



# MAKING YOUR PROPERTY READY TO RENT

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A fresh start to a new lease means getting your property sparkling and ready to rent for your next tenant.

Rent-ready means your rental property is in the perfect condition for new tenants to move in. The sooner your property is rent-ready, the sooner you can start collecting rent. Properties that are not show-ready will sit on the market - and a vacant property is a huge expense.

Once a lease ends and your tenants vacate, the home needs to be cleaned and repaired or remodeled as quickly as possible. As tempting as it is, avoid the urge to market your property before it is ready to show.

We've provided a checklist to make sure you don't miss important items that get overlooked when you are in a hurry to get a property rented. If you need our help, just let us know. We can do it all or just the things you don't want to tackle.

# Vacancy Standards

**Before listing a rental, we bring vacant units to "hotel room" clean.**

## FIXING AND CLEANING

### UTILITIES

- If this is the first time, leave all utilities on. We will let you know when to disconnect them. Homes in sweltering heat or extreme cold do not attract tenants. In addition, visitors will use the bathroom and you want to make sure toilets flush.
- After this, we will handle all utilities while the home is on the market. You won't need to worry about turning them on and off.

### PAINT WALLS AND TRIM - VERY IMPORTANT!

- We always recommend painting the entire interior of your home the very first time you put your home on the rental market. Tenants biggest complaint starts here. Tenants feel like they spend a lot of money for rent and expect the walls NOT to be spotty with mismatched paint.
- Walls that cannot be cleaned without spotting should be painted. Remove tape, stickers, nails, and screws. Do not touch-up walls with paint as it always spots or will show the spots when light reflects on them. Plan to paint a marked up wall from corner to corner. Use neutral colors and limit accent walls.

### DOORKNOBS AND LOCKS

- All exterior door locks need to be re-keyed.
- Try to have matching door knobs through the home.
- Make sure the deadbolts are keyed on one side with a turn knob on the other side to meet code requirements. If locked, a tenant needs to be able to get out quickly in case of fire or other emergency.



# FIXING AND CLEANING

## OUTLETS AND LIGHT SWITCHES

- Replace all broken and burned outlets.
- Replace all broken, novelty, or non-matching outlet and switch plate covers.
- Ensure all outlets are grounded and are solidly in place.

## PERSONAL PROPERTY AND TRASH

- Remove all personal property. Do not store anything on site. If you have personal property, store it in a rented storage facility.
- Properly dispose of all trash. Do not leave it on the curb unless you **KNOW** the trash company will pick it all up.

## SMOKE ALARMS AND FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

- Make sure all smoke alarms are operable. Install smoke alarms in every room except the kitchen.
- Install carbon monoxide monitors in the appropriate locations.
- Put a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and make sure it is within the expiration date. If there is a fire, you don't want to get caught up in a law suit because you didn't install these very inexpensive but life-saving devices.



## HVAC

- Vacuum vents and registers. Replace rusted registers.
- Replace filters and service the unit. This is one system we recommend you care for and not rely on the tenant. Our Tenant Benefit Program delivers dated filters to the front door quarterly. We fine the tenant if we discover they are not changing them.

## FLOORING

- Vacuum carpets and have them professionally cleaned. Have spots addressed and use pet conditioners if there was a pet in the home.
- Mop hardwoods, laminate and tile floors with hot water; no soap
- Clean grout and re-seal.
- Replace broken/damaged tile and flooring.

# FIXING AND CLEANING

## WINDOWS AND DOORS

- Make sure all windows can be opened and locks are operable.
- Repair window screens or remove the screens entirely - don't leave some and remove others.
- Install blinds on all uncovered windows and replace any broken blinds.
- Remove drapery but you can leave the rods only if they are in good condition. If you remove the rods then remove the brackets and patch/paint the holes.
- Wipe marks off the doors or paint them. Wipe dust off the door and window ledges and sills.

## CABINETS AND VANITIES

- Clean inside drawers and under cabinets. Wipe off cabinet face and knobs.
- Paint doors that are chipped.
- Make sure all drawers and door open and shut.

