

Master Renter Checklist

A start-to-finish process from the first listing through deposit recovery.

1. Search & Verify

- Search the property address independently.
- Verify the owner or property-management company.
- Confirm the representative's authority to rent the unit.
- Verify the payment destination before sending money.
- Save important listing screenshots and contact information.

2. Before You Apply

- Start your My Rental Rules Sheet for the property's state and city/county.
- Ask for written qualification and screening criteria.
- Identify application, screening, administrative, and holding charges.
- Confirm what each pre-lease payment covers and when it is refundable.
- Know which screening company is used, if disclosed.

3. Price the Real Rental

- Calculate true monthly housing cost - not just base rent.
- List mandatory utilities, parking, insurance, technology, trash, pet, and billing fees.
- Calculate total cash required before move-in.
- Get the quoted rent, lease term, mandatory charges, and quote expiration in writing.

4. Inspect Before You Commit

- Inspect the actual unit whenever practical.
- Check condition, safety, appliances, pests/moisture, noise, parking, and common areas.
- Get important repair promises in writing before signing.

5. Review the Deal

- Review security-deposit and move-in-money rules for the jurisdiction.
- Read the full lease and every addendum.
- Identify automatic renewal, early termination, concession repayment, utility, guest, roommate, subletting, pet, and insurance terms.
- Match every important verbal promise to the written agreement.

6. Final Decision

- PROCEED only when the property, cost, rules, and written lease are acceptable.
- INVESTIGATE any unresolved inconsistency or missing term.

- WALK AWAY when identity, authority, price, documentation, or pressure tactics cannot be resolved.

7. Move In

- Photograph/video every room before unpacking.
- Complete and return the condition form on time.
- Report unresolved defects in writing.
- Back up the signed lease, addenda, photos, receipts, and communications.

8. During the Tenancy

- Keep repair, fee, utility, entry, and dispute records.
- Calendar renewal, nonrenewal, and move-out notice deadlines.
- Verify local procedure before withholding rent, repair-and-deduct, early termination, or another legal remedy.

9. Move Out & Close the File

- Give proper notice and keep proof.
- Use any available pre-move-out inspection process.
- Take final empty-unit photos/video.
- Return keys/fobs/remotes with proof.
- Provide the forwarding address correctly.
- Track the deposit/itemization deadline and dispute unsupported deductions with records.