# Guide To Renting: Everything First-Time Renters Need To Know



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# Abstract

Renting a property for the first time can be an exciting yet daunting experience. It's crucial for first-time renters to understand the rental process thoroughly. Begin by setting a budget that includes not only rent but also utilities and other potential expenses. Research different neighborhoods to find one that suits your lifestyle and commute needs. When viewing potential rentals, pay attention to details like safety features, maintenance quality, and lease terms. Read the lease agreement carefully before signing and clarify any questions with the landlord or property manager. Lastly, familiarize yourself with tenant rights and responsibilities to ensure a smooth renting experience.



#### 1. Introduction

As a first-time renter in Canberra, it's important to prioritize communication with your landlord or property manager. Establishing clear lines of communication from the beginning can help address any issues or concerns that may arise during your tenancy. Keep records of all communications, including emails or written notices, for future reference. Additionally, be proactive about reporting maintenance issues promptly to ensure the property remains in good condition. Building a positive relationship with your landlord can lead to a more pleasant renting experience overall.

# 2. Find a Property To Rent



Whether you're having difficulty buying a home right now, don't want to commit to living somewhere long-term, or just need a temporary place to stay, you may be looking to find a rental home in Canberra to move into. Although you may be a little intimidated about the prospect of finding a rental property you can call your home, it's actually a pretty easy process. Determine the parameters of your search, figure out what type of home is best for you, then use the Internet, print ads, and word of mouth to find homes in your budget.

#### **Locating Available Rentals**

Search trusted online rental sites to get a sense of local prices. There are a lot of different rental search engines online that allow you to narrow your search based on price, size, location, and other factors. Use these websites to look at properties in the area you want to rent in and to see what the typical price range is.

Draw up a budget and calculate how much you can pay in rent.[3] According to the Census Bureau, your monthly rent should never be more than 20%-30% of your monthly income. Thus, before you can find the property that's right for you, you need to calculate what price range you can actually afford in rent in Canberra.

Work with a real estate broker or realtor to use their expertise. After you've gotten a sense of what the available properties in an area are like, enlist a real estate broker or realtor to help you locate the best properties for you. Many realtors will perform this service free of charge and will also be better equipped for finding a property that meets your specific criteria.

Look in print media if you're mainly interested in local rental properties. Newspapers, for example, often have listings that include both "for rent by owner" properties and properties that realtors are advertising. Local newsletters and marketing publications also often have properties listed in them, although your selection will probably be pretty small.

Contact the neighborhood association for assistance. If you've narrowed your search down to a particular neighborhood, the neighborhood association may know of some houses that are either available for rent in Canberra or will be available soon. Even if they can't necessarily find you a rental home in their neighborhood, they'll probably know the area well enough to be able to give you some pointers for finding a property nearby.

Avoid scams that ask you to pay a fee up front. You should never have to make any sort of down payment or pay a fee in advance for finding or looking at rental properties. Refrain from giving anybody your credit card information before you've actually decided on a rental property, as well.



#### Determining What Type of Rental is Right for You

Opt for renting an apartment if you want a centrally located home. If you're moving to an urban area and want to live downtown, most of the available rental properties will probably

be apartments. While these locations will provide you with the most convenient location, they will probably also be the most expensive rental properties in Canberra.

Go with a townhouse or single-family home if you want lots of space. These types of rental properties tend to be much cheaper than centrally located apartments and are more spacious, both in terms of square footage and sometimes in terms of yard space. However, these properties are often harder to find listings for, so consider hiring a real estate broker to help you locate them and secure you an appointment.

Decide what features you need to have in your rental. These should be features of your rental that are absolutely necessary for your standard of living. For example, you may require that your rental home have a certain number of bedrooms or bathrooms, that it be within walking distance of your job, or that it be in a low-crime area. Whatever parameters you set, just make sure these are requirements for your rental home in Canberra and not just features that you'd like to have.



#### **Going Through the Renting Process**

Save up enough money for the first month's rent and security deposit. A lot of landlords will require you to make a down payment before you can actually rent from them. This payment usually takes the form of the first month's rent and a security deposit, which you will typically receive back at the end of your lease.

