

Renters: Handling complaints

A harmonious relationship can erode quickly when landlords or tenants fail to live up to their agreement. When landlord-tenant conflicts arise, it is critical for both parties to use the proper process defined by the legislation in the province or territory where the rental premises are located.

for tenants: handling landlord problems and actions and problems with other tenants

Sometimes tenants face landlord problems. Many negative situations can develop. The landlord could be harassing a tenant for having a visitor or might claim that the tenant is not living up to his/her obligations to keep the premises in good repair as a reason to evict. The landlord may have initiated an eviction that is based on a false claim against the tenant. Other problems could include excessive noise, cigarette smoke seeping into your unit from other renters, or failing to take care of the garbage.

Regardless of the situation, you

should understand that you have rights. A problem landlord may bully or harass you, or even try to evict you; but the landlord cannot do so legally unless the proper legal process is followed and the reason for eviction is valid.

case study

The situation: A retired gentleman who had lived in an apartment in the Toronto area for 29 years was given an eviction notice from his landlord, ordering him to be out of his apartment 23 days later. The reason: the landlord claimed that the tenant's dog was causing damage to the premises, asserting that the dog was chewing the hall walls, running loose; and that the owner failed to clean up after his dog, both inside and outside.

In fact: In Ontario, the landlord could evict based on the reasons cited above. However, the tenant had support from the building superintendent and neighbours stating that the claims were false.

The result: The tenant took action, contacting his MPP, the Rent Tribunal, a lawyer and the local newspaper.

When the newspaper contacted the landlord about the situation, the landlord decided to withdraw the eviction.

problems relating to repairs

Landlord-tenant conflicts often relate to Emergencies, Repairs and Privacy. In these situations, tenants should deal directly with the landlord and put everything in writing.

getting results, the legal way

If the landlord fails to make repairs or respect the tenants' rights, local rental authorities and advocacy agencies can offer assistance. Fire, health or building inspectors may also intervene in some cases to order improvements to a rental property. A tenant may also consider filing an application asking the province or territory to order a landlord to carry out repairs.

tenant advocacy

If you are a tenant in a large urban centre, there may be an advocacy agency that can help. These organiza-



tions offer a variety of services to tenants. They will often explain tenants' rights, help tenants respond to landlord complaints, and protect the renter if the complaints are unreasonable or untrue. Check with your provincial or territorial rental authority to find out if tenant advocacy groups operate in your community. Some of these resources are in the Useful web links for landlords & tenants section of this online Guide (<http://cmhc.ca/en/co/reho/yogureho/fore/index.cfm>).

If you are unsatisfied with a rental situation or landlord, contact your local rental authority and follow the proper steps. If you are tempted to use rent as leverage against a landlord, think again. Refusing to pay rent without court approval is inadvisable, as withholding rent can get you evicted! See the section — Do Not Withhold Rent to Pay for Repairs (http://cmhc.ca/en/co/reho/yogureho/fore/isdute/isdute_002.cfm#caution).

responding to an eviction notice

What should you do when the landlord issues an eviction notice? First, review the notice carefully and check your rights. If the notice is not based on solid grounds and you want to oppose the eviction, consider following the process outlined by your local rental authority. If the eviction is based on non-payment of rent, paying the rent due in full will enable you to stay.

The eviction notice will set a date for the tenant(s) to vacate the premises. If you decide to oppose the grounds of the eviction, you do not have to actually vacate the premises until an order from the local rental authority is issued. If this happens, the date stipulated on the order is the actual date on which you must leave. You remain responsible for paying the rent in full up until the date that you leave the premises. ■

— CMHC, www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca

Arranging room accessories

Arranging your accessories and creating a beautiful display of collectibles is easy when you follow these simple ideas:

1. Use Odd Number Groupings — one three or five, seven, nine... you get the idea. A great place to start is by reviewing and duplicating professionally inspired arrangements as in magazines such as *Martha Stewart Living*. Notice the details, the odd numbers, the sizes, shapes and colors.
2. Size Matters — There are two ways to display your collectibles. A symmetrical display means everything is the same size and color. This works best in modern, minimalist, or elegant style decorating. Asymmetrical groupings work best in a more casual or contemporary situation; varying sizes cause the eye to flow gracefully over each item.
3. Don't over accessorize — Enough is as good as a feast! Too many items displayed can equal clutter. To get the most visual impact out of the items you want to display, choose sparingly and rotate different decorative pieces every few weeks to a month.
4. Display what you love — A fundamental element of good Feng Shui is to love what you have. Accessories are not necessarily for your guest, they are for you to enjoy. Be willing to look carefully at what you are accessorizing with. Do you love it? Then show it. If you get lukewarm feelings about it either store it away or discard it.
5. Accessorize one space at a time — Take your time and think about what and where you are placing objects. Remove all accessories and start with a clean slate. Methodically place treasures, step back and take a look, then add another.

— *Rental Decorating Digest*, www.rentaldecorating.com