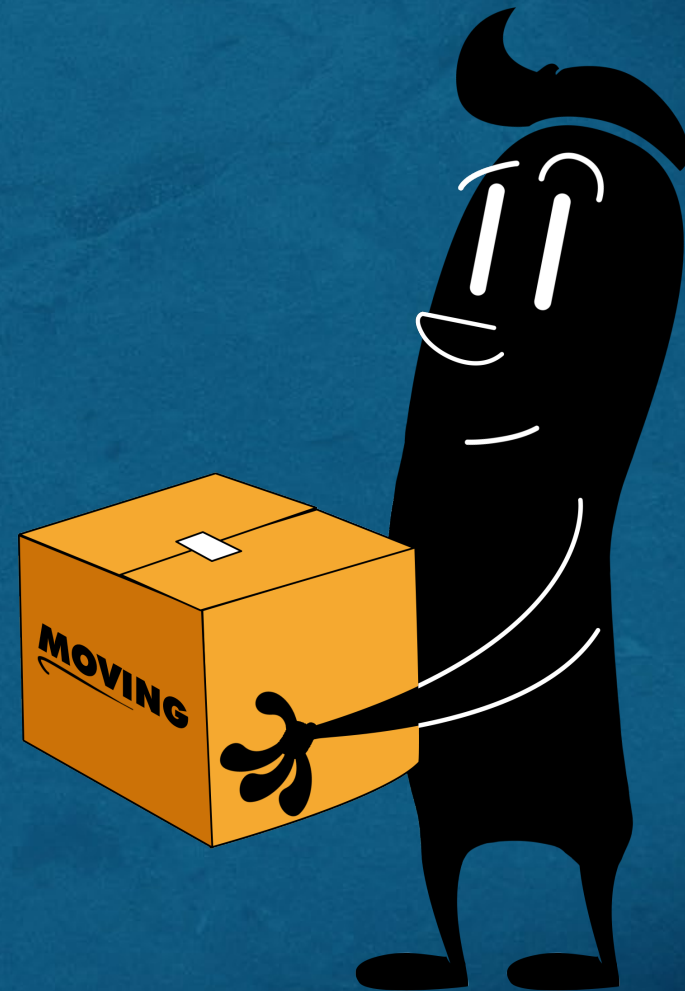




SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES

**10 Things to Know
Before You Rent**



MANY HOUSING LEGAL PROBLEMS CAN BE PREVENTED

Understanding a bit about:

- **Housing law**
- **Responsibilities of tenants and landlords**
- **How leases work**
- **financial issues and practicalities**




1. A BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

Your landlord is not your friend!

- **Check into your potential landlord's reputation before you sign a lease.**
- **Get everything in writing**
- **Keep copies of all documentation and correspondence between the landlord and you.**



2. READ AND UNDERSTAND YOUR LEASE

- **A lease is an enforceable contract between you and the landlord**
 - **A good lease protects you as much as them**
 - **All agreements between the landlord and you should be in the lease before you sign it.**
 - **Be sure you completely understand and agree to all of the provisions in the lease. Never let anyone pressure you into signing**
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3. KEY LEASE TERMS TO UNDERSTAND (AND NEGOTIATE)


- “Term” of the lease - how long it lasts
- What happens at the end of the lease term
- What is the security deposit?
- What happens if someone else lives in the home; subletters, etc.



3. KEY LEASE TERMS TO UNDERSTAND (AND NEGOTIATE)

- What happens if *you* break the lease?
- Housing conditions: Property damage vs normal wear and tear?
- Landlord's right of entry
- Other issues like pets, parking, noise, rights to use common areas, responsibility for common spaces (i.e. mowing)

3. KEY LEASE TERMS TO UNDERSTAND (AND NEGOTIATE)

- **Is negotiation, mediation or arbitration required?**
 - **What happens if the unit is sold**
 - **What the lease say about attorneys' fees.**
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4. SAFETY: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN LANDLORD AND TENANT

- **LANDLORDS:**
Needs to provide a safe and “habitable” home, including basic appliances, water, security, a working roof, heat, etc.
- **TENANTS:**
Need to keep themselves safe in the home: know where smoke alarms and fire extinguishers are and notify the landlord of any unsafe conditions.



5. LOCATION AND COSTS

- **Location matters: Visit potential neighborhoods a few times, at different times of the day, before deciding on whether to rent.**
- **Go shopping: Remember to factor household costs into your budget; don't forget the security deposit, last month's rent, and background check fees**
- **Roommate caution: Remember that when you sign a lease together, you could be responsible for the whole bill if roommates do not pay their share.**

6. GET RENTERS' INSURANCE – IT'S CHEAP AND NECESSARY

Costing as little as **\$12** a month

Renters' insurance could save you,

- **if your belongings are stolen**
- **destroyed in a fire**
- **as well as theft from other places, such as the trunk of your car.**



7. YOU HAVE RIGHTS!

Remember, while paying rent, the apartment is your private home first and the landlord's property second.

You have the right:

- **To complain without being retaliated against - but put everything in writing!**
- **To not to be discriminated against (race, color, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or family composition)**

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