

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A RENTER IN PENNSYLVANIA

## TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES

### Your Responsibilities as a Tenant

As a tenant, you are renting property that is owned by someone else. Just as tenants have legally-protected rights under federal, state, and local laws, tenants also have a number of responsibilities that they must fulfill when renting a home. In order to have a successful tenancy, you should comply with the following list of duties:

1. Pay the rent when it is due. If the rent is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, pay it on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month—not the day after the due date or 5 days after the due date
2. Comply with all of the terms and conditions of your lease. This includes any rules and regulations included either in the lease or in a separately signed addendum.
3. If you are responsible for any utilities, they must be paid on time. If they are not paid on time, this could result in an eviction.
4. Comply with all requirements of federal and Pennsylvania laws, local ordinances, and housing and property maintenance codes.
5. Refrain from disturbing other tenants or neighbors.
6. Refrain from damaging the premises. Be sure no one living with or visiting you damages the property, as you may be held financially responsible for any damages.
7. Notify the landlord of any serious defects (or needed repairs) in the dwelling that may cause the building to deteriorate. Be sure to follow the notice provisions outlined in your lease. If your lease does not provide specific notice instructions, put your request in writing and make sure you keep a copy for your records.
8. Keep the premises clean and orderly.
9. Allow the landlord, landlord's representatives, or local government code inspector reasonable access for inspections and/or repairs.

### Pay Rent When Due

As a tenant, you are legally responsible to pay the full amount of rent on time in accordance with your lease agreement. If you do not pay your rent on time, your landlord can file an eviction action against you. If you are disabled, or lost your job, have children or a sick family member, or if it is during the winter months, you can still be evicted. If you cannot pay your rent on time, contact your landlord as soon as possible and ask to make a payment arrangement. If your landlord agrees to a payment arrangement, get a copy of the agreement in writing.

### Get a Receipt

Save receipts for all payments to your landlord. Pay your rent by check if possible, because your cancelled check gives you a record that you have paid your rent. If your landlord does not accept checks and you pay by cash or money order, make sure the landlord gives you a receipt for each payment.

10. Do not allow persons who are not on the lease to live in the unit.
11. Do not engage or allow anyone to engage in criminal activity, including illegal drugs or allowing underage drinking on the premises. Any of these activities could result in eviction.
12. If you change your locks, make sure you get permission from your landlord and then provide them with copies of the keys.

## Renters Insurance

Most landlords carry property insurance, which covers damages to the property itself but not your possessions. Renters insurance (which is optional, but may be required by some landlords) can be purchased to cover your furniture and other personal possessions. The cost of renters insurance is roughly about \$175-\$200 per year, which averages about fifty cents per day. Renters insurance can generally be obtained from any company that sells homeowners insurance.

## Neighborhood Relations

Introduce yourself to your neighbors and become part of the neighborhood. Maintain a friendly relationship with them if possible. Neighbors can help each other in many ways, such as keeping an eye out for illegal activity.

Refrain from disturbing the peace of other tenants or neighbors with excessive noise or other disruptions. To be a good neighbor, you must try to see that your guests do not disturb your neighbors. It is not always possible to control everything your guests do, but you have the responsibility to make sure they behave in a way that will not antagonize or disrupt the peace of others.

Neighborliness also means good upkeep and maintenance of the exterior of the building. This means that any lawn or plantings that you are responsible for should be well maintained and that trash should not be left outside. In apartment buildings it is important to respect all common areas—hallways, stairs, or grounds. Do not leave trash in these areas or obstruct the entrances to the building. It is also a good idea not to allow play or create excessive noise in public halls and stairs for safety reasons as well as consideration of your neighbors.



The Housing Equality Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing fair and equal access to housing opportunities for all Pennsylvanians. We provide education on fair housing rights to consumers and organizations serving members of the protected classes and training and technical assistance to housing providers and local governments. The Housing Equality Center provides fair housing counseling and testing investigation services for victims of housing discrimination in the City of Philadelphia and in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Northampton Counties.



For more information about your rights as a renter in Pennsylvania, visit online:

[renters.equalhousing.org](http://renters.equalhousing.org)

