CASE FILE DS-007 · TENANT RIGHTS

Tenant Holiday Rights Mini Kit

“Know your rights before the landlord knocks.”

A knock on the door in December. A rent increase slipped under it. A deposit deduction you didn't see coming. This kit turns panic into a plan — in plain language, before you need it.

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS KIT

1. Renter rights one-pager — notice periods, deposits, repairs, and lockouts, in plain language
2. Notice-response templates — answer a rent increase, a deposit deduction, or a repair stall in writing
3. Deposit photo log — room-by-room photo checklist for move-in and move-out
4. Key contacts & notes — your building manager, tenant union, and legal aid in one place

IMPORTANT — READ THIS FIRST

- This kit is general information, NOT legal advice. Tenant law varies by state.
- Consult a local attorney or tenant union before relying on any template in this kit.
- Put EVERYTHING in writing. A paper trail is what turns a dispute into a win.

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Renter Rights in Plain Language

General principles only — your state and lease set the exact rules.

WHAT EVERY RENTER SHOULD KNOW

1. Rent increases need written notice. A landlord generally must give you written notice before raising the rent — never accept a verbal increase. The required notice period depends on your lease and your state, so check both, then answer in writing with Template 1.

2. Your deposit is YOUR money. A landlord may only deduct from your security deposit for documented damage beyond normal wear and tear — worn carpet and small nail holes are usually wear, not damage. Always demand an itemized deduction list with receipts or photos.

3. Repairs belong in writing. Request every repair in writing and keep a dated copy. Landlords generally must keep the home safe and livable — a written trail proves when you reported the problem, which is what counts if it goes unresolved.

4. Lockouts are illegal almost everywhere. A landlord generally cannot change the locks, shut off your utilities, or remove your belongings to force you out without going through a court process. If this happens, document it immediately and call your tenant union or non-emergency police.

5. Landlords must announce visits. Your landlord generally must give you advance written notice before entering your home, except in a real emergency. The required notice period varies — read your lease, and put surprise entries in writing.

6. The holidays don't pause your rights — but offices slow down. Courts, legal-aid offices, and management companies run short-staffed through the holidays. Don't wait until January: send every notice now, photograph your deposit now, keep copies of everything.

THE GOLDEN RULE

- Verbal promises disappear. Written words win.
- Every request, every response, every photo — dated, copied, and filed. That is the whole game.

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Notice-Response Templates

Fill in the blanks, keep a copy, deliver in writing. Templates 1 of 3.

TEMPLATE 1 — ANSWERING A RENT INCREASE NOTICE

Your name: _____ Date received: _____

Unit address: _____

Manager name: _____ Proposed new rent: $ _____

Dear manager: I received your rent increase notice. Before I agree to anything, please confirm in writing: (1) the notice period required under my lease and state law, (2) the exact effective date of the increase, and (3) that this increase follows the terms of my lease. I will continue paying my current rent until I receive your written confirmation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

TEMPLATE 2 — DISPUTING DEPOSIT DEDUCTIONS

Move-out date: _____ Deposit paid: $ _____

Deductions claimed: $ _____ Date of their letter: _____

Dear manager: I dispute the deductions taken from my security deposit. Normal wear and tear is not damage. Please send me, in writing, an itemized list of every deduction with receipts or invoices and the photos you relied on. I expect the undisputed balance returned promptly.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

TEMPLATE 3 — REQUESTING REPAIRS IN WRITING

Date first noticed: _____ Issue location: _____

The problem (one line): _____

Dear manager: This is a written repair request. The problem above affects my home's safety and livability. Please confirm receipt of this request in writing and give me a repair date. I am keeping a dated copy of this letter with my records.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Tip: photograph the problem before and after the repair. Photos plus this letter are your proof.

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Deposit Photo Log

Photograph every room at move-in AND move-out. Dated photos win deposit disputes.

YOUR UNIT

Your name: _____ Unit address: _____

Move-in date: _____ Move-out date: _____

ROOM-BY-ROOM CHECKLIST

ROOM	MOVE-IN PHOTOS	MOVE-OUT PHOTOS	NOTES
Entry / hallway	☐	☐	
Living room	☐	☐	
Kitchen	☐	☐	
Bedroom 1	☐	☐	
Bedroom 2	☐	☐	
Bathroom(s)	☐	☐	
Laundry area	☐	☐	
Garage / storage	☐	☐	
Balcony / patio / yard	☐	☐	
Exterior / front door	☐	☐	

PHOTOGRAPH THIS IN EVERY ROOM

Walls and ceiling (every wall), floors, windows and blinds, doors and locks, light switches and outlets, fixtures, appliances inside and out, cabinets and counters — and close-ups of ANY existing damage, no matter how small. Shoot a slow video walkthrough too, narrating what you see.

MAKE THE PHOTOS COUNT

- Turn on date stamps in your camera app — dates are what make photos evidence.
- Store copies somewhere the landlord can't touch: your email, cloud drive, or this kit.
- Compare move-in and move-out shots side by side before you dispute any deduction.

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Key Contacts & Notes

Fill this in tonight — not the night you need it.

YOUR BUILDING

Building manager: _____ Phone: _____

Emergency maintenance: _____ Phone: _____

Landlord / company: _____ Email: _____

HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

Local tenant union / hotline: _____ Phone: _____

Legal aid office: _____ Phone: _____

Housing authority: _____ Phone: _____

Non-emergency police: _____ Phone: _____

NOTES

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

PLEASE READ — THE FINE PRINT THAT PROTECTS YOU

- This kit is general information, NOT legal advice.
- Tenant law varies by state — consult a local attorney or tenant union.
- Templates are starting points, not legal documents. Nothing here creates an attorney-client relationship.

You know your rights now. Walk through the holidays calm — and if the landlord knocks, answer in writing.

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