

DEPOSIT REFUND HINTS

NOTE THAT THE BELOW INFORMATION WAS WRITTEN AND PROVIDED BY A 3RD PARTY SOURCE

How does a renter avoid conflict from the start? Start when you move in, being sure to do a complete walk-through of the premises. Most leases decree that the unit “is to be returned in the same condition as when first rented, less wear and tear”. Your task at hand is to establish exactly what condition the place was in from the start.

Where to begin? Hopefully the landlord will provide a walk-through or inventory checklist at move-in. If not, create your own.

If possible, draw out a basic floor plan on a sheet of paper. Label the rooms, and indicate where windows and doors are placed to help narrow down the details. Bring a camera to back up any notable items, especially those already damaged, such as peeling paint. For each room, make note of the following items:

- The paint and how it looks. If the unit was freshly painted top to bottom, that’s the threshold you’ll be responsible for. If just a few walls, say the kitchen and baths are painted, make careful note of that condition. Be sure to “look up, down and all around” when checking the condition of the paint.
- Floors. Every type has its weak spots. For example, wood floors can be easily scratched and expensive to refinish. Ask what steps are needed to keep them in good condition.
- Vinyl or linoleum underfoot? Flooring seams are notorious for splitting, especially where water can seep in around sinks and bathtubs. Check carefully for any pull-ups or binding.
- Window coverings should be checked. Even though most jurisdictions don’t require window coverings, such as blinds or drapes, many landlords include them at move-in. If none exist or only on certain windows, jot it down.
- Don’t overlook the screens. While not terribly expensive, replacing several can add up. While you’re looking out the windows, be sure the glass isn’t cracked or broken, and that all windows open, close and lock properly.
- Light fixtures should brighten your list, too. A flip of a switch will determine if fixtures work as they should. Ask if there are any master switches, typically found in living rooms that control an outlet or two.
- Smoke detectors. A must-have for every bedroom and some hallways, check that the alarms are fully functional. Simply press the test button, usually at the center of the detector.
- Drains. Run the water a few minutes. If they don’t drain freely, add that to your “please repair” list.
- Kitchen. With appliances galore, there’s much to explore. Open the oven. Is it spotlessly clean or caked with grease: Do all the burners’ fire? Does the garbage disposal hum when switched on or simply groan with trapped debris?
- Bathroom. Built-ins such as soap dishes and towel racks should be in top shape. Be sure the tub/shower enclosure is clean and not hiding mold in the cracks.
- How’s the appearance of the tile? Tile is expensive to replace, especially in older buildings where the classics are no longer available.
- Jot down how many keys you are given at move-in, including the mailbox key. The number of remote control or security type keys should be noted, too.

Doing a good job of keeping track of the details can save you time, frustration and hopefully your security deposit at move-out.