

Steps By Step Guide

To Vacating A Rental Property



By: Josh Martin

Abstract

Vacating a rental property involves more than just packing and leaving; it requires careful planning, communication, and adherence to tenancy regulations to ensure a smooth transition and the return of the bond. This guide provides a comprehensive step-by-step process for tenants preparing to move out of a rental property. It covers essential tasks such as giving proper notice, understanding lease terms, organizing cleaning and repairs, conducting final inspections, and returning keys. By following these structured steps, tenants can avoid common pitfalls, meet their legal obligations, and secure a hassle-free move-out experience. This guide is ideal for renters seeking clarity and confidence as they transition to a new home.



1. Introduction

Moving out of a rental property can be both exciting and stressful. Whether you're upgrading to a new place, relocating for work, or simply changing your living situation, it's important to follow the correct procedures to avoid complications. Tenancy agreements come with specific responsibilities, and failing to meet them can result in delays, financial loss, or disputes with landlords. From giving the appropriate notice to ensuring the property is left in top condition, there are several crucial steps to take before you hand back the keys.

This guide breaks down the vacating process into clear, manageable steps to help you leave your rental on good terms and with your full bond in hand.

2. Write a Notice Letter to Your Landlord



Moving out of a rental home or apartment can be a busy and stressful time. If you are renting and you are considering moving out, you will have to let your landlord know about your plans. The type of notice you will be required to give your landlord will vary depending on the terms of your lease agreement and the tenancy laws of your state. In general, you will need to comply with the terms of your rental agreement in Canberra, write your notice letter, and deliver that notice letter to your landlord. Regardless of what state you live in, follow the directions in this article to successfully notify your landlord of your intent to end your tenancy.

Things You Should Know

Address your letter to your landlord, date it, and state the purpose of the letter. For example, you might say, “I am writing to notify you of my intent to terminate the lease agreement.”

In the body of your letter, ask for any refundable deposits to be returned to you, and provide the landlord with your new address. Finish by signing your legal name.

Make a copy of your letter and check your contract’s delivery clause. Your clause should specify the location to which your letter must be mailed or hand-delivered.

Understanding Your Lease Agreement

Know what type of tenancy you have. In order to provide adequate notice to terminate your lease agreement, you will need to know what type of tenancy you and the landlord have entered into. For residential rental agreements, the most common type of tenancy is a periodic tenancy.

Read the termination clause in your lease. Your rental agreement may or may not include a termination clause. If it does, be sure to read and understand it because in most situations this will provide you with directions on how to terminate your lease.

Look for a delivery clause in your lease. In addition to understanding how much notice you need to provide your landlord, you also need to understand how that notice needs to be delivered. If your rental agreement sets out the manner in which you must deliver the notice, then you must follow that language.

Writing Your Notice Letter

Address the letter to your landlord. When you write your termination notice to your landlord, you need to address the letter properly. In order to do so, look at your lease agreement and find the landlord's official address. If it is not provided, call your landlord and ask how the letter needs to be addressed. If you cannot get a hold of your landlord, use the address you have for paying rent.

Date your notice letter. Either before or after the landlord's address, you will include the date your notice is delivered. This ensures your landlord understands when your notice period will start.

State the purpose of your notice letter. The first body paragraph of your notice letter should state the reason you are writing the letter. This gives the landlord an idea of how they need to respond, if they need to respond at all.

Include the date you will vacate the rented space. In addition to the date of delivery, the body of your letter should also state the date in which you will vacate the premises. This date will need to be some time after the required notice period is up.

Ask for any refundable deposits to be returned to you. In another body paragraph, you should respectfully request that any refundable deposits (e.g., security deposit) be returned to you upon satisfactorily vacating the premises. In addition to requesting any deposits be returned to you, you should state all of the reasons you have complied with the lease agreement, and therefore why you deserve the deposits back.

Give the landlord your new address. Before you end the letter, be sure to give the landlord your new address. This new address is where your refundable deposit will be sent, as well as any notifications you may need to receive after you vacate the premises.

