

TENANT SURVIVAL GUIDE

*Everything You Need to Know When
Renting a Home in Houston*



Ready to take a huge leap and live independently? Perhaps, your first time renting a space in the big city? Worry no more! Here, we'll list down all the tips and tricks to survive your tenancy.



1.) Know your Tenancy Agreement

First things first, know the terms and conditions. Entering a tenancy contract usually requires legal binding agreement, laying down the tenancy duration, payment terms, and living inclusions. Here are a few watch-outs to note when reviewing your contract:

- **Security deposit:** This is a fee required by some landlords to secure their property, protecting from potential damages when inhabited by tenants. Make sure to include this term when signing your tenancy agreement.
- **Pet damage deposit:** Some landlords require an additional damage fee protecting their property from pets brought by the tenants. If you're planning to bring your pet, make sure to disclose this to avoid incurring any hidden cost.
- **Co-tenants:** If you happen to rent a space with your friends or families, make sure to list your name in the contract. This officially makes you a co-tenant, equally responsible in maintaining the tenancy contract.

2.) Conduct a move-in inspection

To protect you from paying unforeseen damage fees, remember to conduct a move-in inspection together with your landlord. Remember to document how the unit looks like before the turnover to ensure that you're covered in case of any existing leaks or wall scratches. Apart from taking photos and videos, some owners would have a formal inspection report where you'd need to confirm the inspection turnover.

3.) Pay your rent on time

Once settled in your new rental home, never forget to pay your rent on time. Most rental schemes follow a date of every first week of the month, but this will depend on the tenancy terms signed with your landlord. Failing to do so could result in an eviction notice, so it would be better to prepare your payment ahead of its due date. You could also explore setting an automatic bank transfer to your landlord, wiring the payment automatically every month.

4.) Respect your neighbor's privacy

Respect begets respect. To live harmoniously in your new neighborhood, learn to respect your neighbor's privacy and quiet time, especially at night. Avoid causing any unreasonable disturbances like blasting your speakers in the middle of the night, or launching a loud home party in the middle of the week. You should also check the state bylaws in case there are specific violations pertaining to noise to avoid legal implications.

5.) Pay attention to unit repairs and service requirements

Always be on the lookout for possible unit repairs and service requirements. Remember, you must always declare the maintenance of the rental unit. In case any maintenance issue arises, contact your landlord right away to have it repaired. Best if you could document before and after repair situations to keep it handy in case the landlord requests for further evidence.

Otherwise, if any major damage occurs due to undisclosed repair issues, associated costs could be charged to the tenant. Remember that it is the tenant's duty to maintain the cleanliness at par with sanitary standards for every rental unit. However, if you observe reasonable wear and tear damages due to the unit's old age or natural forces, you can demand your landlord to have these items fixed right away to avoid further damages.

For emergency repairs, remember to get the emergency contact from your landlord in case any urgent service needs arise.

6.) Set at least a 30-day moving out notice

If you follow the monthly tenancy terms, you have to inform your landlord at least 30 days before your desired moving out date. Remember to have your moving out notice documented in writing, furnished with your name, signature, and date of signing. This can serve as a legal document, proving that you've given a proper moving out notice.

However, if you follow a fixed term tenancy, a 30-day moving out notice won't suffice. As the fixed term tenancy contract is legally binding, you are obliged to finish the tenancy duration reflected in your contract. A possible exception is when there is a vacate clause indicated in your contract, allowing you to move out and terminate the contract when deemed fit. There can be additional charges associated with this abrupt contract termination, so it would be best to negotiate with your landlord on these terms.



7.) In case of eviction, dispute your claim within the timeline provision.

Possible cases of eviction include non-payment of monthly rent, landlord's use of the property, or a notice demolishing the property altogether. In any case, once you receive an eviction notice, make sure to dispute your claim within the provided timeline. Usually, the landlord allots ample time for dispute claims on eviction and provides a reasonable lead time for moving out.

In cases of property eviction, you may be granted a compensation grant due to abrupt contract termination. However, note that eviction due to non-payment of monthly rent receives the tightest ruling and lead time. Make sure that your tenancy contract covers this clause to protect you from any rental eviction woes.



All in all, moving into a new rental space can be terrifying. This is especially true when you just moved to a new city, starting a new life with your new space. Always keep this tenant survival guide to navigate through the hooks and crooks of tenancy excellently. Remember, tenancy comes easy with a sheer amount of tenacity.

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