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.

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

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.

Summarize the rules for a lease in your own words.

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.

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

Summarize two tenant rights, in your own words.

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.

Reference: http://www.c4sa.org/our-work/fair-housing/housing-discrimination

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 at a low cost.

Here is a list of helpful resources in Minnesota:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrimination</strong></td>
<td>Homeline: <a href="https://homelinemn.org/">https://homelinemn.org/</a> (612-728-5767)  &lt;br&gt; Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid: (612-332-1441)  &lt;br&gt; Southern MN Regional Legal Services: (1-888-575-2954)  &lt;br&gt; Fair Housing: <a href="http://fairhousingmn.org/">http://fairhousingmn.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eviction</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.housinglink.org/List/MNevictionprocess.aspx">http://www.housinglink.org/List/MNevictionprocess.aspx</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding a Home</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.housinglink.com">www.housinglink.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing Assistance (help with rent)</strong></td>
<td>Call United Way 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal Aid (help for most problems with a landlord)</strong></td>
<td>Homeline: <a href="https://homelinemn.org/">https://homelinemn.org/</a> (612-728-5767)  &lt;br&gt; Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid: (612-332-1441)  &lt;br&gt; Southern MN Regional Legal Services: (1-888-575-2954)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.
Glossary

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

References:

www.learnersdictionary.com
http://www.housinglink.org/Files/Housing%20Terms.pdf


Housinglink

http://www.housinglink.org/HousingResources/Success
ingtoFindSuccessfulRenting/2014/070F8942-D0D5-1EC9-4FC4-5E5C-497771BB667F/updatedtenantssept2014.pdf

MINNESOTA ATTORNEY GENERAL’S OFFICE

www.learnerst comunis/terms/publiclandlordtenants.pdf

Successful Renting at a Glance (2014), Retrieved February 07, 2016, from

References:

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