

Ending A Lease: Preparing Your Rental Property For Final Inspection



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Abstract

Ending a lease requires tenants to thoroughly prepare their rental property for the final inspection to ensure they recover their bond. This involves addressing various aspects, including deep cleaning the property, fixing any damages, and ensuring the space meets the standards set by the landlord or property manager. Key areas to focus on include cleaning carpets, walls, kitchens, and bathrooms, and tending to outdoor spaces. Adhering to a detailed cleaning checklist and seeking professional help when necessary can lead to a smooth inspection process, preventing potential disputes and ensuring the full return of the security deposit.



1. Introduction

When a tenancy comes to an end, preparing your rental property for the final inspection is crucial for ensuring a smooth transition and retrieving your full bond. Landlords and property managers will closely inspect the property to assess its condition compared to when you first moved in. Any damage, excessive wear and tear, or unclean areas could lead to deductions from your bond. By following a thorough checklist and addressing all required cleaning and repairs, you can increase your chances of passing the inspection without any issues. This guide will help you understand what needs to be done to get your rental property ready for the final walk-through, providing tips to make the process less stressful and more efficient.

2. Giving notice to end a residential tenancy



How landlords or agents and tenants should serve a notice of termination of a residential tenancy.

Key information

- A tenancy agreement will usually be terminated by the tenant or the landlord giving notice to the other party, with the tenant vacating by the date specified in the termination notice.
- A termination notice must:
- be in writing
- be signed and dated by the party giving the notice
- include the address of the rented property
- state the day the tenancy agreement is terminated (and by which the tenant will need to move out), and
- include the reasons for termination (if applicable).
- Termination notices do not have to line up with the rent payment cycle.

- After a landlord gives a termination notice, they can give another notice on different grounds if necessary. For example, if a landlord gives 90 days notice to terminate a periodic tenancy without a reason, and the tenant then doesn't pay rent for 14 days, the landlord can give a termination notice for the non-payment of rent.
- In some cases, the landlord or tenant can apply directly to the Tribunal for a termination order without needing to issue a termination notice.

Serving a notice

When serving a termination notice, it's important that the correct procedures are followed.

A notice or document can be given by:

- handing it to the landlord or tenant in person
- handing it to somebody aged 16 or over at the tenant's or landlord's residential or business address
- putting it in the tenant's or landlord's letterbox, at their residential or business address, in an envelope addressed to them
- posting it to the tenant or landlord at the address they have specified for receiving notices (e.g. care of an agent), or, if no such address has been specified, posting it to the tenant or landlord's last known residential or business address
- emailing it to the tenant, landlord or agent at the email address they have specified for receiving that notice or document when giving consent to service by email
- if the tenant or landlord is a corporation, emailing or posting it, or handing it to a person aged 16 or over at the corporation's address.

Where there are two or more tenants or landlords, the notice or document may be given to either one. It does not need to be given to both.

Keeping proof that a notice has been served

There is no need to prove that the notice was received by the other person, only that it was properly served.

However, it is good practice to keep a copy of each notice, including proof of the method used to serve it, and the date it was sent or handed to the person.

Amount of notice required

The amount of notice that needs to be given depends on the circumstances.

Different notice periods apply when a termination notice is served:

- from a tenant to end the tenancy agreement
- from a landlord to end the tenancy agreement.

See Minimum notice periods for more information.

How to count days for termination notices



Days in the notice period are calendar days, not working days.

All days of the week are counted, including weekends and public holidays.

The day on which the notice is served is not counted.

Note: If a termination notice is posted to a tenant, the landlord or agent must allow an extra 7 working days for delivery.

Example 1

If a tenant emails or hand delivers a 21-day termination notice on 1 February, the 21 days are counted starting from 2 February.

The 21st day is 22 February. If notice is sent by post, an extra 7 working days have to be added to the notice period. Weekends, public holidays and bank holidays are not counted in the 7 days that are added for notices that are posted.

Example 2

If a landlord posts a 14-day termination notice on Friday 1 February, the 7 working days for postage starts on Monday 4 February.

The notice is considered to have been served on Tuesday 12 February.

The first day of the 14-day notice period starts on Wednesday 13 and ends on Tuesday 26 February.

