

Landlord-Tenant Compliance Checklist

Action Checklist — ClearLegalTips.com (2026)

1. Confirm Your State's Figures First

- ☐ Look up your state's deposit cap, return deadline, nonpayment notice, and notice-to-enter rule (see the compliance tables).
- ☐ Check your city or county for stricter local rules (rent control, longer notice, deposit interest, extra protected classes).
- ☐ Confirm each figure is current with your state statute or housing authority, and date the confirmation.

2. Security Deposit

- ☐ Keep the total deposit at or below the state cap; count any pet deposit toward that cap.
- ☐ Place the deposit in a separate or interest-bearing account if your state requires it.
- ☐ Document the unit's condition with photos and a written checklist at move-in and move-out.
- ☐ Deduct only for unpaid rent and damage beyond normal wear and tear — never for ordinary aging.

- ☐ Return the deposit within the state deadline, with a written itemized statement of any deductions.

3. Entry and Late Fees

- ☐ Give the required advance notice (commonly 24 hours) before non-emergency entry; enter emergencies only without notice.
- ☐ Put the late fee in the lease and keep it within the state's limit; charge only a reasonable estimate of actual costs.

4. Eviction — Court Process Only

- ☐ Serve the correct notice for the situation: nonpayment (pay-or-quit), lease violation (cure-or-quit), or end of tenancy (notice to vacate).
- ☐ Wait out the full state notice period before filing anything.
- ☐ File an unlawful-detainer case, serve the tenant, and let only the sheriff execute a writ of possession.
- ☐ Never change locks, remove belongings, or shut off utilities — self-help eviction is illegal in every state.

5. Habitability and Repairs

- ☐ Keep heat, plumbing, electricity, hot water, and the structure in working, code-compliant condition.
- ☐ Respond to repair requests promptly; know your state's tenant remedies (repair-and-deduct, escrow, lease termination).

6. Disclosures and Fair Housing

- ☐ Provide the lead-based paint disclosure and EPA pamphlet for any home built before 1978.
- ☐ Provide all state-required disclosures (mold, flood zone, bed-bug history, owner/agent identity, others).

- ☐ Screen all applicants by the same written criteria and document the reason for every decision.
 - ☐ Honor reasonable accommodations, including assistance animals that are not charged as pets.
7. Keep the Paper Trail
- ☐ Match every lease clause and notice to the confirmed state figures; the law overrides any conflicting lease term.
 - ☐ Save copies of notices, itemized statements, move-in/out records, and disclosure acknowledgments.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

How to use this checklist: Work top to bottom whenever you sign a new tenant, return a deposit, or start an eviction. The figures vary by state and city, so complete Section 1 before relying on any number elsewhere in the list. This checklist is informational only and is not legal advice; confirm your state's current rules or consult a licensed attorney for your situation.