

Your rights as a tenant

Moderate • 30 min to read • Free

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ Your lease
- ☐ Email, or a notebook, for a dated record of every request
- ☐ Your state's official tenant guide (see the links below)

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **You have a right to a livable home.** Landlords must keep a rental fit to live in.
- 2 **Ask for repairs in writing.** Email or a dated letter creates proof.
- 3 **Know the legal options if repairs don't happen.** In Texas, if a serious health or safety problem isn't fixed after proper notice, you may be able to end the lease, repair it and deduct the cost, or ask a justice of the peace to order the repair (up to \$10,000) without a lawyer.
- 4 **Don't withhold rent on your own.** If the problem doesn't qualify, or you skip a step, you can be sued or evicted.
- 5 **Know that complaining is protected.** A landlord can't punish you for asking for repairs.
- 6 **Know that only a court can evict you.** A landlord can't change the locks, remove your doors or windows, take your belongings, or cut off water, gas or electricity to force you out.
- 7 **Take every eviction notice seriously.** A notice is the start of a process, not the end.
- 8 **Know your privacy rules.** Your landlord can come in for repairs and showings, but most states require notice except in emergencies.
- 9 **Know that discrimination is illegal.** The federal Fair Housing Act bans discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability, and requires reasonable accommodations for disabilities.
- 10 **Know your rights if a screening report gets you turned down.** A landlord who denies you, or charges a higher deposit, because of a screening report must tell you which company made it.

Watch out Before you deduct repair costs or hold back rent, call legal aid. Every state's remedy has its own conditions, and getting one wrong can turn your landlord's problem into an eviction case against you.

DAD NOTE *Polite, in writing, with a date on it, and rent paid on time. That keeps every right you have on your side.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/your-place/moving-out/your-rights-as-a-tenant/

Checked October 3, 2026. Sources: California Department of Real Estate; New York State Attorney General; Texas Attorney General; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; USA.gov; Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; Legal Services Corporation; George Washington University Off-Campus Housing.