

# It's Time to Move On

## *Moving Out and Your Security Deposit*

Shortly before your lease ends, you must begin preparing to move out or make arrangements with your landlord to stay beyond the end of the lease. If you plan to leave, you should make sure that all of your belongings are out of the apartment. Do an inspection of your home to take note of all the possible damage. You should write down all of the damage and/or take pictures. You should compare this list to the list you made at the beginning of the lease.



You will be responsible for the things that happened while you lived in the home.

Before you leave, you must provide your landlord with the keys to the home and an address where you can be contacted about your security deposit.

Within 30 days after you move out, your landlord must contact you in writing about your security deposit. The letter should include the list of things the landlord believes you damaged and the amount of money the landlord plans to charge you.

After receiving the letter, you have 15 days to respond to the charges. If you respond, you should try to negotiate with your former landlord on how much you would like returned.

If you cannot agree on the charges, you have the right to file a lawsuit for the return of the money. If you do not respond to the charges within 15 days, the landlord has the right to keep the money she has claimed and should mail you a refund check within 30 days.

**CAUTION:** Florida law allows the Judge to order the "loser" in the lawsuit to pay the other side's court costs and attorney's fees.

**Example:** *Rita Renter's lease ended on March 31. On March 31, Rita moved out, turned in the keys to the apartment, and left her new address to her landlord, Lisa Landlord. Lisa mailed a letter to Rita on April 30th claiming damage to the apartment. Rita never responded to the letter. On May 31st, Lisa mailed Rita the refund check for the security deposit, minus amounts Lisa kept to make repairs in Rita's apartment.*

**Q. What happens if the landlord does not contact you within 30 days?**

A. Most likely, you are entitled to get back the entire amount of your security deposit. See a lawyer for specific advice about your situation.

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