

What Landlords Should Fix

An advantage of renting versus owning is that someone else is responsible for repairs. It's important to remember, however, that landlords won't fix everything that might broke in your apartment or condo.

There are specific rules outlined in your lease, beyond obvious exterior things like roofs and common spaces that are always maintained by the property owner. Pay close attention before signing the document to make sure it covers areas that are important to you. Here are some key things to be aware of as you make that decision.

THINK BASIC REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Most state, county and local laws require that building infrastructure be maintained for renters, including electricity, plumbing, central heating and air conditioning, provided appliances, gas and building elevators. Most also include water, and sometimes cable and/or internet are part



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REAL ESTATE 101

Tips for Buying your First Rental Property

Thinking about purchasing an investment property? Being a landlord requires a broad array of skills, so you'll want to consider all the pros and cons before investing. The experts at Investopedia cover the risks and rewards at bit.ly/3AWY3tu.

of the lease. Garbage containers are required; common areas must be kept safe and clean. They also must make sure that the buildings follow local building and fire codes, which would include limits on maximum capacity, removing mold or asbestos, and maintaining structural integrity, among others things. If there's a dispute, your lease serves as a primary information source in determining what will be fixed.

SOME THINGS ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

In most cases, landlords are required only to make "reasonable" repairs. Meaning, they might fix a failing dryer or leaky roof rather than completely replace it. Landlords are not required to address smaller issues that have to do with comfort, rather than those impacting whether an apartment or condo is "habitable." For instance, they may not fix a running toilet,

chipped paint or a small rip in the window screen.

Sometimes, those issues can be worked out on a case-by-case basis, but landlords would generally not be required to address them. How long they have to make these repairs is a matter of local law, so be prepared to find that information.

WHAT IF THE LANDLORD REFUSES?

Some landlords will allow

you to fix things that might have been in their purview, like say a broken board on the steps to your unit, then ask for a bill so that you can be reimbursed. If he subsequently refuses to pay the bill, you may be able to deduct the costs from your monthly rent. If issues persist to the point at which your apartment or condo is uninhabitable, then there are provisions in place for you to make a penalty-free exit from the lease agreement. Consider discussing your dispute with a local real estate attorney, since there are sometimes complicated rules in place about written notice and allowing time for the landlord to respond.

BEFORE YOU BECOME A LANDLORD

Keep in mind that if you decide to rent your home, all of these burdens would then shift to you. It's important to build a budget that takes into account regular expenses for repairs and maintenance, since these landlord requirements would now apply. Keep a reserve fund for cleaning costs when tenants vacate, as well. Most landlords require a security deposit specifically meant to address these expenses, but sometimes that deposit doesn't cover all needed scrubbing and repairs.



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HOMEWISE GLOSSARY

Extension: A written agreement between all parties on a contract allowing an additional specified period of time during which all parties are expected to perform their contractual obligations. **SOURCE:** MLS.com

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