

Getting Your Security Deposit Back

Your landlord may keep the security deposit, or part of it, for unpaid rent or for costs of repairing damages caused by you, your family, employees or guests. Ordinary wear and tear is *not* damage. If the security deposit is \$50 or more and you lived in the property for more than 6 months, your landlord must also pay you interest on the security deposit.

If your landlord does not return the security deposit plus interest *within 45 days*, you may sue your landlord for three times the amount wrongly kept by your landlord plus attorney's fees. If your landlord fails to notify you of its intent to withhold any part of your security deposit and the cost of the *actual* repairs (not an estimate) within the 45 day period, then your landlord may not keep *any* part of your security deposit.

Are There Exceptions to These Rules?

Some of these rules do not apply if you are evicted for breach of lease or if you move out of the property before your lease term has ended.

If You Were Evicted or Vacated without Notifying Your Landlord

If you were evicted or if you left without telling your landlord, you may still be able to get your security deposit back.

Within 45 days of being evicted or leaving the property, you may provide written notice to your landlord requesting the return of your security deposit and providing your new address. *Upon receipt of your request*, your landlord then has 45 days to follow steps #5, #6, and #7 listed previously.

What to Do If You Have a Problem with Your Security Deposit

If your landlord has violated the security deposit law, you may sue him/her in district court. Your lawsuit must be filed no later than two years from the end of your tenancy. If you file suit against your landlord and hire an attorney to represent you, you can ask the court for attorney's fees.

You may want to talk to an attorney about any problem concerning your security deposit. You may be eligible for free legal services or advice from Maryland Legal Aid or a volunteer lawyer program.

You can get the forms you need to file a small claims lawsuit against the landlord at your local district court. The forms are simple to use, and the court clerk can answer your questions about filling them out. The district court also has free brochures on how to file a small claims lawsuit and tenant/landlord law that include information on security deposits. You can

obtain these brochures from the Internet or from a court clerk.

There is a small fee to file a small claims lawsuit. You also must have someone serve the papers on your landlord, or for an additional fee, you or the court can mail the papers by certified mail, restricted delivery, return receipt requested. You may not have to pay these costs if you are poor. Ask the district court clerk for the forms to ask for a waiver of these costs.

The protection that you have under Maryland's security deposit law cannot be taken away from you or changed by your lease.

Surety Bonds

Laws were passed in 2006 creating a provision for surety bonds to provide tenants with an alternative to paying a full security deposit. These laws are fairly complicated and it is not yet clear how often tenants will actually use this option. If you have questions regarding surety bonds, please contact your local Maryland Legal Aid office.

Legal Aid

This brochure was prepared by the Maryland Legal Aid Bureau, Inc. ("Legal Aid"), a non-profit organization dedicated to providing high quality legal advocacy to protect and advance human rights for individuals, families, and communities.

We want you to know your rights

This brochure is intended to give you general information about your rights, not to give you specific legal advice. We make every effort to keep this brochure up to date, however, the law sometimes changes. Individuals with specific legal questions or a pending legal action are strongly urged to contact an attorney for legal advice. You may be eligible for free legal services from Maryland Legal Aid or a volunteer attorney program.



What Is a Security Deposit?

Under Maryland law a security deposit is any money you pay your landlord to protect your landlord in case you do not pay the rent or damage the property. A security deposit may also include the last month's rent.

Your landlord may not charge a security deposit of more than two months' rent, and if your landlord charges more than this amount, you can sue for three times the extra amount charged plus attorney's fees.

When You Pay Your Security Deposit

Your landlord *must* give you a receipt for your security deposit which may be separate or as part of your written lease. The receipt *must* notify you of the following information:

- (1) You have the right to have the residence inspected by the landlord in your presence to create a written list of damages that exist at the beginning of your tenancy (you *must* request this inspection *by certified mail within 15 days* of moving into the residence);
- (2) You have the right to be present when the residence is inspected at the end of your tenancy to determine if there are any damages (you *must* request this inspection *by certified mail at least 15 days* prior to the date when you intend to move, stating your intention to move, the date of moving, and your new address);

- (3) Your landlord must conduct the inspection *within 5 days* before or after your stated date of intended moving;
 - (4) Your landlord must notify you in writing of the date of the inspection;
 - (5) You have the right to receive, by first class mail, delivered to your last known address, a written list of the charges against the security deposit claimed by the landlord and the actual costs incurred, *within 45 days* after the termination of your tenancy;
 - (6) Your landlord must return any unused portion of the security deposit, by first class mail, addressed to your last known address *within 45 days* after the termination of the tenancy; *and*
 - (7) If your landlord fails to comply with the security deposit law, your landlord may be liable to you for *up to 3 times* your security deposit plus attorney's fees.
- If your landlord fails to provide a security deposit receipt, you may also sue your landlord for \$25.



Anne Arundel County

229 Hanover St
Annapolis, MD 21401
(410) 972-2700
(800) 666-8330

Baltimore City

Main Office
500 East Lexington St
Baltimore, MD 21202

Intake Lines:

(410) 951-7750
(866) MD LAW 4U
(or 866-635-2948)

Business Line:

(410) 951-7777
(800) 999-8904

Cherry Hill

Neighborhood Ctr.
606 Cherry Hill Rd 2nd Fl
Baltimore, MD 21225
(410) 355-4223

Baltimore County

29 W. Susquehanna Ave
Ste 305
Towson, MD 21204
(410) 427-1800
(877) 878-5920

Lower Eastern Shore

Dorchester, Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester

111 High St
Salisbury, MD 21801
(410) 546-5511
(800) 444-4099

Metropolitan Maryland

Prince George's

6811 Kenilworth Ave
Calvert Building, Ste 500
Riverdale, MD 20737
(301) 560-2100
(888) 215-5316

Montgomery

51 Monroe St., Ste. 1200
Rockville, MD 20850
(240) 314-0373

Howard

3451 Court House Dr
2nd Floor
Ellicott City, MD 21043
(410) 480-1057

Midwestern Maryland

Carroll, Frederick, Washington

22 S. Market St, Ste 11
Frederick, MD 21701
(301) 694-7414
(800) 679-8813

Northeastern Maryland

Cecil, Harford

103 S. Hickory Avenue
Bel Air, MD 21014
(410) 836-8202
(800) 444-9529

Southern Maryland

Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's

15364 Prince Frederick Rd
P.O. Box 249
Hughesville, MD 20637
(301) 932-6661
(877) 310-1810

Upper Eastern Shore

Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot

Tred Avon Square, Ste 3
210 Marlboro Rd
Easton, MD 21601
(410) 763-9676
(800) 477-2543

Western Maryland

Allegany, Garrett

110 Greene St
Cumberland, MD 21502
(301) 777-7474
(866) 389-5243

Statewide

Long Term Care Assistance Project

(800) 367-7563

Farmworker Program

(800) 444-4099

Maryland Senior Legal Helpline

(800) 896-4213

TTY Users:

Call Maryland Relay,
Dial 7-1-1

Visit

www.peoples-law.org
for self-help legal
information and
community resources.

Security
Deposits

Maryland Tenants' Rights: Security Deposits

Equal Access to Justice: Legal Aid

