

Tenants' Rights: Moving Out

I have a month-to-month rental agreement. Do I have to tell the landlord I am moving?

Yes. You must send the landlord a letter saying you are moving out. The landlord must get the letter at least 20 days before the end of the rental period. [RCW 59.18.200\(1\)\(a\)](#).

The end of the rental period is the day before rent is due. The day you deliver the notice does not count in the 20 days.

Example: Your rent is due July 1. You want to move out in June. Get the letter to the landlord by June 9.

I need to move because I am a victim of domestic violence. Do I have to give 20 days' notice?

If you are the victim of threats by other tenants, threats or assaults by the landlord, or violations of domestic violence protection orders, you may be able to end the rental agreement immediately. You must follow certain guidelines. [RCW 59.18.18.352](#), [59.18.354](#), [59.18.356](#). Read [Landlord-Tenant Issues for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and/or Stalking](#).

I am in the armed forces. I have been given immediate assignment orders. Can I give less notice?

You can end a month-to-month tenancy with less than 20 days' notice if you get immediate assignment orders.

What happens if I move out without telling my landlord?

You must pay whichever comes first:

- Rent for the month after you move out

OR

- Rent for 30 days from the day the landlord finds out you moved - [RCW 59.18.310\(1\)](#)

The landlord **must** try to rent the unit as soon as they find out you moved. If they can rent it less than 30 days after you moved, you only have to pay for the days the apartment was empty. [RCW 59.18.310](#). After the next month, you do not have to pay anything.

I have a lease. I plan to move out when the lease is up. Do I have to tell the landlord?

If you move out at the end of a lease, your lease may require that you give notice before it is up. If you do not, the rental agreement may turn into a month-to-month agreement. In practice, you should probably give notice regardless. Then you can notify the landlord

of your forwarding address and receive your deposit return.

I did not move when my lease was up. The landlord still takes my rent. We have no new lease. Do I have to tell the landlord when I am moving?

If you stay beyond the end of a lease and the landlord accepts rent for the next month, you become a “month-to-month” renter. All rules for month-to-month renters now apply to you.

What happens if I move before the end of my lease?

You must pay the lesser of

- the rent for all the months left in the lease
- OR
- all rent owed before the landlord was able to re-rent the unit - [RCW 59.18.310\(2\)](#)

I am in the armed forces. I received reassignment orders. I have to move before my lease is up. How much notice do I give the landlord?

You must give the landlord seven days’ notice of the reassignment or deployment order. [RCW 59.18.200](#).

The landlord has threatened me with a gun, firearm or other weapon. Can I move out before my lease is up?

You can move out immediately. [RCW 59.18.354](#). Read [Landlord-Tenant Issues for Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and/or Stalking](#).

How do I get my deposit back after I move?

The landlord has 21 days after you move out to return your security deposit OR give you a letter stating why they are keeping any of it. You should take pictures or video of how the place looks when you leave to prove how you cleaned it. If you have a hard time getting your deposit back, use [Letter to Landlord for Return of a Security Deposit - Self-Help Forms](#) or get [Getting Your Security Deposit Back](#). Both are at [washingtonlawhelp.org](#).

I got a notice to vacate. I moved out before the time on the eviction notice was up. Can my landlord still take me to court?

Yes. Your landlord cannot file an eviction lawsuit against you now. But the landlord can still sue you for rent or other damages the landlord says you owe. Your landlord has six years after you move out to sue you for rent owed if you had a written rental agreement. Read [My Former Landlord Says I Owe Damages](#). If you have a low income, call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

The landlord served me with an unlawful detainer (eviction action). Would moving out right away make the eviction go away?

Moving does not make the eviction go away. Even if you move, you must still respond. Otherwise, you will lose the case automatically. Talk to a lawyer right away and read [Landlord Served Me with a Summons and Complaint for Unlawful Detainer](#).

I moved in a hurry. I did not tell the landlord. I left my belongings. Can I get them back?

The landlord may have assumed you abandoned the rental. The landlord can take and store your property if you “abandon” the rental. In some cases, the landlord can move your property to the nearest public space.

You abandoned the rental if both these are true:

- You stopped paying the rent.
- You acted like you have moved out. **Examples:** You moved all your things out. You stopped sleeping there.

If your things are worth more than \$250, the landlord must send written notice to your last known address 30 days before selling them. **If it is worth less than \$250,** the landlord must send written notice seven days before the sale. [RCW 59.18.310](#).

I have a low income. Where can I get legal help?

Call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014.

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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