Security Deposit Lifecycle Checklist

From verifying the cap before you sign to collecting the refund after you move

Run this checklist alongside the free security deposit calculator at clearlegaltips.com/security-deposit-calculator/. It pairs with the Security Deposit Worksheet.

BEFORE YOU SIGN

- [ ] You ran your state and rent through the security deposit calculator and know the legal maximum
- [ ] The deposit the landlord is asking for is at or below that maximum (or your state sets no cap)
- [ ] The lease states the deposit amount, what it covers, and how it comes back

AT MOVE-IN

- [ ] You got a dated receipt for the deposit you paid
- [ ] You took dated photos or video of the unit condition, room by room
- [ ] You noted any existing damage in writing and gave the landlord a copy

DURING THE TENANCY

- [ ] You know whether your state requires interest on the deposit and, if so, that it is being paid
- [ ] You kept the lease, the receipt, and the move-in photos together

AT MOVE-OUT

- [ ] You took dated move-out photos matching the move-in set
- [ ] You gave the landlord your forwarding address in writing
- [ ] You calendared the return deadline your state allows

IF THE DEPOSIT DOES NOT COME BACK

- [ ] You checked the itemized statement against your photos and the worksheet
- [ ] You sent a return or demand letter citing the amount, the deadline, and the statute
- [ ] If it stays unresolved, you looked into small claims court for the balance

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

This checklist is general information, not legal advice. Security deposit rules vary by state and change over time; confirm your state cap, return deadline, and interest rule against the statute before you rely on them. Full guide, the calculator, and official sources: clearlegaltips.com/security-deposit-calculator/