Make sure your credit is good before submitting your application. Most landlords require their applicants to have a relatively good credit score, since they're more likely to be able to pay their rent in the long run. You can check your credit score for free using certain free websites or pay to see your FICO score.

Bring identification and financial documents when you go to apply. You should bring a letter of employment that shows you're gainfully employed, your most recent pay stubs indicating your monthly income, and your driver's license. If you have reference letters from previous landlords, bring these as well.

Walk through the rental and inspect it before you sign the lease. You'll want to make sure that all the lights, faucets, and other fixtures are in good working order and that there's no obvious sign of damage. This not only ensures you're moving into a good home, but also keeps you from potentially losing your security deposit when you go to move out, since management might blame you if these fixtures still don't work by then.

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# 3. Know About The Local Rental Laws

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (the Act) is the law that governs renting in the ACT. It provides a balanced framework that gives tenants strong protections, so they feel secure in their homes, while respecting the legitimate rights and interests of landlords in their property. The law also provides for fast, independent and informal resolution of disputes through the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The Act also sets out the law on occupancies. Occupancies are an alternative form of legal agreement for housing to tenancies. People who live in student accommodation, crisis

accommodation, a caravan (or mobile home) park, a room in a club, or a boarding house, will usually be occupants. Occupants are also protected under the Act with minimum guaranteed rights and access to dispute resolution options to enforce them.

Access to secure and stable housing is fundamental to well-being. The information on this page is intended to help landlords, tenants, occupants and grantors to know their rights and obligations. This allows the parties to tenancy and occupancy agreements to make informed choices, manage their relationship with confidence, minimise and constructively resolve disputes, and as necessary enforce their rights.

#### Reforms to tenancy and occupancy laws

The information on this page is to help you understand the law in general terms. It is not a substitute for legal advice on your individual circumstances.

The ACT Government has reformed the Act over recent years to strengthen tenants' rights and make our tenancy and occupancy laws clearer and fairer to produce better outcomes for all parties involved.

#### **Renting Book: A handbook for tenants**

#### What is the renting book?



The Renting Book is a guide to rental laws in the ACT. It is primarily written for tenants, to explain their legal rights and responsibilities. It may also help landlords and real estate agents to make sure that properties are managed in accordance with the law. The law

requires landlords to provide a copy of this Renting Book to the tenant (or tell the tenant where it can be found) before the tenancy starts.

The Renting Book covers the main issues that may arise before, during and after a tenancy. It is a guide only. It does not cover every aspect of the Act or every situation. The Act is also amended from time to time. You should always read your tenancy agreement closely, check the Act and seek legal advice if you are unsure about your rights or obligations.

The Standard Residential Tenancy Terms, which by law form part of all tenancy agreements in the ACT, are contained in Schedule 1 of the Act. There are also additional Standard Residential Tenancy Terms that may apply to tenancy agreements in certain circumstances. These are contained in Schedule 2 of the Act.



# 4. Negotiate The Lease

Most renters don't negotiate lower rent prices when their lease is up for renewal, even though it works 25% of the time, a recent survey finds.

With the rental market cooling, the success rate for haggling cheaper rent has risen from 17% in October 2022 to just over 25% as of April 2023, according to Avail, a platform for doit-yourself landlords and tenants. However, only 28% of those surveyed said they negotiated the price on their most recent lease renewal.

"Renters certainly have more leverage now," says Jon Leckie, a data researcher for Rent.com, a rental listings site. "With more inventory and less demand, landlords have to compete for tenants more than they did just a few months ago."

Rent price growth has stabilized in recent months, with median rent in Canberra in the 50 most populous cities hovering at about \$2,000 per month since late 2022, after surging by about \$300 throughout 2021 and 2022, according to Redfin price data. Slowing rent growth has, in turn, made it harder for landlords to raise prices, says Leckie.

"It's a great time to try to negotiate rent if you can," says Leckie. "But people have been conditioned to the idea that, 'Oh no, rents are crazy, landlords can just charge whatever they want.' I don't think that's the case anymore."

Plus, negotiating can lead to other benefits if a landlord refuses to lower the price. This can include other concessions, like repairs or upgraded amenities.