## FIREPLACE

- Clean out ashes and vacuum thoroughly.
- Wipe the mantle and clean any smoke on the hearth.
- Make sure there is a screen and that it is not damaged.
- Dispose of any unused firewood; Do not leave firewood anywhere on the property.



## SINKS AND BATHROOMS

- Clean sinks, tubs, showers, toilets, medicine cabinets, mirrors, faucets, shower heads, and shower doors.
- Wipe drain pipes under the sinks and clean up the cabinet shelf under the sink.
- Wipe off counters and remove stains the best you can.
- Replace toilet seats and remove any products that color the toilet water.
- Remove mold using bleach or mold/mildew cleaner.
- Clean shower and tub grout and re-seal.
- Repair cabinet doors and hinges.
- Touch-up chipped cabinet doors with matching paint as best as possible.

# FIXING AND CLEANING



## LIGHTS AND FANS

- Change all burned out and missing light bulbs with the correct bulbs and wattage. Replace low wattage bulbs with the brightest bulbs possible.
- Replace broken lights and light fixtures. Remove light covers and clean; remove dead insects.
- Wipe off ceiling fan blades and dust fan unit. Clean the ceiling if dust has accumulated around the fans. Make sure they are operable and replace if they are not working.
- Wipe marks off the doors or paint them. Wipe dust off the door and window ledges and sills.

## APPLIANCES

- Make sure all appliances are in working order. Do not turn off the refrigerator.
- Thoroughly clean all appliances removing food debris, spillage, and stains.
- Clean oven, racks, doors, knobs, burners, panels, glass tops, bottom of oven,
- Replace burner rings and drip pans. Remove all grease and clean up all oven cleaner residue.
- Remove all sticker and magnets.
- Pull the refrigerator out and clean the floor and wall. Be careful not to damage the floor. Wipe off the top and clean the grill. Replace any filters.
- Wipe out the washer/dryer if you provide one. Clean lint filters. Vacuum behind the dryer and clean the vent.

## EXTERIOR

- Blow off decks, patios, porches, and steps.
- Dust off exterior doors and light fixtures; remove cobwebs.
- Mow lawn, cut bushes to below windows, edge lawn, lay mulch/pine straw.
- Repair fascia, shingles, gutters, downspouts, decks and railings.
- If there are landscape lights, they must be in working order - otherwise remove them.
- All porch lights should be in good condition (not rusted or have missing parts) and are operable with the correct wattage bulbs.
- Ensure there are no "tripping" hazards.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## CAN YOU AFFORD RENTAL PROPERTY?

Renting out real estate on which you're paying a mortgage is a balancing act. To be profitable, you have to make sure that the money coming in from rent covers what goes out—or else you're operating at a loss on your real estate investment.

Always prepare for the worst. Your rental property may sit vacant occasionally, require repairs, or may have a tenant that has defaulted so having a decent financial cushion is a smart move.

You should have at least 3 months rent in your bank account for the unexpected.



## WHAT THINGS SHOULD YOU CONTINUE TO HANDLE?

**MORTGAGE PAYMENTS.** You should never rely on anyone except yourself to make sure your mortgage is paid on time.

**PROPERTY TAXES:** Again, never rely on anyone to pay your taxes. Ensure your taxes are sent directly to you and not the property.

**INSURANCE:** Unpaid premiums could be disastrous. Make sure you are in control of your coverage and payments.

**HOA DUES:** Failure to pay could result in fines, fees, and liens on your property. HOA companies are not friendly and their main goal is collecting dues.



## WHAT DO YOU OWE TO YOUR TENANT?

A safe, quiet, and clean environment. Every tenant is looking for a place to call home and it is your responsibility to provide it and theirs to maintain it.

Operate within the Fair Housing guidelines, fair processing of their security deposit, and handling your share of home maintenance.

Put yourself in your tenant's shoes ...

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT ABOUT SERVICE AND SUPPORT ANIMALS?