Disputes about ending an agreement

Landlords (or agents) and tenants should try to resolve disputes together. This means they can reach an agreement between themselves, where possible.

The best place to start is to carefully read the terms of the agreement.

If the correct procedures have not been followed by a landlord or agent when issuing a termination notice, tenants can lodge a complaint using NSW Fair Trading's online complaint service for further help to resolve the matter.

3. What property managers really look for in a rental inspection



A couple of times each year, I get an email from my property manager letting me know she's "dropping by soon" for an inspection.

What it feels like she's saying is: "I'm coming over to see the way you live and judge you."

Property inspections are just part of the game when you rent, but even if you're used to them, it can be tricky to know how to prepare for one.

We asked you what worries you the most when an inspection is coming up, and put common questions to industry experts. Here's what they said.

Myth 1: It's to see how tidy I am

"We're not playing the role of the parent, we're not checking to see if you tidy your room," says Rob Edwards, the managing director of a property management company in Perth.

"When we're inspecting, we're looking to ensure the property is safe, first and foremost, and then we're looking for anything that needs maintenance or could create or cause damage to the property," he says.

Inspections are also a chance for property managers to update the landlord about any issues, such as worn carpets, so they can budget/prepare for it.

If your main concern is how clean your place should be for an inspection, you're not alone, says Sydney property manager Matthew Geftakis.

"The only question people ask me is: 'Do I have to have it tidy?'" says Mr Geftakis.

"Many owners don't mind if you're not tidy; their primary concern is damage."

Mr Geftakis adds that it's worth remembering inspection reports usually end up going to the landlord, with photos, and it's in your best interest to have the place looking tidy.

"If you really love the place and want to stay in it, you'll look after it," he says.

NSW Fair Trading recommends tenants keep the property in good nick and in a reasonable state of cleanliness, and at the very least to the same standard they received the property in.

Myth 2: If I raise a repair issue, they'll think I'm to blame

A rental inspection is an opportunity to highlight parts of the property that need maintenance or repairs.

I often worry that if I raise a maintenance issue with my agent or landlord, I'll be blamed for it and be slogged with a bill I didn't expect.

"In many instances of repair, it's not the tenant's responsibility to fix," Mr Geftakis says.

"However, you have a duty of care as a tenant to report issues in a property."

If there is something that needs repair that is your fault (an unintentional hole in the wall, a stain on the carpet, scratched floor boards), it's best to report it straight away.

Your property manager is more likely to reach a compromise with your landlord around the repairs than if you were to try and conceal it, he says.

According to a spokesperson from NSW Fair Trading, landlords aren't obliged to fix everything. They only need to keep premises in a "reasonable" state of repair considering the age of the property, the amount of rent being paid and the prospective life of the premises.

The rules can differ slightly in each state so ensure you check the legislation in your state.

Myth 3: My landlord can inspect their property whenever they want



According to NSW Fair Trading, tenants have the right to privacy when renting. A landlord, agent or anybody else acting on their behalf can enter the property if the appropriate notice is provided.

For ordinary repairs or maintenance, your property manager or landlord needs to give a notice period.

"If an urgent repair is required, such as installation or repair of a smoke alarm, fixing a burst water pipe, a gas leak or a blocked toilet, no notice needs to be given to the tenant," says a spokesperson from Fair Trading NSW.

Notice periods and how often your property manager or landlord can inspect your property differ slightly in each state. For more information, you can always check your lease agreement in Sydney.

"One of the murkier aspects which isn't currently spelled out in the legislation is what counts as an inspection," says Leo Patterson, a senior policy officer at the Tenants' Union of NSW.

"Some landlords who live nearby might do a drive-by inspection where they just cruise past the front of the house, and you get a note a couple of days later pointing out some things to fix up, and the status of that drive by is unclear.

"There are a range of types of inspections, so it's important to ask, 'Is this a general inspection, or are you coming to inspect the repair I reported a month ago?'"

Myth 4: If I fail an inspection, I'll be asked to leave



Mr Patterson says that when it comes to inspections, it's not really a case of pass/fail.

"The purpose of an inspection is to check whether you're breaching the agreement in some way," he says.