Sign your notice letter. Once you have written the entire notice letter, you will want to sign it. This will make it official and help if there is some dispute between you and your landlord about the notice.

Make a copy of your notice letter. Once you have written the notice letter, make a couple of copies for yourself. If your landlord doesn't receive the notice, or there is some dispute about the notice, you will want a copy you can look back on.

Delivering Your Notice Letter



Choose when you want to deliver your notice letter to your landlord. After completing your termination notice letter, you will want to consider when to give it to your landlord. Remember, the notice period will not start until your notice is delivered to your landlord.

Deliver the notice letter to your landlord properly. After deciding when you want to deliver your notice, remember to look at your lease agreement or your state's laws and understand how you will have to deliver your notice. Make sure you follow the correct procedures to ensure your notice is valid.

Move out by the required date. Once you have delivered your notice, be sure you vacate the property on or before the date you specified in your notice letter.

3. Start Packing Early



It's also the ideal time to reappraise your belongings and do some decluttering because if you don't want to take it to your new home, that's a clear indication that it's something to donate, throw out, or sell. I donated two large bin bags of clothes that I haven't worn in ages, t-shirts that had seen better days, and a blazer that was never quite right. The money's already spent, off it goes.

So, where to begin? As someone who is moving house in a few days' time, I'd recommend starting with all of your ornaments.

Ornaments are a fairly broad category, but packing these up first (a lot of vases, picture frames, candle holders, candles, trays, and anything else that could be defined as decor) forced me to be more methodical, rather than hopping between different rooms and items.

A lot like our thoughts wander in meditation, I kept getting distracted – my apartment looked like it had been turned upside down like a snow globe. Being surrounded by stuff gets tiring so the best thing was to just keep on going.

I washed out my glass vases that had ended up covered in hard water stains and dust (really boring), dried and wrapped them up in newspaper, gradually filling 'fragile' boxes one by one.

As well as giving you one task to focus on when faced with the task of packing, boxing up all ornaments right at the start when you are relatively fresh also means you are more likely to pack these delicate pieces carefully, avoiding smashed items on the other end.

And unlike toiletries, shoes, and kitchen appliances, you won't suddenly need a vase or trinket box in the final days of living somewhere. It helped me to stay motivated, too. With decor pieces packed away, my apartment suddenly felt a lot less homely. With half-bare living room shelves, I was spurred on to keep going.

Tips for packing ornaments properly

There are a few things that speed up packing and unpacking your favorite ornaments. First, group similar items together as much as possible. Choose moving boxes with tick boxes printed on the side, at Amazon, to make it easier to unpack room by room once you have arrived at your new home.

If you have lots of delicate, breakable items, ensure you have enough bubble wrap, also available at Amazon, and newspaper on hand, and cushion the bottom of boxes with dish towels.

What to pack early on



Next, I moved on to out-of-season clothes, spare bedding, and then some bathroom items. When it comes to packing up your bed sheets, Homes & Gardens' bedding expert and e-commerce editor Louise Oliphant has some quick tips:

'Pack your bedding by folding both sheets, duvet cover and pillowcase inside one pillowcase to keep the set together,' says Louise. 'This will avoid any pillowcases or parts of the set getting lost.'

'Also, packing bedding is the perfect time to assess whether you're due a new pair of pillows or a duvet. They're items that can often get overlooked but having the best pillow or duvet can make all the difference and help you sleep better.'

What I pack last

Left until last are books and some artwork to avoid having bare walls and shelves for the final week. I've left plates and cutlery alone too, as well as cleaning products, which I'll pack together so I can easily clean my new home before moving in. The kitchen items I use every day will probably be the last items to pack before the moving van arrives.

Moving house is a stressful time and it can feel overwhelming. There's the packing, obviously, but there are also the more administrative practicalities, from canceling bills to sorting out the internet in your new place.

