



Can My Landlord Do That?

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- ❖ Read this only if you live in the state of Washington.

 - ❖ **COVID-19 Update! Eviction law is changing quickly. There are temporary bans and changes to how courts handle evictions. Things may be different depending on where you live.** Get the latest information and learn about help for evictions in your area at WashingtonLawHelp.org: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): There are only a few reasons your landlord can evict you right now](#)
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I asked my landlord for a payment plan to pay my deposit. Can the landlord turn me down?

Maybe.

In most cases, your landlord must let you pay your deposit, nonrefundable fees, and last month's rent in installments.

Your landlord can deny your request for a payment plan if the total amount of deposits and nonrefundable fees are not more than 25 percent of the first month's rent and your landlord is not requiring you to pay the last month's rent when you move in. Read [Tenants Can Now Pay Most Move-In Costs in Installments](#). It is available at Washingtonlawhelp.org.

Can my landlord lock me out?

No. Your landlord cannot lock you out of the unit, no matter what. Your landlord cannot

- change locks
- add new locks
- keep you from entering the unit in any way

- lock you out even if you are behind in rent

❖ The landlord must file an eviction suit in court and win a court order giving permission to evict you.

Can my landlord shut off my utilities?

Only to make repairs. Your landlord cannot shut off your utilities

- Because you are behind in rent.
- To try to make you move.

It is also illegal for your landlord to stop paying the utility bills in order to turn off the service.

You can take your landlord to court if the landlord shuts off your utilities. If you win, the judge can award you up to \$100 for each day you had no utilities.

Can my landlord take my personal belongings?

Only if you abandon the unit. Under state law, you have abandoned the place **only** if both of these are true:

- You have fallen behind on rent.
- You have told your landlord, in words, actions or writing that you are moving out.

It is illegal for your landlord to put in the rental agreement that they can take your property.

If your landlord takes your things, contact the landlord in writing. If you do not get your things back that way, call the police. You can take your landlord to court to force your landlord to give your things back. The judge can award you up to \$500 for each day your landlord kept your things, up to \$5,000.

Can a landlord rent a condemned place to me?

Landlords cannot rent property with existing code violations. You can sue if you find out your landlord knew at the time of renting to you that the property violated code.

Can the landlord retaliate against me?

Your landlord cannot “retaliate” (take revenge) against you for taking legal action against your landlord.

Some possible cases of retaliation:

Example 1: You reported a big hole in your roof to the city. The city notifies your landlord that they are going to inspect your place. Your landlord then tells you he is going to raise the rent.

Example 2: You properly notify your landlord that you are deducting costs for repairs from your rent. After getting this notice, your landlord has your heat shut off. Your heat is unrelated to the repairs you needed made.

If your landlord does take an adverse action against you within 90 days of legal action you took against him, it may count as retaliation and be illegal. Talk to a lawyer if you think your landlord may be illegally retaliating against you. You may be able to sue.

Can the landlord refuse to accept cash rent?

The landlord **may** refuse to accept cash for payment of rent by a tenant. If the landlord does accept cash rent, then the landlord must give you a receipt.

If you ask for this, the landlord must give you a written receipt for any payments you make to the landlord.

Get Legal Help

- Outside King County, call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm.
- In King County, call 2-1-1 weekdays between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- Seniors (age 60 and over) can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111 (statewide).
- You can also apply online with CLEAR*Online: nwjustice.org/get-legal-help.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

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