



College Renters: Top Tips for an A+ Move

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MADISON – Mid-August signals a mass migration for college students statewide – some coming to campus, some leaving campus, and many switching from one rental unit to another. For apartment renters either leaving a property or starting a new lease, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection offers simple tips to ease the transition.

“Between buying supplies, packing, securing a truck and finding helpers, moving can be a stressful process,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “College students who rent must also navigate the world of security deposits and lease agreements, adding an additional level of potential confusion for these young consumers.”

To help renters understand their rights, DATCP offers a “[Tenants’ Rights and Responsibilities](#)” fact sheet as a free download. This document addresses a wide range of rental-related topics including security deposits, rent increases, evictions, property maintenance and more. Students should familiarize themselves with their rights before they start the move in/move out process and should share this fact sheet with fellow students.

To help landlords and tenants avoid common misunderstandings, the agency also offers its “[Guide for Landlords and Tenants](#)” document as a free download. The Guide is more extensive than the fact sheet and answers commonly asked questions about each party’s rights and responsibilities in simple language.

Top tips for move out:

- Ask your landlord for a preliminary walkthrough. This will give you a chance to see what needs special attention for cleaning or repair before you take your final tour of the property with the rental company and face potential deposit deductions.
- Before you turn over the keys to the rental company, make sure that they have your new address for sending your security deposit.
- Take detailed photos of the property before your final walkthrough in order to document the condition of the property when you left.
- If you are moving out at the end of your lease, the landlord must return your security deposit, less any amounts that may be withheld, within 21 days after you move out. If you move out before the end of your lease, the landlord has 21 days to return your security deposit from either the last day of your lease or the date a new tenant moves in (whichever comes first).

Top tips for move in:

- Your lease is a contract. Familiarize yourself with your responsibilities and any additional terms required by the landlord before you sign.
- If your lease requires a security deposit, you have seven days from the first rental date to complete a check-in report that notes pre-existing defects. If you fail to return a check-in sheet within seven days, you may be giving up your right to contest some security deposit withholdings for pre-existing conditions. You should take photos of any damages, submit copies of the photos to your landlord with the report, and keep a copy of all of these materials for yourself.

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- At the start of a tenancy, the landlord must provide you with the name and address of a person who can be readily contacted regarding maintenance problems. But unless otherwise agreed, tenants are usually responsible for routine minor repairs and are required to comply with any maintenance and sanitation requirements imposed on tenants by local housing codes.

If you have issues regarding your security deposit or questions about your rights as a tenant, contact the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128 or via email: datcph hotline@wi.gov. Also, look for rental assistance organizations in your area and find out if they offer walk-in service to discuss any issues you may face.

For additional consumer protection information, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at <http://datcp.wi.gov> or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wiconsumer.

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