Packing can feel never-ending, and you always need more boxes than you think you will. But I've tried hard to resist the urge to pack a box marked 'random', although I'm nearing the end and some boxes hold an array of items. Doing it properly will make it much easier on the other end when you are unpacking and need to find the scissors, your toothbrush, and so on. On that note, lots of professional organizers will also tell you to make an overnight box with essentials for when you arrive.

4. What property managers really look for in a rental inspection



A couple of times each year, I get an email from my property manager letting me know she's "dropping by soon" for an inspection.

What it feels like she's saying is: "I'm coming over to see the way you live and judge you."

Property inspections are just part of the game when you rent, but even if you're used to them, it can be tricky to know how to prepare for one.

We asked you what worries you the most when an inspection is coming up, and put common questions to industry experts. Here's what they said.

Myth 1: It's to see how tidy I am

"We're not playing the role of the parent, we're not checking to see if you tidy your room," says Rob Edwards, the managing director of a property management company in Perth.

"When we're inspecting, we're looking to ensure the property is safe, first and foremost, and then we're looking for anything that needs maintenance or could create or cause damage to the property," he says.

Inspections are also a chance for property managers to update the landlord about any issues, such as worn carpets, so they can budget/prepare for it.

If your main concern is how clean your place should be for an inspection, you're not alone, says Sydney property manager Matthew Geftakis.

"The only question people ask me is: 'Do I have to have it tidy?'" says Mr Geftakis.

"Many owners don't mind if you're not tidy; their primary concern is damage."

Mr Geftakis adds that it's worth remembering inspection reports usually end up going to the landlord, with photos, and it's in your best interest to have the place looking tidy.

"If you really love the place and want to stay in it, you'll look after it," he says.

NSW Fair Trading recommends tenants keep the property in good nick and in a reasonable state of cleanliness, and at the very least to the same standard they received the property in.

Myth 2: If I raise a repair issue, they'll think I'm to blame

A rental inspection is an opportunity to highlight parts of the property that need maintenance or repairs.

I often worry that if I raise a maintenance issue with my agent or landlord, I'll be blamed for it and be slogged with a bill I didn't expect.

"In many instances of repair, it's not the tenant's responsibility to fix," Mr Gaftakis says.

"However, you have a duty of care as a tenant to report issues in a property."

If there is something that needs repair that is your fault (an unintentional hole in the wall, a stain on the carpet, scratched floor boards), it's best to report it straight away.

Your property manager is more likely to reach a compromise with your landlord around the repairs than if you were to try and conceal it, he says.

According to a spokesperson from NSW Fair Trading, landlords aren't obliged to fix everything. They only need to keep premises in a "reasonable" state of repair considering the age of the property, the amount of rent being paid and the prospective life of the premises.

The rules can differ slightly in each state so ensure you check the legislation in your state.

Myth 3: My landlord can inspect their property whenever they want



According to NSW Fair Trading, tenants have the right to privacy when renting. A landlord, agent or anybody else acting on their behalf can enter the property if the appropriate notice is provided.

For ordinary repairs or maintenance, your property manager or landlord needs to give a notice period.

"If an urgent repair is required, such as installation or repair of a smoke alarm, fixing a burst water pipe, a gas leak or a blocked toilet, no notice needs to be given to the tenant," says a spokesperson from Fair Trading NSW.

Notice periods and how often your property manager or landlord can inspect your property differ slightly in each state. For more information, you can always check your lease agreement.

"One of the murkier aspects which isn't currently spelled out in the legislation is what counts as an inspection," says Leo Patterson, a senior policy officer at the Tenants' Union of NSW.

"Some landlords who live nearby might do a drive-by inspection where they just cruise past the front of the house, and you get a note a couple of days later pointing out some things to fix up, and the status of that drive by is unclear.

"There are a range of types of inspections, so it's important to ask, 'Is this a general inspection, or are you coming to inspect the repair I reported a month ago?'"

Myth 4: If I fail an inspection, I'll be asked to leave

Mr Patterson says that when it comes to inspections, it's not really a case of pass/fail.

"The purpose of an inspection is to check whether you're breaching the agreement in some way," he says.