To try it for yourself, check out five tips for negotiating your rent from real estate experts.

#### 1. Research rent prices in your neighborhood

Check local rental listing sites to confirm rent prices for similar units in your neighborhood. If you're paying more than you would for a similar unit, you'll have a convincing, fact-based argument for a fair price based on local rental market rates.

#### 2. Leverage your rental history

Landlords favor renters who keep their units in good shape and have a long history of ontime rent payments. If you've been with the same landlord for a long time, it's reasonable to ask for a discount.

Likewise, when negotiating a lease with a new landlord, offer references from previous landlords to make the case that you're a reliable renter.

#### 3. Propose a longer, discounted lease

If you're happy with your unit and don't expect to move soon, consider proposing a longer lease, such as two years instead of one. In exchange for the commitment, ask your landlord for a discounted rate on your monthly rent in Canberra.

Plus, by locking in a fixed rate over two years, you can ensure your rent won't increase with inflation for the remainder of your lease.

#### 4. Take advantage of seasonal pricing

Try to sign new rental leases in December or January, which is the peak off-season for the rental market. That's because the rental market is seasonal, so rent prices fluctuate depending on the demand and time of year. When there's less demand, prices tend to drop.

#### 5. Negotiate other perks

If your landlord is reluctant to lower your monthly cost, you can propose other concessions, such as overdue repairs or upgrades to your unit's amenities, like having the walls painted.

You could also suggest other expenses be waived, such as the cost of utilities or fees for extra storage space.

# 5. Read The Lease Carefully



Someday, between the time you move out of your childhood home and when buy your first residence, you'll probably find yourself staring at a lease. A lease is a contract between someone who owns real estate (the landlord) and another person who occupies that piece of real estate (the tenant), covering the conditions under which the tenant may possess, occupy, and use the property.

Reading a lease can be befuddling, and often the first impulse is to just go ahead and sign the thing, rather than try to wade through and decipher all the legal language. However, it's important to understand that a lease is a legally enforceable agreement, and you could find yourself in a predicament later on if you fail to abide by the terms—the very ones you agreed to by signing on the dotted line. Before you sign, take the time to read the entire document.

#### **Include Property Details**

The lease should include basic facts and data about the property, including the physical address and the landlord's name and contact information. It should also state the date the

lease was signed; the beginning and end dates of the rental period; and options for lease renewal, including policies for rent increases. If any appliances are in the unit (such as a range, refrigerator, or washing machine), or if the unit is furnished, that should be included, too.

#### Define Deposit, Rent, and Fee Amounts

People tend to pay close attention to how much rent will cost each month, but there may be other costs that should be noted as well, including various deposits and fees. Details about any deposits—such as an upfront security deposit or fees for parking or pets—should also be clearly stated, along with conditions for getting your money back.

The lease should state particulars about the rent:

- Monthly amount due
- When it is due
- Methods of acceptable payment
- Any allowable grace period for late payment
- Amount of any late fees
- Utility Inclusion

The lease should indicate policies regarding utility service and billing. Be sure to find out which, if any, utilities are included as part of your monthly rent, and whether you are expected to cover any of the costs.

Some landlords, for example, pay for electric, water, and sewer services, while the tenant pays for cable and Internet.

#### **Repairs and Maintenance**

This is something to pay close attention to since it can end up costing a lot of money, time, and headaches. In some rental arrangements, the landlord is responsible for taking care of all repairs and maintenance—whether it's a leaky faucet or a broken air conditioner.

In other situations, the landlord might repair or replace only major appliances but leave the tenant responsible for everything else. And then there are agreements where the tenant is responsible for all the costs of repairs and maintenance. There may also be stipulations about the maintenance of the yard or outside areas.

As you can see, it's imperative that you read the lease to determine your landlord's responsibilities—as well as yours—when it comes to repairs and maintenance issues. Make sure you're clear on who pays for what, who arranges service calls, and the amount of time you and your landlord have to address any issues.



6. Tell Your Landlord You're Moving Out Or Give Notice To Vacate

If you're coming to the end of the term of your rental lease in Canberra your landlord is expecting you to do one of two things: Sign a new lease or move out. If you are choosing to do the latter, though, you must still communicate your intentions to your landlord in writing. After all, a lease is a legal contract.