If the property isn't being cared for as per the lease agreement, then the tenant may be in breach.

"If you are doing something like running a meth lab in your property, then yes, that's a breach of your agreement," Mr Patterson says.

"And you'll probably be asked to leave."

But if the breach is minor in nature, such as failing to water or maintain the garden and lawns, for example, in most cases you'll be given time to remedy the breach without any repercussions.

Myth 5: I'm not sure whether it's best to stay or go

Finally, when it comes to whether you should be at the property while it's being inspected or nip out for a bit, the answer is simple. It's up to you, says Mr Geftakis.

Some people feel more comfortable being present, while others want to be out of the house.

Mr Edwards agrees and says he doesn't mind if tenants are present or not.

"Happy with either, it's purely the [tenants'] choice," he says.

But even if your preference is to be there, it's not always practical, especially if the inspection is during work hours.

Mr Edwards says tenants are usually given plenty of notice to make alternative arrangements.

4. Ultimate Move-Out Cleaning Checklist



No matter if you're relocating to a new apartment or buying a new house, moving can be pretty stressful. When you have a lot on your mind—packing up, picking renters insurance plans, changing your mailing address—cleaning when moving out can quickly fall down to the bottom of your to-do list.

While hiring a cleaning service can help you check off this task, handling it yourself will save you some money and lets you tackle the cleaning on your own schedule. We've made it easier by compiling this move-out cleaning checklist below so you can quickly make sure you have all of the frequently forgotten spots covered.

Why You Need to Clean

Whether you've sold your home or are just handing the keys back to a landlord, a moving clean-out is almost always required. In the former case, there is probably a clause in the contract stipulating that the house will be completely clean before the new owners move in.

If you're a renter who is relocating, cleaning before you move out is important to get your security deposit back and to avoid a cleaning fee from your landlord or the building's management company. Before you start scrubbing, confirm what the expectations are. Sometimes management will provide their own cleaning list for you, and some leases in Sydney will even state upfront what the costs will be if the place isn't properly cleaned before you move out.

Cleaning Tips



Clean From Top to Bottom

Just like we recommend for your regular cleaning routine, dust surfaces high up in the room, like ceiling fans or shelves, before cleaning lower surfaces, like floors. This way, you won't accidentally waft dust onto just-cleaned areas.

Work in Stages

Depending upon how large the space is, cleaning all at once may be overwhelming. Break it up into chunks of time, starting with the areas you'll use the least between now and move-out day, such as a guest bedroom.

Allot Time for Last-Minute Cleaning

Even if you clean in advance of the move-out day, there are some things you'll have to clean right before you leave, like the bathroom. Remember that once the furniture is moved out, you'll likely have to sweep up the dust bunnies that are uncovered.

Move-Out Cleaning Checklist



Throughout the Home

Dust the ceiling fans. Try the pillowcase trick or this looped duster.

Remove any nails or screws from the walls. If you used hardware to hang up artwork or shelves, now's the time to remove them and fill the holes with putty.

Wipe down walls and molding. A dry microfiber mop will make quick work of this. Grab a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser to get out any scuffs or marks.

- Clean the windows and wipe window ledges.
- Wash the doors and wipe them down with a damp microfiber cloth.
- Sweep and vacuum, then mop the floors.
- Dust any vents or exhaust fans.
- Dust blinds or window treatments (if you're leaving them).

In the Kitchen

- Empty out and clean the refrigerator. Have a cooler ready for any food you want to transport to your new place.
- Clean the oven and stovetop.
- Refresh the dishwasher by running it through a normal cycle with a dishwasher cleaner.
- Scrub and disinfect the sink (and the garbage disposal, if you have one).
- Wipe down and disinfect the countertops.
- Clear out the cabinets. Once emptied, vacuum up any crumbs inside the cabinets, then wipe down the cabinet fronts and knobs.

In the Bathroom



- Scrub the shower.
- Clean the sink and faucet handles.
- Don't forget the toilet! First, scrub the bowl, then wipe down the outside, including the tank.
- Clear out and clean any cabinets.

Outside

If you have a lawn, mow the grass.

Sweep the patio, porch, stoop, and front walkway.

