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Preparing Your Home For Moving Out

Security deposits are fees of insurance assessed by a landlord/manager. Unless the renter damages the property, the security deposit is usually refunded at the end of the lease term. In order to insure the return of your security deposit, follow these helpful tips.

Cleaning and repairing your home before you move out is important; however, you also need to take steps to protect your security deposit before you move in.

- Make a written list of any damage you see in the home.
- Take photographs.
- Outline the exact condition you find the home in down to the slightest detail including chips in the paint on a wall or carpet stains.
- Make a copy of your written record as well as the photographs, keep a copy for your records and give one copy to the landlord.
- Ask for a receipt for the deposit and keep a copy of your cancelled check. Don't pay for the security deposit in cash as a paper trail will be useful if needed.

Living In Your Home

- Take care of your home as if you owned it.
 - This includes cleaning (to prevent insect and rodent infestation).
 - Make repairs as needed instead of waiting until you move out.
 - If a repair is large enough or significant enough to require professional work, speak to your landlord before you do anything. Depending on the type of repair required, it may be covered in your lease.
 - Pay your rent in full and on time and keep a record of each payment. If your rent is late, your landlord may charge late fees that may be deducted from your security deposit. This should be detailed in your lease agreement so make sure you read it in full and in depth.

Moving Out

Before you pack your stuff and hit the road, if you want to get your security deposit back, you're going to need to do some work first. Follow these guidelines and you should get back most, if not all, of your security deposit.

In the Bathroom

- Scrub bathtub/shower.
- Scrub inside and outside of toilet (yuck).
- Clean sink.
- Dust and wash the medicine cabinet and mirror.
- Look for any signs of leaking water or mold growth.

In the Kitchen

- Clean and wash out cabinets and drawers. If necessary, vacuum crumbs.

- Make sure that the hinges on all cabinets are working properly and that the drawers slide easily in and out on their tracks.
- Note the condition of the linoleum or tile. Check for cracks or chips. Wash the floor.
- Scrub and use a cleaner with bleach on countertops, backsplash and sinks.
- Look for any chips, nicks or stains in sinks.
- Clean stove, oven, microwave and broiler.
- Defrost the refrigerator and freezer making sure any ice trays or accessories are in place.
- Make sure all appliances are working properly.

In the Bedroom and Living Areas

- Thoroughly vacuum, and if needed, steam clean the carpet. Look for burns or for deep stains in the carpet.
- Check the condition of closet doors and hinges to make sure that they are working properly.
- If your home has a fireplace, make sure that it is clean and working properly.

General Areas

- Check for cracks or stains on walls.
- Remove all tacks and/or nails from the walls and spackle the holes left behind.
- Clean windows and window sills.
- Make sure all electrical outlets are working properly.
- Test ceiling fans, air conditioners and heaters to make sure they are functioning properly.
- Look for any missing switch plates or outlet covers.

Don't Forget To

- Empty all drawers.
- Pack everything that you brought with you to the home including shower curtains, shower hooks and rugs.
- Vacuum your furniture.

Schedule an appointment with your manager to walk through your home. Have on hand the written record and photographs that you compiled when you first moved in. Refer to your records if any preexisting damages are attributed to you. Create a checklist that you and your landlord can review during the walkthrough. If everything meets with the approval of the landlord, you and he/she should sign the checklist and both of you should retain a copy. Be sure to leave your landlord your new address if the deposit is not available immediately after your walk through.

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