

The Renter's Deposit Protection Checklist

The 15-minute routine that gets your full deposit back.

Nice tenants lose their deposit the most. Not because they did anything wrong, but because they can't prove they didn't. Documentation is proof. Work this list and you become the tenant a landlord doesn't try.

MOVE-IN DAY — BEFORE YOU UNPACK A SINGLE BOX

- ☐ Photograph every room wide first, then close-ups of anything already damaged.
- ☐ Get every wall, floor, corner, and ceiling. Empty rooms photograph best.
- ☐ Every outlet, light switch, and fixture. Note anything loose or broken.
- ☐ Appliances inside and out: oven, fridge, dishwasher, microwave.
- ☐ Bathroom: grout, caulk, under the sink, base of the toilet, tub and shower.
- ☐ Windows, screens, blinds, and every lock.
- ☐ Outside too: steps, handrails, walkways, railings. Photograph anything cracked or loose.
- ☐ Confirm the timestamp setting on your phone camera is ON before you start.
- ☐ Same day, email the full set to yourself AND the landlord. That is your dated proof.

WHY THIS WORKS

A landlord deducts from your deposit because they assume no one will challenge it. Dated photos flip that. The moment you reply to an itemized deduction with a timestamped photo of that exact wall on move-in day, the deduction usually disappears. You are not being difficult. You are being documented.

DURING THE LEASE

- ☐ Put every repair request in writing, text or email, and keep a copy.
- ☐ Anything breaks? Photograph the damage and your report, with the date.
- ☐ Keep every receipt for anything you repair or replace yourself.

MOVE-OUT DAY — BEFORE YOU HAND OVER THE KEYS

- ☐ Clean the unit fully first. Photos of a clean unit end most arguments early.
- ☐ Record ONE slow walkthrough video of every room, wall, and floor.
- ☐ Say the date out loud in the video. Show it clean, empty, and dated.
- ☐ Re-photograph the SAME angles you shot on move-in day.
- ☐ Photograph inside every appliance, closet, and cabinet.
- ☐ Return the keys with a dated note. Get written confirmation you returned them.
- ☐ Send your forwarding address in writing. That starts the deposit clock.

IF THEY WITHHOLD YOUR DEPOSIT

- ☐ Most states require an itemized list of deductions within 14 to 30 days.
- ☐ Send a written demand with your photos attached. Cite your state deadline.
- ☐ Give a clear deadline to respond, usually 10 days, and keep it in writing.
- ☐ Small claims court is cheap, and a documented tenant usually wins.

THE SENTENCE THAT GETS THEIR ATTENTION

"Attached are timestamped photographs taken on my move-in date documenting the condition you have listed as damage. Please remit the withheld amount within 10 days, or I will file in small claims court."

Want all of this done for you?

The Tenant Protection Kit gives you fill-in-the-blank landlord email scripts for move-in, the deadline demand, and the wear-and-tear dispute, plus a private 24-month photo vault that timestamps and organizes every photo on this list for you.

Get the full kit · \$47 one time · sskreadydocs.com