Yours likely indicates you are required to submit to your landlord a letter known as a notice to vacate. Read on to learn more about how to write and when to submit this simple yet important document.

#### What Is a Notice to Vacate?

A notice to vacate is a letter written by a tenant to a landlord, stating that they will not be seeking to renew their lease at the end of the lease term.

The letter usually indicates why the tenant is moving out and when they will vacate their apartment. It also includes the tenant's cell phone number, email address and a postal forwarding address so the landlord can remit the security deposit, if applicable, as well as remain in touch should there be any questions or concerns after the tenant vacates the premises.

#### When Should I Write My Notice of Intent to Vacate?

Typically, you'll want to write your notice 30 days before you move out of your rental. This will give your landlord enough time to find a new tenant. Although one month is the standard amount of time to give notice, the terms of your lease may require more or less time. Make sure to check the lease agreement to ensure you can vacate without any issues.

#### Why Should I Write a Notice of Intent to Vacate?

The main reason you'll want to give your landlord notice is so you don't violate your lease agreement. Checking whether your lease requires notice of intent to vacate will protect you from any legal trouble. Moving, especially long-distance moving, is already a stressful process—reading over your lease agreement before you leave can help prevent any hiccups.

Additionally, giving your landlord notice will give them plenty of time to find a new tenant for their rental property, and this courtesy can go a long way in maintaining a positive relationship. In the future, you may need letters of reference from former landlords to move into new rental properties.

#### Tips for Writing Your Notice of Intent to Vacate



While writing your notice, keep in mind that this document is legally binding. There are a few main things you'll need to include in your letter to make sure your landlord has all the information they'll need and to protect yourself against any legal issues that may arise in the future.

First, you'll want to focus on important dates. Your notice must include the following dates:

#### The date you're submitting your notice

#### The date you're vacating

You'll also want to include your name, your landlord's name and your current address so that there's no confusion over who's moving out of what rental unit. Your letter should clearly state your intent to vacate in 30 days, or however much time you and your landlord agreed upon in your lease. You'll also want to provide your contact information as well as your new address—this information will allow your landlord to get in touch with you should any problems arise and to forward you your security deposit.

Keep in mind that your notice to vacate won't be the last contact you'll have with your landlord. They'll likely want to perform a walkthrough of the apartment to evaluate it for damages. It's another reason to maintain a positive relationship with your landlord—you'll have to interact with them multiple times during the move out process, and staying on good terms may mean you'll receive back a greater portion of your security deposit.

# Step by Step Guide to Writing a Notice to Vacate

#### 1. Read Your Rental Agreement



Rental agreements are required reading before you sign them, but it's equally important to read them when you're getting ready to end them, too. The moment you think you might be moving, read your rental agreement to learn the window of time you have to inform your landlord of your intent to vacate at the end of the lease term.

Are you moving out sooner? Keep in mind that if you are vacating with months to go on your lease term, you'll likely have to pay a penalty—this is for the landlord to recoup rental income in Canberra loss in case they cannot rent out your apartment soon after you vacate it.

#### 2. Put Your Notice to Vacate in Writing

Even if you have had a conversation with your landlord about moving out at the end of your lease, you should still put your notice to vacate in writing and send it to them. This is to avoid any misunderstandings; it is easy to dispute a conversation between two people, but not a letter shared between the same parties.

#### 3. How to Deliver the Letter

In the digital age, you might be wondering if you even need to print out your notice of intent to vacate on paper and mail it, or whether email will suffice. While email is an acceptable form of professional communication, you should still confirm with your landlord which is the best method of correspondence to reach them. If it is by email, send the letter as an attachment, not in the body of the email. This way, the landlord can easily print or save the letter for their records separately from their email inbox..

#### 4. Keep Records

This could be as simple as making a copy of the letter you've mailed or saving the email you sent to the landlord. To save time digging through the sent folder in your email—and to have some assurance that the email was indeed sent—add your email to the CC or BCC field of the email. Then, when it pops up in your inbox, you can flag it for future reference.

