

# Property Manager-Tenant Communication



## Finding Common Ground

Both landlords and tenants have responsibilities under the law to keep rental properties safe. The best way for property managers and renters to have a successful experience is to work together. Renting is also a legal relationship. It works best if it is seen by all parties as a business relationship.

Communicating with others can be tricky. This is especially true when people have different perspectives, have had bad past experiences, or speak different languages. But talking with your property manager or tenant about problems with your apartment is important for both the tenant and the property manager. Working together to identify and fix problems early helps keep the costs down and creates a safer and healthier home for the tenant. Open lines of communication keep good tenants in your units.

### We encourage both parties to:

Recognize that many property owners and managers have had bad experiences with tenants. And likewise, many tenants have had bad experiences with landlords and property managers and owners. To promote clear communication set aside the past and use these techniques to talk about housing problems effectively:

- Discuss what is considered an emergency – such as water leaking into a unit from plumbing or a storm. This is something that needs to be addressed right away to ensure more damage does not occur.
- Everyone appreciates when conversations are polite and professional – bonus, this helps both parties achieve what they want.
- When you call make sure you have thought through what you want to say. If you are angry about an issue, try to call when you can communicate your needs in a neutral tone, this will help the other person understand what you need better.
- Don't call where there are distractions – such as a TV or music in the background.

Being polite and professional is important for all parties. Follow up any phone calls with an email or a letter identifying the details of the conversation. This makes sure that there are no misunderstandings. Keeping track of problems with a building can help a property manager identify if there are recurring issues that may hint at a larger problem.

## Property managers:

- Be proactive – ask your tenants if they are having any problems with their units. They are busy and may not remember to bring up an issue in a timely manner – a reminder may help them ask for assistance with a problem. Ask your tenant to keep two lists – identifying high priority and low priority problems. Talk to them about what sort of problems fall in what lists. Perhaps provide a draft list?
- Talk to your tenant about the best times and ways to communicate. We all have crazy schedules. A tenant may work nights or prefer to communicate via email.
- Every time you have a call with a tenant follow up in writing. This ensures everyone is in agreement.
- Make sure you talk with your tenant before stopping by or entering the unit. Don't stop by unannounced. You need to provide 24 hours written notice (email or text is ok) before you can enter the apartment. It is their home and they are entitled to privacy. There is an exception for emergencies, such as flooding.
- Be as flexible as you can and respond quickly to issues. It is important to address the root cause of the issue not the symptom. If water is leaking into the unit, identify if the roof is leaking rather than just fixing the water damage in the unit. We recognize this is often more expensive or hard to do. Communicate with your tenant if the larger fix will take more time to address. See the back page for resources to helping address more expensive problems.
- Keep an eye on common areas and lobbies. Clarify that you wish to be notified if there is a problem such as a leak in a common area.

- Use a lease! Leases can help identify what the ground rules are for a tenant to follow and set the tone for further communication. Explain the lease to the tenant to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities.

## Tenants:

- When you call your property manager, identify who you are and where you live. They may manage many properties and knowing who is calling is important.
- Keep lists of problems that need to be fixed. Emergencies such as water leaking into the apartment need to be communicated to the property manager right away. Smaller issues can be discussed when you pay your rent.
- Sometimes a picture of a problem using your phone can help when trying to explain a problem.
- Every time you have a call with a landlord follow up in writing. This ensures everyone is in agreement.
- Be honest about damage that you cause. You can't fool your property manager or owner -they have seen it all. Being honest keeps the relationship fair and trustworthy.
- Pay your rent on time. If you can't pay your rent, talk to your landlord about arrangements to pay your rent. That can be a difficult conversation, but it is better than not paying rent or getting chronically behind in your rent. The property owner needs that money to maintain the property.
- Follow all housing rules. Ask for a lease so you know what the ground rules are and that you can follow them. If you have any questions about what the rules are, clarify them with your property owner or manager.

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