If the property isn't being cared for as per the lease agreement, then the tenant may be in breach.

"If you are doing something like running a meth lab in your property, then yes, that's a breach of your agreement," Mr Patterson says.

"And you'll probably be asked to leave."

But if the breach is minor in nature, such as failing to water or maintain the garden and lawns, for example, in most cases you'll be given time to remedy the breach without any repercussions.

Myth 5: I'm not sure whether it's best to stay or go

Finally, when it comes to whether you should be at the property while it's being inspected or nip out for a bit, the answer is simple. It's up to you, says Mr Geftakis.

Some people feel more comfortable being present, while others want to be out of the house.

Mr Edwards agrees and says he doesn't mind if tenants are present or not.

"Happy with either, it's purely the [tenants'] choice," he says.

But even if your preference is to be there, it's not always practical, especially if the inspection is during work hours.

Mr Edwards says tenants are usually given plenty of notice to make alternative arrangements.

5. Landlord Woes: Dealing with Unrealistic Cleaning Expectations



Landlords can be picky or overly concerned about their leased properties. They can fuss over every small detail and hold the tenant responsible for everything that goes wrong on the premises. It can be challenging to deal with a meddlesome rental provider who is never satisfied. They can make the end of the tenancy a stressful period for the renters. However, if you keep them in the loop and showcase the progress of your cleanliness and maintenance, you can win them over.

When you know you are dealing with a hard-to-please landlord or property manager, you must prepare for the final inspection accordingly. They have high expectations and will not settle with general house cleaning. You will have to go the extra mile and hire expert end of lease cleaning Canberra services to give the property a makeover. Here is how tenants can deal with unrealistic cleaning expectations. These tips will help you handle landlord woes without feeling pressured or restricted.

1. Read the Cleaning Clauses in the Lease Agreement

The residential lease agreement is a legally binding contract signed by the landlord and the tenant. Both parties must follow the terms and conditions mentioned in the contract or it will be considered a breach of the agreement that leads to termination.

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 governs tenancies in Canberra, and the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal resolves the disputes. Most disputes occur due to damage to property or cleanliness issues. Thus, the tenant must read the cleaning clauses carefully to avoid getting into problems and losing the bond at the end of the tenancy.

2. Follow The Industry Benchmark for Cleaning

Tenants must know that they do not have to make the rented property spotlessly clean when they move out. However, they must clean it thoroughly to make it look the way it was when the lease began.

The landlord cannot force the tenants to hire professional end of lease cleaning Canberra experts. The tenants must make the decision based on their needs. The property should be reasonably clean, which means that there should be no apparent dust, filth, or stains on the surfaces.

3. Match the Entry and Exit Condition Reports

The best way to meet the expectations of the landlord is to match the exit condition pictures with the entry condition. Thus, you must preserve these pictures when the lease begins and use them to clean the house effectively at the end of the tenancy.

If the landlord creates any trouble related to cleaning standards, you can provide proof from the pictures. They will also help to provide proof if the matter reaches the tribunal for a hearing.

4. Set Boundaries With Your Landlords

If the landlord is demanding and too demanding, you must know how to push them back. Do not let them intimidate you because they own the property. They cannot enter the property whenever they please. They must follow the notice requirements and respect the tenant's privacy.

Tenants must know that fair wear and tear is exempted from returning the property to its original condition. So, you do not have to feel stressed about end of lease cleaning in Canberra. Understand the residential tenancy laws and comply with the regulations to stay stress-free.

5. Avoid Disputes With Landlords

Although setting boundaries with overly particular landlords is necessary, you should not strain the relationship. It is vital to have a good rapport with the rental provider in Canberra to get the bond back and avoid disagreements. If the landlord is dissatisfied with the condition of the house at the end of the tenancy, they can claim the bond money.

Thus, maintain good relations if you do not want to lose the amount unnecessarily due to friction with the landlord. Communicate often to clear misunderstandings and forge a partnership that ends smoothly.

