

Be secure:

Know your rental rights & responsibilities

Penn CASE

Renters in Pennsylvania have several important rights and duties:



Renting

Before looking at apartment or rental houses, **evaluate your living needs**: how many rooms do you need? Where is the building located? How far away is the building from work? **Avoid "apartment finders"** who merely charge for apartment lists that are taken down from newspaper classifieds.

When purchasing a rental, **make sure to keep a list of all existing damages**. Write them down and give a copy to your landlord - this ensures that you won't be on the hook for those damages when you move out.

Your landlord may require credit references, employment history, and a list of past addresses and landlords. An application fee may be charged.



Leasing

Your best protection from scams is a **written lease signed by both parties** that clearly highlights all of the rental terms between you and your landlord.

Make sure your lease contains the **specific property address**, the **length of the lease**, an **explanation of the rent payment procedure**, which **utilities you are responsible for paying for**, **termination or renewal terms**, and the **amount of the security deposit**.

Keep a signed copy of the lease for yourself. Make a second copy and keep it in a bank deposit box or another safe place. Do not sign a lease until all blanks have been filled in.



Security Deposits

A security deposit is money which actually belongs to the tenant, but is held by the landlord for damages and unpaid rent protection.

A security deposit **cannot exceed two months' rent for the first year of rental**. At the beginning of the second year, a landlord cannot hold a security deposit worth more than one month's rent. A renter is entitled to interest on his security deposit after two years of occupancy.

To have your security deposit refunded, **give the landlord a forwarding address and return the keys to the property**. The landlord must give a list of written damages within 30 days - otherwise, he may not keep any part of the security deposit and, if necessary, can be sued to recover the deposit.

**Contact the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General for more information:
Strawberry Square, Harrisburg, PA 17120 | (717)787-3391 | www.attorneygeneral.gov**