Service animals are specifically and rigorously trained to perform specific tasks or alerts to mitigate their handler's disability. These animals are permitted to accompany the human in public areas because of ADA laws. These animals qualify as an assistive animal under Fair Housing laws and are not considered pets.

Emotional support animals (also called Comfort animals) do not have to have any specialized training. They help alleviate symptoms of that person's disability that impact one or more daily activities. These animals also qualify as an assistive animal under Fair Housing laws and are not considered pets.

Therapy animals are trained to provide psychological or physiological therapy to individuals other than their handlers. These animals do not qualify as an assistive animal under Fair Housing laws.



## WHAT IS THE TENANT BENEFIT PROGRAM?

Every tenant is required to participate in this program which benefits both the tenant and you with these features:

Credit bureau reporting. We report both on-time and late rent payments to the credit bureau which encourages tenants to pay their monthly rent on time.

Renters insurance. We provide \$10,000 personal property coverage for the tenant and \$100,000 asset protection for your home.

HVAC Filter Delivery. Every quarter, dated furnace filters for each furnace are delivered to the tenant's front door. Tenants are fined if we discover they are not changing the filters.

Online portal. Tenants are provided with an online portal where they can submit repair requests, get their monthly statement, and make rent payments with ACH, credit card, debit card, or automatic recurring payments. You also have access to an online portal where you can see the repair requests, get your monthly statement, and converse with us, if needed!

## ***The Importance of Re-keying Your Doors***

Our policy is to have every property re-keyed before a new tenant takes possession. After you read this, we think you'll agree. After managing rentals for 15 years we are more sensitive than others about reducing risks for our owners. Re-keying your property before turning it over to a tenant is a big step in reducing your exposure to litigation.

**1. LAWSUITS.** Reduce the risk of lawsuits. Most homeowners have several keys (or codes) to their house in circulation. Relatives are often given keys, as are neighbors, cleaning crews, contractors, pest control companies, and real estate agents. If you think about it, there are probably more keys in circulation than you would like to admit. There are probably keys hidden around your house, under bricks, over door casings - the problem is we forget where we have hidden them.

Imagine renting your home and having a relative or neighbor let themselves in a month after your tenant moves in. Having a relative unlock the door and walk in on a tenant who might be eating a bowl of popcorn watching TV in his boxer shorts would be a huge surprise! Think of the potential lawsuit! In our "lawsuit happy society", a tenant would not hesitate to sue you for NOT protecting their right to privacy and providing a safe place to live. Locking everybody out significantly reduces the chances of a break-in and a subsequent lawsuit.

**2. ACCESS.** Many homes have locks that have not worked for years. Owners tolerate not having a key to a door lock if the deadbolt works or vice versa. Some owners only use one door to access the property and have not idea where to find the keys to the other doors. We hear "I have lived without a key to that door for years, why can't the tenant?"

Renting a property with locks on the doors implies that the locks work. If they do not work and a burglar gets in, the tenant will sue you for failure to provide usable locks with keys. Renting a property raises the requirements to provide the safety of working door and window locks. What you "lived with" as the owner is not the standard for renting to another person. What you tolerated as an owner is different than what you must provide as a landlord.

**3. CONVENIENCE.** Most homes have several door locks and deadbolts that have been added over the years - each with different keys. It is common for owners give us three to six keys to a home when we take over management. One of our first activities is to reduce the number of keys to just one.

**4. LIMITING OWNER ACCESS.** Many owners do not understand that when they rent their home they have transferred the "right of possession" and are promising "quiet enjoyment" to another. We have had owners actually enter properties when tenants were in possession and cause major problems. Re-keying the locks helps protect owners from themselves and offers the tenant the same peace of mind that you want in your private residence.

**5. COST.** Owners are responsible for the first re-key. All exterior doors locks and deadbolts must be re-keyed or changed before a tenant takes possession. After that, we require the tenant to cover the cost of re-keying and we take the cost from their security deposit when they terminate their lease.

We try hard to protect both owners and tenants from potential lawsuits. Sharing the cost of re-keying is a reasonable and smart policy.