6. Do Not Settle for Unreasonable Demands

Landlords can ask for professional end of lease cleaning Canberra only if they have hired a service provider to clean the property immediately before the lease. They cannot make the demand if the professional cleaning took place months before the tenancy began. In many cases, the house stays locked after the cleaning and gets leased after months. In such cases, professional cleaning demands are not required to be met.

7. Get Your Bond Refund Without Hassles

Bond refund disputes occur if the tenant has not paid the rent, damaged the property or left it dirty at the end of the tenancy. The most common reason for dispute is end of lease cleaning because fussy landlords are quick to spot problems like dust on the windowsills or hard water stains on the faucets.

Thus, it is vital to clean the property reasonably, barring fair wear and tear, to get the approval during the inspection. Hiring experts can help overcome these obstacles and get the bond back without hassles. Professionals have clear understanding of the landlord's expectations and industry benchmarks. They even cover the hard-to-reach spots so that they cannot be pinpointed during the inspection.

6. Request a bond refund



A request for a refund of a bond is usually made after the completion of a tenancy. Lessors, agents, and/or tenants can request the refund. Once the refund has been processed and released from the Rental Bonds Office, the refund is deposited into a nominated account/s.

Refund requests can be made before a tenancy has been completed if:

- the application is signed jointly by the lessor and the tenant.
- the application is signed by the lessor to be paid to the tenant.
- the application is signed by the tenant to be paid to the lessor; or
- the Australian Capital Territory Civil & Administration Tribunal (ACAT) orders the full, or part of the bond be paid to either party.

Disputes

Disputes where a lessor or agent are claiming part or full bond

The Rental Bonds Office on application by either lessor or tenants will refer a dispute between lessor/agent and tenants to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT).

Disputes in relation to co-tenant refunds



Co-tenant changes may lead to disputes between co-tenants regarding if, and when, a person should have been added or removed from a bond, the ACAT can decide on disputes relating to co-tenants. Tenants can apply to the ACAT directly or where requested the Rental Bonds Office in Canberra can refer a dispute between co-tenants to the ACAT if requested. If a tenant is not listed on a bond held the referral will be independent to the bond held, until the ACAT notifies the Rental Bonds Office by Tribunal Order.

Who can go to ACAT?

Both landlords and co-tenants can apply to ACAT to resolve a tenancy dispute. Under the new laws, co-tenants can apply to ACAT to resolve a dispute between co-tenants (so long as the dispute is related to the tenancy agreement). Further information regarding leaving a tenancy can be found at [Ending a tenancy - ACT Government](#).

Conclusion

Vacating a rental property doesn't have to be overwhelming. With careful planning and attention to detail, you can make the process smooth and stress-free. By following each step—from giving notice and fulfilling lease obligations to deep cleaning and final inspections—you not only protect your bond but also maintain a positive rental history, which can be invaluable for future rentals. Taking the time to communicate clearly with your landlord or property manager, address any maintenance issues, and leave the property in good condition demonstrates responsibility and respect. Ultimately, a well-managed move-out benefits both the tenant and the landlord, paving the way for a successful handover and a fresh start in your next home.

References:

How to Write a Notice Letter to Your Landlord | Wiki How, Retrieved 21 April 2025, from

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Letter-of-Notice-to-Your-Landlord>

What to pack first when moving | Home And Gardens, Retrieved 21 April 2025, from

<https://www.homesandgardens.com/solved/what-to-pack-first-when-moving>

What property managers really look for in a rental inspection | ABC News, Retrieved 21 April 2025, from

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-17/what-property-managers-really-look-for-in-rental-inspection/12045980>

Landlord Woes: Dealing with Unrealistic Cleaning Expectations | The Every Girl, Retrieved 21 April 2025, from

<https://www.bondcleaningincanberra.com.au/landlord-woes-dealing-with-unrealistic-cleaning-expectations/>

How to request a bond refund | Revenue ACT, Retrieved 21 April 2025, from

<https://www.revenue.act.gov.au/rental-bonds/how-to-lodge-a-bond-refund>