# 7. Perform A Proper End Of Lease Clean

Moving home can be both exciting and stressful. To help you focus on the adventures in your new property and alleviate the tension from moving, read through this helpful end of tenancy checklist.

#### **Essential Cleaning Tasks**

First make sure that you've read your tenancy agreement in full. It will stipulate how the house needs to be left when you move out.

If any damage has been caused by you or incurred during your tenancy then make sure this is fixed or replaced before you move out. If you don't then your landlord is within their rights to organise for the issue to be fixed and send you the bill. In most cases, your landlord will propose that this amount is deducted from your deposit.

#### Doing The End of Tenancy Cleaning Yourself



It's worthwhile getting your end of tenancy clean done early, to ensure that you get your home perfectly clean before the final inspection. That way, you stand a better chance of getting your deposit back.

You can either opt to hire a professional end of tenancy cleaning company or do it yourself. It's often more cost effective to do it yourself, plus that way you have peace of mind that all the rooms have been cleaned to the required standard.

The work that you carry out should be based on your inspection checklist and your check-in record. Generally, though, to pass your final inspection you should carry out the following cleaning tasks:

#### The Kitchen

Remove everything from the cupboards and shelves, making sure to remove any crumbs and stains with a damp cloth. Next, pull out your appliances and wipe beneath and behind them.

It's important to make sure that you give your washing machine and dishwasher a thorough clean to remove any built-up grime.

Next, clean the refrigerator inside and out, making sure to remove all fridge trays, racks and cabinet shelves and soak them in soapy water. Then dry and place them back inside the refrigerator. When you leave, turn the appliance off at the wall and leave the doors open to prevent mould.

We're all guilty of letting our ovens get dirty. Whether your oven has large deposits of grime, household dust, grease or burnt food deposits, you need to give it a thorough clean to get your deposit back. The oven is usually the first item checked during the inspection process.

Take a look at our step-by-step guide to oven cleaning if you decide to do it yourself. Alternatively, you may want to opt to get a professional oven cleaning company to carry out the deep clean for you. This can save you time, money and a lot of energy as oven cleaning is a difficult job.

#### The Living Room

The two main jobs to tackle in the living room are your carpets and dusting. Give your carpets a thorough vacuum. If any stains remain then you might want to consider hiring a professional to combat the issue or renting an industrial vacuum cleaner.

Next, clear your shelves, cabinets, coffee table, cupboards and TV stands, and give them a good polish.

#### **The Bathroom**



Wipe everything in your bathroom to remove any stains, including (but not limited to) the sink, bath, toilet, tiles and mirrors.

Next, check plug holes and drains to ensure that they are clear and that water can flow easily. If not, drain cleaner can help to remove blockages.

Then check your metallic surfaces like the taps, shower head and drain grates for mould and limescale. There are a whole host of products that can help you tackle them. It's as simple as spraying the solution on the affected area and leaving it to work its magic, then washing it away.

If any limescale remains, you can also use white vinegar and a fresh lemon to break down the particles causing the chalky residue.

# 7.1. What Is Expected From An End Of Tenancy Clean?



As the end of a tenancy period approaches, it becomes imperative for tenants to create a todo list and focus on returning the property in a spotless and impeccable condition. This is where the end of cleaning comes into play. As per the residential tenancy laws in ACT, tenants/renters are required to leave the leased property in a clean state to pass the rental inspection. It is a pivotal step to secure full bond money when moving out. Landlords or property managers expect a high-standard end-of-lease clean according to the pre-approved checklist. That's why hiring an expert end of lease cleaning Canberra is one of the best decisions for a stress-free experience. However, if you are doing it for the first time, read the following guide and discover what you can expect from an end-of-tenancy cleaning. Let's Get Started!

# What Is The Importance Of End Of Tenancy Clean?

The process goes beyond removing visible dirt, clearing the mess and mopping the floor. In this type of cleaning, a landlord or property manager expects a thorough cleaning of each and every area according to the approved checklist. The meticulous cleaning helps tenants secure the bond money and sets the stage for new tenants. What to Expect from an End of Lease Cleaning?

