

Renting in Seattle

MOVING IN

There is a lot to know when it comes to moving in. This brochure discusses housing search, rental applications, fair housing protections, move-in charges and what to look for in your rental agreement and new home.

Visit www.seattle.gov/rentinginseattle or call the **Renting in Seattle Helpline** at **(206) 684-5700**

Moving in begins with finding a home. People looking in Seattle often use mobile apps and online search sites for listings. Use social media and your professional and personal networks to get the word out. Post ads on community boards in your target neighborhood. For affordable housing providers, visit www.seattle.gov/findhousing. For help with move-in costs, call the 211 Community Information Line.



Applying to Rent

- Be prepared to submit an application as soon as you find a place you want to rent. Have your information ready such as references, proof of income, and other documents typically required for rental applications.
- A landlord must provide the screening criteria and minimum qualifications for rental applications in writing.
- A landlord can only charge for the actual cost of a screening report.
- If a landlord requires a *holding deposit* to reserve a unit while screening your application, you must be provided with a written receipt stating the terms and conditions.
- The holding deposit must be refunded in full if you are not offered the unit or applied to your move-in costs if you are offered the unit.



Fair Housing for All

- A landlord cannot refuse to rent to you because of your race, disability, gender identity, source of income, age, housing voucher or any protected class. Visit www.seattle.gov/civilrights/civil-rights to see a complete list of protected classes in Seattle.
- Applicants with a criminal history cannot be unfairly denied housing. Ads for housing cannot prohibit renters with arrest records or conviction records from applying.
- Renters with disabilities can request reasonable accommodations for things like closer parking spaces or reasonable modifications for items like grab bars in their home to improve mobility.
- A landlord cannot refuse to allow service animals but can ask for verification of the disability-related need from a qualified provider. A landlord cannot ask about the disability itself.

Move-in Charges

There are strict limits on fees and security deposits.

- Fees are non-refundable. Deposits are fully refundable.
- Fees can *only* be charged for screening and/or cleaning.
- Total fees cannot exceed 10% of one month's rent unless the actual screening costs exceed 10%.
- The security deposit and fees combined cannot exceed the total of one month's rent.
- A landlord can charge an additional pet deposit of 25% of one month's rent.
- Pet deposits cannot be charged for service animals.
- A landlord can also charge the last month's rent in advance.



EXAMPLE 1:

Lee is a single person household. Rent is \$1,000 per month.

The landlord can charge Lee \$45 (screening fee) + \$55 (cleaning fee) + \$900 (security deposit) for a total of \$1,000.

MONTHLY RENT	\$1000
SECURITY DEPOSIT	900
CLEANING FEE	55
SCREENING FEE	45

MONTHLY RENT	\$2000
SECURITY DEPOSIT	1800
CLEANING FEE	110
SCREENING FEE	90
PET DEPOSIT	500

EXAMPLE 2:

Tracy and Morgan with their two children are a four-person household. They have a cat and a dog. Rent is \$2,000 per month.

The landlord can charge Tracy and Morgan \$90 (\$45 x 2 screening fees) + \$110 (cleaning fee) + \$1,800 (security deposit) for a total of \$2,000. The landlord can also charge an additional \$500 (pet deposit)

Installment Payments

- You can opt to pay your move-in fees, security deposit, pet deposit, and last month's rent in installments.
- Installment payment options depend on the length of your rental agreement or can be scheduled by mutual-agreement between you and your landlord.
- A landlord cannot refuse to rent to you because you want to pay in installments nor charge you extra for choosing the option.

✓ Move-in Checklist

- A landlord must provide a written checklist detailing the condition of the rental unit before collecting a security deposit.
- Carefully review the list for accuracy and make changes where needed before both you and the landlord sign and date it. Make sure you have a copy.
- When you move out, the landlord must use the checklist to determine if there is any damage.
- A landlord must also provide you a copy of *Information for Tenants*, a summary of landlord-tenant rights and obligations produced by the City of Seattle. A voter registration form is included. Don't forget to register to vote at your new address!



Keys to Success

Before you sign a rental agreement, you need to understand the terms and conditions. Look for the following:

- How long is the term?
- How does your rental agreement end?
- Do you have an option to renew?
- Do you pay utilities or other charges?
- What are the rules for having guests?

Get advice if you need help to understand a rental agreement. Keep a copy in a safe place so you can refer to it easily. You are entitled to one free replacement copy from your landlord.



Is the Rental Registered?

- Rental units must be registered with the City of Seattle, with few exceptions. You can find out if your unit is registered or if it needs to be at seattle.gov/rrio (click on the renters' tab).
- Rental units must meet minimum housing standards and be safe. Some items to check for include:
 - Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
 - Windows that open and shut
 - Secure locks on entry doors
 - A permanent heat source
 - Windows in bedrooms



City of Seattle

Seattle.gov/rentinginseattle
Helpline (206) 684-5700



Seattle believes in inclusion and equity. Immigrants and refugees are welcome. City employees do not ask about citizenship status and serve all residents regardless of immigration status.

If you have a disability and would like to receive information from us in an alternative format please call our helpline. Our TTY line is (206) 233-7156.



Interpretation is always available. This document is available in:

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