In the Laundry Room

- Clean and deodorize the washing machine. Then clean the outsides of both the washer and dryer.

4.1. Carpet Cleaning for Rentals: When to Replace vs. Deep Clean



Maintaining a clean rental property is crucial for a hassle-free retrieval of bond money at the end of your lease in Sydney. One of the major aspects in a rental property is plush and delicate floor coverings. Of course, carpets add warmth, comfort and aesthetic look, but they also trap pet hair, dirt, pollen and allergens that can pollute the indoor air. Due to faded or stained floor coverings, you may even lose your hard-earned bond money.

As a responsible tenant, it becomes essential to understand your cleaning clauses and decide whether to replace your carpet with a new one or perform a thorough carpet cleaning to pass the rental inspection. Many professional end of lease cleaning Sydney experts recommend assessing the condition of your carpet to make a well-informed decision.

So, here is a complete guide to help you make the right decision about deep cleaning or replacing the dirty carpet in your leased property. With the right approach, you can restore the shine of your floor coverings while maintaining a healthy living environment.

Let's Get Started!

1. Assess the Condition of Your Carpets: Key Signs of Dirt & Damage



First things first! It is imperative to evaluate the current condition of carpets in a rental property. This will help you decide whether deep cleaning can fix it or you will need to spend dollars for the replacement. Here are key signs you look for:

Dull & Discoloured Carpets: This indicates the embedded dust particles, pet hair and heavy spoil. It can be retrieved using a HEPA-filtered vacuum machine.

Visible Spills and Stains: The intensity of stains depends on their appearance. If they are fresh or even mild, you can remove them using natural methods. You can even consider using hot water extraction.

Unpleasant Odours: Mould infestation, pet stains, and beverage spills are the prime sources of lingering odours. Effective cleaning methods can help neutralise the odour. Unfortunately, severe smells often require replacement.

Matted Fabrics: Embedded heavy soil can compact the fibres of your carpets and may require deep cleaning or replacement.

Visible Wear and Tear: Fraying edges, ripped seams, and fabrics are signs of major wear and tear, which is beyond deep cleaning. In such a scenario, you must replace your floor coverings with a new one.

2. Deep Cleaning vs. Replacement: Consider Key Pros and Cons

Understanding the key signs may help you act on the dirt or damage before the final rental inspection. However, it is imperative to weigh the benefits and limitations of both options before making the final decision.

Pros & Cons of Deep Cleaning:

Pros:

An Affordable Option: Deep cleaning is more affordable than replacing the entire delicate floor covering, especially if you are moving out of your tenancy. If you are a budget-conscious renter, use proper tools and products to tackle dirt, dust and stains with perfection.

Helps to Secure Bond Money: Deep carpet cleaning by end of lease cleaning Sydney professionals can improve its appearance and help you get full bond back without any dispute.

It is More Flexible: You can rent a steam cleaning machine or adopt a DIY approach to remove stains, grime and heavy soil from your carpets.

Cons:

It May Deliver Ineffective Results: Deep cleaning may not be ideal for matted and worn-out carpets. In such a scenario, you will need to replace them.

A Temporary Solution: An attention-to-detail spruce removes visible dirt, dust, stains, and lingering odours, but it won't fix the permanent wear and tear.

Pros & Cons of Carpet Replacement:



Pros:

A Long-term Solution: A new carpet gives the entire property a fresh look and can also improve its value. So, landlords can replace worn or dirty carpets with new ones to quickly attract new occupants.

Cons:

An Expensive Option: Replacing carpets is a huge investment, especially for larger properties. So, it is good to try all the cleaning methods before making the replacement decision.

Time-Taking Process: Most tenants require the landlord's permission before replacing the old carpets with new ones. This can be a time-taking process.

3. A Brief Guide to Make the Right Decision

Here are some quick tips and tricks to help you navigate through the right decision with ease:

Check Cleaning Clauses in the Rental Agreement: Check your lease agreement in Sydney for specific cleaning clauses regarding your carpets. Deep cleaning your carpets will restore their pristine shine.

Consult Your Landlord: It is imperative to discuss the condition of your carpets with your landlord. They might help you make the right decision and save you at the end of your tenancy.