#### 1. Attention-To-Detail Cleaning

When you hire cheap end of lease cleaning Canberra Professionals, you can expect detailed sprucing of all nooks and crannies. This is one of the basic things to achieve a spotlessly clean living space. A detailed checklist includes all rooms, such as:

- Living areas
- Bedrooms

- Kitchen
- Laundry Area
- Patio
- Windows
- Blinds
- Garage
- Exterior walls, etc

If you are doing it yourself, inspect the property thoroughly and create a customised checklist so that you don't miss out on any important spot.

#### 2. Don't Miss Ceiling Fans, Vents And Walls

Start by removing dust and dirt from ceiling fans, air vents and walls. Take a microfiber duster and an extendable handle to reach the top surface and remove cobwebs, accumulated dust, dirt and grime.

#### **3. Fixtures And Fittings**

It is important to pay special attention to fixtures and fittings of your rented property. This includes light fittings, switches, doorknobs, faucets, curtain rails and much more. Spray a non-chemical cleaning product and wipe these spots down to remove dust and stains. It is good to read and understand lease agreement in Canberra and know everything about your roles, rules and responsibilities as a tenant.

#### 4. Window Cleaning Is Must

Dirt-laden window glasses can create an obstacle in getting the full bond back. Landlords thoroughly inspect all windows inside and out, and that's why it is important to wash every nook and cranny of them using the proper tools. Start by removing dirt and debris from sills, frames and panes using microfiber cloths. For stubborn stains, spray vinegar and warm soapy water solution and run a squeegee to achieve streak-free results. Make sure you vacuum blinds as well. Read on some best tips and tricks for window cleaning for sparkling results.

#### 5. Deep Cleaning Of Kitchen Appliances

Most people forget to clean filthy microwaves, ovens and BBQs when performing an end of tenancy cleaning and lose their bond money. If you want to impress your fussy landlord,

inspect and clean all your appliances provided by the landlord. Remove caked-on grime, built-up grease and stuck food particles from a microwave, oven and BBQ using baking soda, lemon and vinegar. Prepare white vinegar, lemon, and warm soapy water for a dishwashing machine and refrigerator. This will help you remove stubborn stains, food spills and splatters.



#### 6. Wipe Down Countertops, Stove Top And Sink

Clean the kitchen countertop, stove top, knobs and sink using safe and sound cleaning products. Baking soda and lemon can do wonders in breaking down stains and killing lethal germs. You can use effective cleaning solutions for different surfaces in your abode to keep stains and grime at bay.

#### 7. Clean And Sanitise Bathroom



Bathroom surfaces are the prime sources of lethal germs, bacteria and mould infestation. To pass the rental inspection in Canberra, thoroughly clean each and every surface of a bathroom, including

- Shower walls and showerheads
- Glass door
- Bathtubs
- Tiles and grout lines
- Toilet bowls
- Sinks and faucets
- Toilet bowl,
- Mirror
- Towel rails
- Floors, etc

Use hydrogen peroxide, vinegar and magic erasers to remove rust stains, calcium deposits and grime from these surfaces.

#### 8. Carpets And Rugs

Though steam cleaning is not included in any end of lease cleaning Canberra Package, you should thoroughly clean it before the final inspection. Vacuuming can help you remove embedded dust, dirt and grime and improve the indoor air quality while blotting the surface can remove stains, spills and splatters. Use vinegar spray and blot the area with a clean cloth.

#### 9. Floors



Make sure you sweep and mop all types of floors before the rental inspection. You can use mild detergent for spot cleaning and achieve sparkling outcomes.

#### **10 Exterior Areas**

This includes a patio area, garage walls, exterior walls and fencing. These areas should be cleaned properly to secure the bond money. You can look for the best end of lease cleaning Canberra who can do all the tasks without giving you a hint of stress and help you get your bond back.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, embarking on your first renting experience requires careful consideration and preparation. By setting a budget, researching neighborhoods, paying attention to details during property viewings, understanding lease agreements, and maintaining open communication with your landlord, you can navigate the rental process successfully. Remember to stay informed about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant to ensure a positive and fulfilling rental experience. With the right approach and knowledge, you can enjoy the benefits of renting while feeling confident and empowered in your new living arrangement.

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