

OpenDoors

Tips for first time renters

Are you a first time renter? Do you know someone who is thinking about moving out on his/her own? There are basic things you need to think about before renting an apartment.

How much can you pay each month?

Being able to pay your full rent on time is extremely important. Remember to take into account all rent-related costs when figuring out how much the unit will be each month (utilities, parking, storage, etc). Having a budget and planning for all rent-related costs will help you meet your responsibilities as a tenant. It is important to remember that paying your rent late or missing a rental payment may mean you could be evicted.

What do you need in a rental unit?

Spending a bit of time deciding what is important to you in your living space will help you avoid getting into a tenancy agreement that doesn't meet your needs.

Ask yourself these questions about the rental units you are looking at:

- Is it close to a bus route?
- Do you need a parking spot and is one included in the rent?
- Does it have extra storage?
- What utilities does the rent include (ex: heat, water, lights, etc.) and what do you have to pay extra for (ex: cable)?
- Does it have an elevator if you need one?

Remember to keep **safety** in mind when you are looking for a rental unit:

- Is the unit in a safe neighbourhood?
- Does the building have a security system?
- Is there a good lock on the door to the unit and does the door have a peephole?
- Does the unit have secure windows?



Other things to consider:

- Is the unit in good condition? If there are repairs needed, when will the landlord complete them? It is a good idea to get this in writing from the landlord.
- What kind of lease is it – month-to-month or fixed term (ex: one year)?
- When is the next rent increase and how much will it be?

Sometimes landlords, when renting to people who don't have a rental history, may ask for a guarantor. A guarantor is someone who promises, in writing, to pay for any money you may owe the landlord. If you think you may need one, you can find information about guarantors on our website at www.manitoba.ca/rtb under Resource List.

If you have questions about renting for your first time, check out our website at www.manitoba.ca/rtb; or you can call or visit the branch office nearest you for more information.

Preventing eviction and protecting your rental history

Landlords want to rent to someone with a good rental history. A good rental history means that, as a tenant, you paid your rent on time, took care of the unit and were quiet and respectful as a neighbour.

When you apply to rent a unit, the landlord can find out about your rental history by calling past landlords, checking references or searching the Residential Tenancies Branch Order System. The Order System will show if you have had any tenancy orders issued against you in the past (ex: order to pay, order to move out).

One way to make sure you create and keep a good rental history is to make sure you understand your responsibilities and rights as a tenant. When you sign a tenancy agreement, you agree to respect the responsibilities of a tenant outlined in *The Residential Tenancies Act*. If you don't live up to those responsibilities, your landlord may give you notice to move out (be evicted).

Some of the responsibilities you have as tenant are:

- Pay the full rent on time.
- Do not cause damage to the unit or the complex.
- Be respectful of your neighbours (ex: no loud parties, loud music, etc.).

- Do not tamper with the smoke detector in the unit.
- Follow all house rules that are part of the tenancy agreement (ex. no pets, no smoking, etc.).

Some things tenants should know:

- If you know that you can't pay your rent on time, talk to your landlord right away. Try to set up a schedule for payment that the landlord will agree to in writing. Make sure that you can make the payments you have agreed to.
- You are responsible for the actions of your guests. If you have people over and they damage your unit or the complex, you must fix it or pay to have it fixed.
- Only the people who are included in the tenancy agreement are allowed to live in the unit. Having people live with you who aren't included in your tenancy agreement can lead to eviction.

If you have questions about your responsibilities or your rights as a tenant, call the branch office nearest you. Branch staff can provide information and help you mediate any problems you may be having with your landlord.

The Winnipeg Rental Network...a great resource for tenants and landlords



The Winnipeg Rental Network (WRN) can help you if you are:

- a new renter who is juggling school, a job and looking for your first apartment
- a senior who has decided to return to the rental market on a fixed income
- a landlord looking to advertise your rental units

This non-profit group provides a large web-based list of affordable rental units in the city. Landlords can advertise their units for free on the WRN website (the units must meet the rent requirements listed on the site). The online database lets tenants search for rental units listed by the kinds of things they need in a rental unit (ex: area, number of rooms, parking).

The Winnipeg Rental Network also includes information on many other service agencies and links to resources for programs and benefits available to:

- older adults
- youth/students
- Aboriginals
- women
- people with disabilities

For more information on WRN, go to **contact@winnipegrentnet.ca**; or call 204-417-2110 or 204-417-2039 in Winnipeg.

When you get a new tenant ...tips for landlords



As a landlord, you know there are forms you need to fill in and responsibilities you must meet. You also know that there are challenges you may face during a tenancy. Starting a tenancy with the right information can help you avoid issues that may cost you money or cause you stress in the long run. Here are some tips that can help you avoid some of the more common problems.

Move-in condition report

When new tenants come in, the branch recommends that you complete a move-in condition report with them. This report gives you a record of the condition the unit was in when the tenant took possession. You may use it later as proof if there is a disagreement over damages to the unit. Taking date-stamped photos or video is also a good idea.

Tenancy agreements and house rules

The branch recommends that landlords use the standard residential tenancy agreement each time new tenants move in. This form provides a clear way to show your tenants how much the rent is, what the rent does and does not include, and other important information you need to tell them. By giving them a copy of the agreement and attaching your house rules, you can make sure that each tenant knows what is expected of them.

Notice to New Tenant form:

The Residential Tenancies Act says that tenants must get a Notice to New Tenant form when they move into a rental unit. You must also send a copy to us. Using this form will help you make sure the rents you are charging are set at the proper amount.

All of the forms you need to start a tenancy are on our website under Forms. You will find plenty of information in our fact sheets to help you with most questions you may have.

If being a landlord is a new experience for you, we encourage you to go to your nearest Residential Tenancies Branch and speak to someone about your responsibilities as a landlord. Branch staff can give you information, forms and fact sheets and they can provide a basic understanding of the Act and the regulations to help you avoid costly mistakes.

As a landlord, you may also want to become familiar with your responsibilities under *The Manitoba Human Rights Code*.

The Human Rights Commission of Manitoba has information for landlords on their website. They also provide seminars for landlords. Go to: www.manitobahumanrights.ca/landlords_condo_owners.html; or call, toll free at 1-888-884-8681 for information.

Garage sale season is on!

Inspect anything you buy for **bed bugs** before you bring it home. To learn more, go to www.manitoba.ca/rtb.

Independent Advisor Office

The Independent Advisor Office helps some landlords and tenants in Winnipeg fill out forms, file claims and get ready for Residential Tenancies Branch hearings. This pilot project began in 2010.

The office's independent advisors also help tenants and independent landlords present their evidence at hearings **if they:**

- have difficulty speaking or understanding English
- have physical or cognitive (mental or emotional) problems
- are on a limited (low) income

If you are unsure of your rights or need help with mediation or hearings, you can talk to an advisor:

Landlords

Phone: 204-505-0720 in Winnipeg
Email landlord@legalaid.mb.ca

Tenants

Phone: 204-881-1714 in Winnipeg
Email: tenant@legalaid.mb.ca

For details on the Independent Advisor Office program, go to: www.manitoba.ca/rtb.

Need information?

Winnipeg at
302-254 Edmonton Street
or call 204-945-2476

Brandon at 157-340 9th Street
or call 204-726-6230

Thompson at
113-59 Elizabeth Drive
or call 204-677-6496
Toll free 1-800-782-8403

Online: manitoba.ca/rtb
Offline: in person or by phone
Visit your branch office
Monday to Friday
from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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