

# Landlord Tips for Successful Renting

Provided by The Landlord Connection, Inc.

## ***Proper Tenant Screening Practices***

When someone applies to you for an apartment they will willingly give you all the information you ask for. Be sure to take full advantage of this opportunity.

To get the right answers however, you must ask the right questions. A comprehensive rental application can obtain most of the information you need.

Besides basic information such as full name, maiden name, date of birth, and Social Security Number, your rental application should ask for the following information:

- Present and previous addresses as well as the landlord's name and phone number.
- Reason for moving and length of time at each address.
- At least two personal references.
- Any other sources of income and any debts owed.
- If they have ever gone to court with a previous landlord.
- A signed authorization to let you check their credit.

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*Landlords often forget that they are operating a business. The business of renting apartments needs to be taken seriously.*

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- Have each adult fill out a separate rental application.
- Verify the basic information while they are still there.
- Always ask for Picture IDs from every adult who will be living in the apartment.
- Verify that the landlord listed on the application is really a landlord - not a friend or relative. The Landlord Connection will do this for you as part of the Tenant History Report.

## ***Ask the Right Questions***

Talk to the applicant for a few minutes and ask them some important questions:

Q: "Why are you moving?"

A: "The landlord is a jerk - he will not fix anything."

Beware - this indicates potential problems.

Q: "When do you want to move in?"

A: "Right away."

Beware - a responsible tenant will want to give the current landlord at least a 2-week notice.

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*Just because an applicant hasn't been evicted, does not guarantee a good tenant.*

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## ***Set some standards***

Stick to your standards in every instance. - NO EXCEPTIONS. Here are some suggestions:

- Require two years of rental history.
- At least two landlord references.
- Employment at the same job for at least 6 months.
- Security deposit + first month (or week) rent up front BEFORE you hand over the keys.
- Call everyone on the application, even his or her friends.
- Don't be tempted to give a questionable applicant a break unless you can afford to give them a free apartment.

## ***Did you know?***

In 2001, over 6,000 Landlord/Tenant actions were filed in NH District Courts. This number has not changed since 1993 - the first year computerized records were available. However, one thing has changed - most of the landlords filing these actions are **NOT** using The Landlord Connection.

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*If you expect a tenant to sign a 1-year lease, you might want to require a 1-year residence at a previous address.*

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### **Move-in Day**

Ok, so you've checked the tenant's references, gotten a tenant history and credit report, received the security deposit and first month's rent. (You've done all of this, right?) Now you are meeting your new tenant to sign the lease and hand over the keys...

- Conduct a walk through inspection of the apartment with the new tenant before they move in. This eliminates any misunderstandings about who stained the rug, put holes in the walls, etc.
- Before the walk through, make sure you have a checklist so that any prior damages can be noted, and signed by you and the tenant. Make a copy for the tenant and keep the original for your files.
- Include the condition of ceilings, walls, woodwork, window glass and screens, floors including linoleum and carpets.
- Note if the apartment has been freshly painted.
- Note the condition and operation of the toilet, bathtub, medicine cabinet, etc.
- Note the condition of the plumbing such as adequate drainage of sinks, leaky faucets.
- If parking is included with an assigned space, note the condition of the pavement in that space and inform the tenant that they are liable for damage caused by leaking fluids from the vehicles.
- Inform the tenant in writing that they have five days after occupancy to notify you of any conditions missed during the walk through.

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*Make all adults who will be living in the unit EQUALLY responsible for all rent and damages by having all adults sign the lease.*

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### **Move-out Notice**

When the tenant gives you their move-out notice, present them with a short letter informing the tenant of your expectations regarding the cleanliness of the apartment.

- Compose a list of sample repairs and their associated costs. For example, a missing refrigerator shelf \$35, a broken window \$20, a torn insect screen \$20 etc. Also include an amount to dispose of any remaining furniture (for example \$50 per truckload).
- Make sure that the tenant authorizes any disposal in writing, lest they become valuable antiques that you disposed of instead of storing for 28 days.

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*"It was like that when I moved in."*

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### **Move-out Day**

Have you ever inspected an apartment on move-out day and noticed carpets with burn holes and stains, or a torn linoleum only to be told "It was like that when I moved in?" To prevent this situation, use the following approach:

- When the tenant is moving out, make an appointment to do the walk through and get the keys. Bring a copy of the lease and the original walk through checklist that was signed by you and the tenant.
- Take your time - check the apartment thoroughly.
- Wait a while (you have 30 days) before you have to return the security deposit. Sometimes there are hidden damages that don't show up on move-out day.
- Check for improper telephone, cable TV and electrical hookups that would have to be remedied.
- Check all windows and screens carefully.
- You may not believe this - some people actually leave a picture or poster on the wall to cover up a hole!