Understand the Severity of the Damage: Deep cleaning is perfect for embedded dust, dirt, and stains. Replacement is the best option for permanent damage or worn-out fabrics.

Estimated Budget: If you are on a tight budget, try your DIY cleaning skills. You can also hire professional carpet cleaning in Sydney to restore your carpet to its original glory.

4. Tips to Deep Clean Your Carpets



Here are some best tips and tricks to help you remove dirt, dirt and stains from your delicate floor coverings:

Remove Embedded Dust and Allergens:

Use a HEPA-filtered vacuum machine with an appropriate brush attachment to fetch dust particles, pet hair, dirt and pollen from the fibres of your carpet. This will help you restore the shine of your floorings.

Pre-Treat the Carpet Stains:

Blot the stained surface with vinegar and warm, soapy water to break down the dirt molecules. If the stain is fresh, keep blotting until the stain transfers onto the cloth. White

vinegar's versatility allows you to break down stains, mould and grime without causing any damage.

Use Hot-Water Extraction Method:

You can hire professionals or rent a steam cleaner to dislodge embedded stains and grime. The hot water extraction method involves using hot water and detergent to remove stains. This method can help you deliver sparkling results. Let your carpet dry completely to prevent mould infestation.

Neutralise Odour with Baking Soda:

Sprinkle a generous amount of baking soda to banish the lingering smell from your carpets. Leave it overnight and vacuum clean the surface to prevent white residue.

5. When to Replace Your Carpets in a Rental Property?

The design depends on your specific cleaning clauses and the condition of your carpets. It is important to remember that deep cleaning only removes dirt, dust and stains. In fact, fair wear and tear is acceptable.

To fix the permanent damage, you will require the landlord's permission and replace your worn-out or matted carpets before the rental inspection.

5. Moving out of home



Moving out for the first time is exciting. Make a plan so you don't get stuck with an unexpected bill. Use our checklist to stay organised.

Work out what you can afford so you can cover all your expenses. If you're going to be sharing with a partner or flatmates, agree on the ground rules before you move.

Costs of moving out

Moving out means more than just paying rent and other bills. You also need to plan for one-off moving and connection costs.

If you have a credit card or a loan, you'll have to keep up with those repayments on top of your everyday living expenses.

Work out what you can afford

Before you move out, create a budget. This will help you work out your income and expenses, and what you can spend on your new lifestyle.

Sharing with your partner or flatmates

Sharing a place can be cheaper than renting on your own. But make sure you and your partner or flatmates agree on responsibilities at the outset.

Set the ground rules



Organise how each of you will:

- pay for bills, including rent and utilities
- pay for groceries

- withdraw from the rental lease (if one of you moves out)

Make sure you arrange to pay your rent and utility bills on time. Not paying on time can affect your credit score and rental history. You could even be evicted.

To sign or not to sign

If you sign a lease contract in Sydney, you're in a formal living arrangement. You need to add your name to utility services connected to the property like electricity, gas, water and the internet.

You may rent part of a house from another tenant. If you haven't signed the lease, that means you're in an informal living arrangement.

Get a written agreement from the other tenants about how much rent you'll pay and how household costs will be divided. If you don't and something goes wrong, you may not be able to get your money back.

Before you sign anything, make sure you understand your responsibilities. Find out more about rental bonds and leases.

Money matters in a relationship



If you're moving in with your partner, have a chat about your finances. Get to know one another's attitude to money. Think about your financial goals, both short and long term. You don't have to have everything figured out, just start a conversation.

Getting to know these things helps build a strong foundation for a healthy relationship, with each other and with money. For tips on how to talk about money, see relationships and money.

Conclusion

Properly preparing your rental property for the final inspection is key to ensuring a hassle-free end to your tenancy and the full return of your bond. By thoroughly cleaning the property, addressing any repairs, and meeting the expectations of your landlord or property manager, you can avoid potential disputes and deductions. Whether you choose to handle the cleaning yourself or hire professionals, following a detailed checklist will ensure no area is overlooked. With careful planning and attention to detail, you can confidently approach your final inspection, knowing your efforts will pay off in a smooth, stress-free process.

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