



EVICTION

You cannot evict your tenants without following legal process. You must provide proper written notice and file a summary process action in court. Only a Judge can order your tenants to leave. There are legal service resources for low-income landlords.



NO RETALIATION

You can not take adverse action against tenants for contacting Inspectional Services, complaining about code violations, or participating in a tenant organization.

OFFICE OF HOUSING STABILITY LANDLORD PROGRAMS

LANDLORD GUARANTEE PILOT PROGRAM

We support landlords who rent to homeless individuals and families. Program participation benefits include:

- motivated tenants
- dedicated landlord partner
- access to landlord resources
- access to funds for losses including unpaid rent and damages.

LANDLORD COUNSELING

We offer free counseling to landlords with nine or fewer units to support owner and tenant stabilization.

The counseling services can:

- inform landlords of their rights and responsibilities
- find dedicated landlord resources
- coach landlords on best practices
- troubleshoot and help solve tenant disputes

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

We offer low and no-cost mediation to help resolve housing disputes. A mediator can help:

- guide discussion
- identify options for solutions
- help put an agreement in writing.

CITY OF BOSTON RESOURCES

OFFICE OF HOUSING STABILITY

We help residents find and maintain stable, safe, and affordable housing.

www.boston.gov/housingstability
617-635-4200

BOSTON HOME CENTER

We are the one-stop shop for homebuyers and homeowners.

homecenter.boston.gov
617-635-4663

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

We administer and enforce building, housing, health, sanitation, and safety regulations mandated by City and State governments.

www.boston.gov/isd
617-635-5300

BOS:311

We connect you with representative ready to help with requests for non-emergency City services and information. 311

RENTING IN BOSTON GUIDE:

Your guide to learning about what to expect when renting.

www.boston.gov/renting-boston

EVICTION GUIDE:

Your guide to responding to an eviction.

www.boston.gov/departments/neighborhood-development/office-housing-stability#eviction-information

TRASH AND RECYCLING GUIDE:

Your guide to properly disposing of trash and recycling.

www.boston.gov/trash-and-recycling-guide

OFFICE OF HOUSING STABILITY

CITY OF BOSTON'S LANDLORD ORIENTATION GUIDE



City of Boston
Mayor Martin J. Walsh



NEIGHBORHOOD
DEVELOPMENT



City of Boston
Mayor Martin J. Walsh



NEIGHBORHOOD
DEVELOPMENT

THINGS TO KNOW WHEN RENTING YOUR APARTMENT



SCREENING TENANTS

You can screen prospective tenants to be sure they can meet their obligation to pay rent and follow the property rules. This can include gathering information on their income, credit history, criminal record history, eviction record, and rental history. You can also request references. You should apply screening criteria consistently.

Remember, you cannot discriminate against prospective tenants based on their race, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity, or source of income. This means, for example, you cannot refuse to rent to a prospective tenant because they are black, latinx, muslim, gay, transgender, have children, or have a rental assistance voucher.



UNRELATED TENANTS

In Boston, no more than four full-time undergraduate students can live together in a single apartment.



LEASES AND TENANCIES-AT-WILL

Leases are binding legal contracts that are typically for one year. You cannot raise the rent during the term of the lease. Remember to give your tenants a copy of the lease.



DEPOSITS AND FEES

At the start of a tenancy, you can only collect first month's rent, last month's rent, security deposit equal to one month's rent, and a lock change fee.

No application fees. No credit check fees. No holding deposits. No pet deposits.

Remember to provide proper receipts and pay interest on the last month's rent and security deposit on an annual basis. You must place the security deposit in a separate, interest bearing account in Massachusetts.



BROKER FEES

You can only charge a broker fee if you are a licensed real estate broker.



LEASE TERMS

If you don't want to allow pets, subletting or smoking - put it in the lease. Tenants must follow the lease and property rules. If they do not, this may be a ground for eviction.



INSPECTIONS

You must register your rental property every year with the City of Boston's Inspectional Services Department. The deadline to register is July 1.

You still have to register even if:

- your property is vacant or being renovated
- your tenants are relatives who are 18 or older and not on the deed, or
- you don't collect rent on the units.

You don't have to register if the property is:

- owned by a City, state, or federal agency, or it's a rooming house, dorm, or lodging house (with a valid lodging license).

THINGS TO KNOW DURING THE TENANCY



APARTMENT CONDITIONS

You must provide a safe and decent apartment:

- Providing adequate heat and hot water
- Providing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Providing adequate trash barrels
- Maintaining the structural elements
- Maintaining the plumbing, heating and electrical facilities



STATEMENT OF CONDITION FORM

If you take a security deposit, you must give your tenants a statement of condition form either when you take the deposit, or when they move in. You may wish to also perform a walk through and take photographs of the unit. The tenant will then have 15 days to sign off on the condition form and note any other damage.



RECORD KEEPING

Keep a copy of all your rental records. Important records include: a ledger with tenant rent payment history; a log of maintenance requests; security deposit a last month's rent receipts, and interest statements; condition statement forms; any legal notices sent or received and communications about the unit.



BE A RESPONSIBLE LANDLORD

Do preventative maintenance. Perform regular pest-control. Respond quickly to maintenance issues so they do not get worse. Regularly change air filters. Clear gutters and caulk windows. Test smoke and carbon monoxide regularly and change batteries twice a year.



COLLECTING RENT

You are entitled to receive rent payments on the first of the month. There is no grace period under Massachusetts law. You cannot, however, charge a late fee unless the rent payment is at least 30 days overdue, and there is a written agreement that allows for it.



REASONABLE ACCESS

You can only enter the apartment with proper reason and notice. You can enter to make repairs, show the unit to prospective tenants or a prospective purchaser, or to inspect within the last 30 days of the tenancy. Before you enter, unless it's an emergency, you must provide at least one day's notice, and should attempt to arrange a convenient time to access the unit.



UTILITIES (ELECTRICITY/GAS)

You can require that tenants pay their own electricity and gas bills so long as these are separately metered. It's best to include this in a written lease agreement.



UTILITIES (WATER)

You can also require tenants to pay the water bill so long as the apartment is separately metered, has water saving devices, the requirement is clear in the lease at the very beginning of the tenancy, and a compliance certificate is filed with the City of Boston's Inspectional Services Department.

THINGS TO KNOW WHEN RENEWING OR ENDING A TENANCY



SECURITY DEPOSIT

Your must return the security deposit and interest within thirty days after move out. If you need to deduct money from the security deposit, you must give an itemized receipt, with corresponding receipts or other proof, within thirty days. You should not deduct for reasonable wear and tear.