



## Renting a place to live

When you rent a place, you are making a legal contract with your landlord. This is often called a “lease”, “tenancy agreement”, or “rental agreement”. It can be in writing or just spoken. Make sure you understand what you are agreeing to.

The information on these pages applies to most rental housing.

But some of this information might not apply if:

- you live in a place that is used for business,
- you share a kitchen or bathroom with the owner or the owner’s close family member,
- you live in some types of temporary housing,
- you share space with or rent from another tenant, or
- you are a member of a housing co-operative.

Get legal advice in these situations.

### How much rent can a landlord charge?

Usually, landlords can charge as much as they like when new tenants move in. After that, the law says how much and when your rent can go up. Your community legal clinic can tell you more about this.

### What else do I have to pay for before I move in?

Your landlord can make you pay a “security deposit” before you move in. This money is for the last rent before you move out. Your landlord cannot use this money for anything else.

Your landlord can also ask for a deposit for your keys. Your landlord must give this money back to you when you move out and return the keys.

Most other kinds of deposits or payments are not allowed.

Be sure to get a receipt each time you pay rent or anything else. The law says that your landlord must give you a receipt if you ask for one.

### Do I need to get something in writing?

Most tenancy agreements have to be in writing on the government’s standard lease form. This does not apply if you live in public housing, or if your rent is subsidized or based on your income.

### What if a landlord discriminates against me?

The laws about human rights say that landlords must not discriminate against you. Discrimination happens when a landlord refuses to rent to you or treats you badly because:

- of race, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, colour, nationality, religion, or the country where you were born,
- you have a disability,
- you are receiving social assistance, or
- you have children living with you.

This list shows many but not all kinds of discrimination.

Sometimes discrimination is direct. For example, a landlord might refuse to rent to you because of your religion or another reason on the list.

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But discrimination can be less direct. For example, a landlord might refuse to put in a ramp or make other changes for a tenant who uses a wheelchair. Or a landlord might refuse to rent to anyone who has no credit history. This can be a problem for people who are new to Canada.

If a landlord discriminates against you, you may be able to get free legal help.

### What other rules must my landlord follow?

Your landlord is not allowed to cut off your water, electricity, heat, oil, or gas, even if you owe rent. Your landlord must give you enough heat in winter.

Usually, your landlord cannot come into your place without telling you in writing 24 hours before.

Your landlord must fix your place or things that came with your place, for example, a stove or fridge. It does not matter if your tenancy agreement says something different, or if you knew about the problem before you moved in. But if you damage something on purpose or by being careless, you must get it fixed.

Your landlord must get rid of bed bugs, cockroaches, mice, or other pests.

### What if my landlord breaks the rules?

Get legal advice if your landlord will not follow these rules. Sometimes there is a one-year time limit to take legal action. It is usually best to keep paying your rent. If you do not, your landlord might try to evict you.

### What if I want to move out?

Usually you must tell your landlord in writing at least 60 days before you want to move out. This is called "giving notice".

There are more rules about when to give this notice and what to put in it. Legal clinics can tell you more about this. If you do not follow these rules, you might owe the landlord more money. 🏠

**These pages give only general information. You should get legal advice about your own situation.**

## How to get help

**211 Ontario** is an information and referral hotline that gives help in many languages. They take calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can tell you:

- how to contact a community legal clinic,
- other places to get legal help and information, and
- how to contact a settlement agency or community agency for other kinds of help.

You could also try contacting a local library or a community legal clinic.

To contact 211 Ontario:

- ☎ Phone..... **211**
- ☎ TTY..... **1-888-340-1001**
- 💻 [211Ontario.ca](http://211Ontario.ca)

### For more help:

Developed by CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario/Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario) in collaboration with the CLEO Six Languages Advisory Group, made up of 10 member agencies. This project was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Legal Aid Ontario. CLEO's **Steps to Justice** website has step-by-step information about common legal problems. Visit [www.stepsjustice.ca](http://www.stepsjustice.ca). Visit [www.cleo.on.ca](http://www.cleo.on.ca) to download these pages and other legal information.