
TOP TEN TIPS FOR LANDLORDS

1. Screen Your Tenants.

Do not rent to anyone before checking their credit history, references, and background. A thorough and complete screening can avoid problems later like a tenant who pays the rent late or not at all, trashes your place, or lets undesirable friends move in.

2. Get It In Writing.

Be sure to use a well prepared written lease or rental agreement that you completely understand to document the important facts of your relationship with your tenants.

3. Handle Security Deposits Properly.

Establish a fair system of setting, collecting, holding, and returning security deposits. To avoid disputes over security deposits when the tenant moves out, inspect and document the rental unit's condition before the tenant moves in. Once a tenant moves out, promptly account for the deposit and return any excess.

4. Make Repairs.

Stay on top of maintenance and repair needs and make reasonable repairs when requested. If the property is not kept in good repair, you will alienate good tenants, and tenants may gain the right to withhold rent, repair the problem and deduct the cost from the rent, sue for injuries caused by defective conditions, and/or move out without giving notice.

5. Provide Secure Premises.

Do not let your tenants and property be easy marks for a criminal. Assess your property's security and take reasonable steps to protect it. Often the best measures, such as proper lights and trimmed landscaping, are not that expensive.

6. Provide Notice Before Entering.

Notify your tenants whenever you plan to enter their rental unit, and provide as much notice as possible, at least 24 hours or the minimum amount required by state law.

7. Disclose Environmental Hazards.

If there is a hazard such as lead or mold on the property, tell your tenants. Landlords are increasingly being held liable for tenant health problems resulting from exposure to environmental toxins in the rental premises.

8. Oversee Managers.

Choose and supervise your property manager carefully. If a manager commits a crime or is incompetent, you may be held financially responsible. Do a thorough background check and

clearly spell out the manager's duties to help prevent problems down the road.

9. Obtain Insurance.

Purchase enough liability and other property insurance. A well designed insurance program can protect you from lawsuits by tenants for injuries or discrimination and from losses to your rental property caused by everything from fire and storms to burglary and vandalism.

10. Resolve Disputes.

Try to resolve disputes with your tenants before you resort to court action. If you have a conflict with a tenant over rent, repairs, your access to the rental unit, noise, or some other issue that does not immediately warrant an eviction, meet with the tenant to see if the problem can be resolved informally.

If your dispute simply involves money and all attempts to reach agreement fail, try small claims court, where you can represent yourself. Small claims court is good for collecting unpaid rent or seeking money for property damage after a tenant moves out and the security deposit is exhausted.

For more information:

Visit our website at <http://www.KirkSimas.com>, or

E-mail us at CLDepartment@KirkSimas.com.