- **evict** you without going to court first.

There are state laws that protect your **rights** as a **tenant**. Get help if you have bad **landlord** or your home is not safe. It is important to report bad landlords. Exercising your rights and reporting bad landlords can help tenants in the future. It is the right thing to do.

If you are having problems with your landlord or being **evicted**, please see the resources section of this booklet.



Summarize two tenant rights, in your own words.

Moving Out

When you are ready to move out of your apartment you should write a letter to your **landlord** and include the date you will move out and your new address. Then, the landlord can mail your **security deposit** back to you.

Be sure to follow the **rules** in your **lease** about moving out. If you move out early and do not follow the rules of your lease, you will still be **responsible** for rent.

When you move out the apartment should be clean. It should look the same as it did when you moved in, except for normal wear and tear. Before you leave, schedule a **walk through** with your landlord and fill out a **checklist** and take pictures again. Ask your landlord to sign the checklist.

Getting Your Money Back

If you are having problems getting your deposit back, first call your landlord. Then, call HousingLink at 612-522-2500 or visit their website www.housinglink.org



What should you do when you are ready to move out? Summarize this page in your own words.

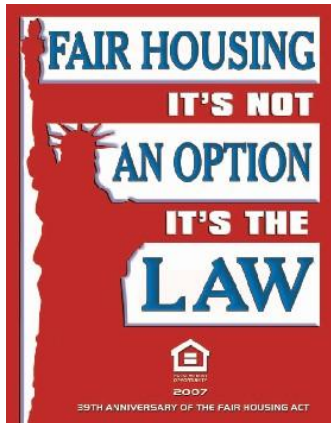
Fair Housing

The **Fair Housing Act** is a law. This law protects people from **discrimination** when they are renting a home. The law says you have the **right** to live anywhere you want to, as long as you can afford the rent and follow the **rules** of the **lease**. You cannot be **denied** housing because of your race or national origin, your gender or religion, having a disability, having a family or being on public assistance.

Landlords cannot refuse to rent to you because of

- race or color of your skin
- religion
- national origin (where you were born)
- gender (being male or female)
- disability (being unable to do some things)
- the fact that you have children (with some exceptions)
- the fact that you get public assistance or rent help.

It is against the law for a landlord to turn down your application, raise rent, turn off services or **evict** you for any of these reasons. If they do it is discrimination and it is against the law.



If you feel a landlord has discriminated against you, you should contact a lawyer. See the **Resources Available in Minnesota to Support Tenants** section of this booklet for help.

Tips for Tenants

KEEP RECORDS

When you rent an apartment it is important to keep copies of all papers and receipts in a safe place. If you pay for rent in cash, you should get a receipt immediately. Your landlord must give you a receipt for the rent if you pay in cash. Then, if you have a problem with your **landlord** you will have a **record** to help you.

Renters Insurance

It is important to understand that your landlord's insurance will only take care of **damage** to the building you live in. The landlord's insurance will not cover your **personal belongings** if they are stolen or damaged.

Many **tenants** do not have **renters insurance** because they think that their **landlord** has insurance that will protect their things. **Usually**, this is not true.

Renters insurance protects your personal belongings. For example, if there is a fire in your apartment and your couch is damaged. Renters insurance would cover that loss and pay for you to get a new couch.

Renters insurance **usually** costs about \$15-\$30 per month. If you have car insurance, talk to your car insurance provider.



Read the first paragraph again. Why is it important to keep records?

Resources Available in Minnesota to Support Tenants

Even if you follow all the **rules** of your **lease**, you still might have problems with noisy neighbors or a bad **landlord**.

Thankfully, there are places you can contact for help.

Usually, these places provide help for free or a low cost.

Here is a list of helpful resources in Minnesota:

Problem	Contact
Discrimination	Homeline: https://homelinemn.org/ (612-728-5767) Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid: (612-332-1441) Southern MN Regional Legal Services: (1-888-575-2954) Fair Housing: http://fairhousingmn.org/
Energy Assistance (help for utility bills)	http://www.minnesotaenergyresources.com/
Eviction	http://www.housinglink.org/List/MNevictionprocess.aspx
Finding a Home	www.housinglink.com
Housing Assistance (help with rent)	Call United Way 211
Legal Aid (help for most problems with a landlord)	Homeline: https://homelinemn.org/ (612-728-5767) Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid: (612-332-1441) Southern MN Regional Legal Services: (1-888-575-2954)
Mediation Services for problems with neighbors or landlords	http://disputeresolutioncenter.org/ http://communitymediationminnesota.org/

Glossary

checklist (noun): a list of things that need to be looked at.

damage (noun): things that are broken. For example, the apartment had a lot of **damage**. The windows were broken and the floor was peeling.

deny (verb): to refuse to give something to someone : to prevent someone from having or receiving something.

discrimination (noun): treating a person or group of people differently from other people; being unfair to some people and not others

evict (verb): to force out (a person, especially a tenant) from a building by legal process, for nonpayment of rent or other reasons.

Fair Housing Act (noun): says that you cannot be denied housing because of your race, where you are from, your gender or religion, having a disability, having a family or being on public assistance.

inspect (verb): to look at something carefully in order to learn more about it or to find problems.

landlord (noun): a person who owns a house or apartment and rents it to other people.

lease (noun): a legal agreement that lets someone use a house or apartment in return for payment

References:

Landlords and Tenants Rights and Responsibilities. (n.d.). Retrieved February 7, 2016, from <https://www.ag.state.mn.us/brochures/pubLandlordTenants.pdf>
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Successful Renting at a Glance. (n.d.). Retrieved February 07, 2016, from <http://www.housinglink.org/HousingResources/SuccessfulRenting.aspx#FindingHousinglink>

Tenants Rights in Minnesota. (2014). Retrieved February 7, 2016, from <http://www.lawhelpmn.org/files/1765CC5E-1EC9-4FC4-65FC-957272D8A04E/attachments/070F8942-D0D5-D0CB-BEC9-6D77718B6B73/updatedtenantssept2014.pdf>
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid.

Glossary

personal belongings (noun): things that are yours. For example, clothes and furniture.

record (noun): an official written document that gives proof of something or tells about past events

renters insurance (noun): An **insurance** policy helps you if things are lost in a fire, storm or theft.

respect (verb): to do things that show that you know that something is important. For example, keeping your apartment clean shows **respect** to your landlord.

responsibility (noun): a duty or something you should do, such as paying your rent on time.

right (noun): a freedom that is protected. For example, you have the **right** to privacy. Your landlord must let you know before coming into your home, unless it is an emergency.

rule (noun): a statement that tells you what you can and cannot do

security deposit (noun): an amount of money that you pay when you begin to rent a home, it can be used to pay for any damage that you cause to the home

tenant (noun): A person who is legally responsible for following the rules of the lease. Also called a renter.

usually (adverb): describes what happens most of the time

walk through (noun): the tenant and landlord meet to look at every room in the apartment , they check for problems