

Before You Sign a Lease

Security Deposit

Landlords may require a deposit equal to one or two months' rent when the lease begins. This money may be used to cover unpaid rent or to fix damages. Money not spent must be returned to the tenant within 30 days after the end of the lease. If money was spent, a list of the cost of repairs must be provided to the tenant.



Co-signers

Many landlords will require a parent/guardian to co-sign a lease. The co-signer will be held responsible in the event that damages are sought and the lessee is unable to pay them.

Late Rent Fees

Some landlords may charge a penalty for late rent payments, or may provide a discount for rents paid early. Make sure that this provision is clearly specified in the lease agreement.



Utilities

Make sure that payment for all utilities are accounted for in the lease agreement, and make sure it clearly states who (landlord or lessee) is responsible for what utilities (electric, water, gas, sewer, internet, trash)

Notice of Entry

Property owners may enter a property at anytime for an emergency, but it is helpful to work out an agreement whereby some notice is given before entering. Usually, tenants request that at least 24 hours notice be given in non-emergency situations. Make sure this is written into your lease and signed by the landlord.



Over-Occupancy

Pittsburgh City Code does not allow more than 3 unrelated people to live in a house together. If more than 3 people live in the home (even if only 3 names are officially on the lease), there is a chance you could be displaced from your home.

Notice to Vacate

Does your lease have a Notice to Vacate provision? If you waive your right to a notice to vacate (this must be included in the lease) the landlord is not required to give you 10 days notice before filing for a notice to vacate. If you have not waived this right, the landlord must give you 10 days notice before filing.



Damages and Repairs

If your apartment is damaged, through no fault of your own, request in writing and orally that your landlord repair the damage. Keep a copy of any correspondence exchanged. If the repairs are not made in a reasonable time, it would be best to consult with a parent or attorney about what a possible solution is.

Renter's Insurance

Many leases require tenants to purchase renter's insurance prior to moving in. Renter's insurance can cover a tenant's personal property if it is lost, stolen, or damaged. It could also include personal liability coverage if someone is injured in your residence. Renter's insurance is relatively inexpensive and should be considered even if not required by a lease.



Eviction



Landlords are not allowed to change the locks, remove a tenant's belongings, or shut off utilities in order to evict a lessee. Legal proceedings must be followed.