



# Can my landlord do that?

- 
- ❖ Read this *only* if you live in Washington State.
  - ❖ Eviction law continues to change. Read about the latest changes to the law at [WashingtonLawHelp.org/resource/eviction](https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/resource/eviction)
- 

## 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% 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](#).

## Can my landlord lock me out?

**No.** Your landlord cannot lock you out of the unit, no matter what, even if you missed rent. **Your landlord must go through the eviction process in court** if they want you to no longer have access to the rental.

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

- 
- ❖ Only the sheriff can change the locks after an eviction.
-

## Can my landlord enter my rental whenever they want?

**No.** The landlord can only enter the home without giving you a notice if there is an emergency or if you have “abandoned” the home. Read on to learn what it means to have abandoned your rental.

**Usually, your landlord must give you at least a two-day notice before they try to enter the home,** such as for a routine repair or inspection.

If the landlord needs to show the unit to someone who wants to buy or rent the place, they are allowed to only give a one-day notice before entering.

Any notice must have the exact time and date or dates the landlord needs to enter. If specific times are not available, the notice can give a range of times if it has the earliest and latest possible hours. The notice must also have a phone number where you can ask to reschedule or refuse the entry.

You cannot unreasonably refuse the landlord entry if there is a legitimate reason they need to come into the home.

The landlord must also respect the tenants’ right to enjoy the home without constant intrusion. In addition, the landlord cannot try to harass you by trying to enter the home repeatedly.

If they do this, you can ask them in writing to stop. If they keep entering without a good reason after you ask them to stop, you can ask a court for up to \$100 each time they try to take advantage of the right to enter a home.

## Can my landlord shut off my utilities?

**Yes, but 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?

**Yes, but 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.

**and**

- 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. Keep a copy of your letter. If you do not get your things back that way, you can take your landlord to court to force them 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?

No. 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 evict me because I complained to the city about the condition of the rental?

Your landlord cannot “retaliate” (take revenge) against you for either of these:

- A. Taking legal action against your landlord.
- B. Using your rights, like asking the landlord to give you proper notice before entering your unit.

### Some examples of 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 raising the rent.

**Example 2:** You have no hot water. You asked your landlord to fix the water heater. The landlord has not fixed it or even responded to you. You contact a lawyer. The lawyer tells the landlord that they must fix the water heater and that the landlord broke the law for not fixing it right away. After this, the landlord shuts off your heat, even though the heat did not need repairs.

If your landlord takes an adverse action against you within 90 days of legal action you took against him, it may count as retaliation and may 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

- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387.
- **Apply online** with [CLEAR\\*Online](https://www.nwjustice.org/apply-online) - [nwjustice.org/apply-online](https://www.nwjustice.org/apply-online)
- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819.
- **Facing a legal issue in King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call 2-1-1 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm or apply online at [nwjustice.org/apply-online](https://www.nwjustice.org/apply-online).
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** with a legal issue outside of King County can also call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111.
- **Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers** can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

CLEAR and 2-1-1 will provide interpreters.

---

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

© 2022 Northwest Justice Project — 1-888-201-1014.

(Permission for copying and distribution granted to the Alliance for Equal Justice and to individuals for non-commercial purposes only.)