

CONSUMER YOUTH WEBSITE

Renting a House or Flat



Leaving home can be great, but finding a place of your own to live isn't easy and if you're not careful and don't have a plan, things can end up in a mess.

Sharing

Sharing a flat or house requires plenty of give and take. It's a good idea to agree on some basic rules before you start sharing.

- **Rule 1:** Agree to communicate - if something is upsetting you, agree to talk about it.
- **Rule 2:** Agree on your share of the costs and make sure you all agree to pay on time.
- **Rule 3:** Agree on how to handle the friend/lover that drops in and never seems to leave. You should agree after a certain period of time the guest should start paying their fair share.
- **Rule 4:** Remember, if the person you are sharing with leaves before the end of the lease, you will be responsible for all bills, so make sure you work this out before they leave.

Agreements

Remember, an agreement does not have to be written – it can be verbal.

There are two types of written residential agreement – one is flexible and one isn't.

Fixed Agreement – an agreement under which you and the landlord agree to you renting the home for a set period of time, generally six to twelve months.

Periodic Agreement – an unfixed agreement that gives you no set period of time to stay or the landlord a set time to rent the home to you. This provides you both with flexibility but could mean you have to leave your home before you want to. In this situation you must give at least 21 days notice in writing when you wish to leave. In the case of the landlord, the notice period will depend on the particular situation.

Inspection Sheet

At the beginning of the tenancy the landlord is required to provide you with two signed inspection sheets, which must include comprehensive details of fixtures, furniture and other contents in the premises and their condition at the commencement of the tenancy. You must complete and sign both inspection sheets and return one copy to the landlord. Don't lose your copy of the inspection sheet, you will need it again at the end of your tenancy when the final inspection takes place. If you lose your inspection sheet you might end up paying for something that was already damaged or dirty when you moved in.

Information Brochure

Make sure you are given a copy of the Information Brochure when you receive the inspection sheets. It's free and you should take the time to read and understand it before you sign the agreement. It explains your rights and responsibilities.

Bond

The bond should not be more than four weeks rent in value if the rent is \$250 per week or less. However, if the weekly rent is more than \$250, you should pay no more than 6 weeks in value. The landlord is required to lodge the bond with the Tenancies Branch, Office of Consumer and Business Affairs within four weeks of receipt. When you leave, at the end of your lease, and your rent is paid up and nothing is broken, the bond should be reimbursed.

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Remember

- Pay the rent on time
- Keep the place tidy
- Trash the place and you're on the street
- No illegals
- No renovations
- No pets unless the landlord agrees

Rent increases

When a landlord asks for a rent increase, remember the following:

- rent can only be increased once in every six months;
- before your rent is increased, the landlord must give you 60 days notice in writing;
- if you have a fixed agreement your rent can only be increased if you've agreed to it in your contract;
- a big increase must be justified eg. major renovations.

Leaving early

If you want to leave a place that you are renting under a Periodic Agreement you must give a minimum of 21 days notice in writing otherwise you could lose your bond.

If you want to leave early on a Fixed Term Agreement, it may cost you a lot of money.

You may have to pay rent until the landlord finds someone else to move in or your agreement runs out. You might also be charged for the advertising required to find new tenants as well as other reasonable costs.

Need help

It is possible you may be entitled to rent relief. If you believe you could be, check with Centrelink.

If you need advice about your rights and responsibilities, check with the Tenancies Branch on 8204 9544.

Checklist

- Prepare a budget and know exactly what you can afford.
- Shop around and see what you can get for your money.
- When you find a place, make sure your flat mate likes it too!
- Negotiate the rent – you never know unless you ask.
- Find out all the extra costs in advance – bond, rent in advance, water charges.
- Read and understand the agreement before you sign. Ask for help if you need it explained.
- Remember, once you sign the agreement you are committed.
- You are not obliged to pay any more than two weeks rent in advance.
- If the weekly rent is less than \$250, the bond should be no more than four weeks rent in value.
- Make sure you are given a copy of the Information Brochure and read it.
- Make sure you and the landlord fill out the Inspection Sheets and keep your copy somewhere safe.

