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## Tenant Rights and Responsibilities for First-Time Renters

By the time you are a senior in high school, you are ready to be on your own. The nagging from parents has almost become intolerable, and all you want is a place of your own--somewhere where you don't have to answer to anybody. Some people think this is what life after high school will be like, but if they choose to move into an apartment, they are wrong! There will be plenty of people in your adult world that will expect you to answer to them, and there are several things you should know before you move out.



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### Rental Agreements

There are basically two types of rental agreements: month-to-month and lease. Month-to-month agreements are for an indefinite amount of time. You must be given a written contract explaining any fees or deposits, but if there are no fees or deposits required, an oral agreement may suffice. Rent is usually paid on a monthly basis. A lease, which must be in writing, is a legally binding contract, specifying the period of time for which the tenant must remain in the apartment. If the tenant decides to leave the property he/she must continue to pay until the time specified in the lease has expired.

When you decide to leave your parent's house and move into your own place, you will be responsible to a landlord. Getting in trouble with your parents is not quite the same as getting in trouble with your landlord, because a landlord has the right to throw you out if you're not abiding by their rules!

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### The tenant must:

- Pay rent and any utilities agreed upon.
- Keep the apartment clean and sanitary.
- Comply with the requirements of city, county, or state regulations.
- Pay for fumigation and/or damage to the dwelling.

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### The landlord must:

- Make sure the apartment meets all state and local code.
- Maintain all structural components and make sure the dwelling is reasonably weather proof.
- Provide garbage cans and control pests.
- Provide the tenant his name and address, or the name and address of his agent.
- Make repairs to the dwelling.

If you understand these rules, your experience moving out experience can be a great one! Remember that landlord tenant laws are specific to every state. You need to check with a local tenants' union or referral service for details BEFORE you move. Knowledge is power.

**Source:** *Teen Consumer Scrapbook, Washington State Attorney General's Office. (n.d.).* Tenant rights and responsibilities. Retrieved December 14, 2005, from <http://www.atg.wa.gov>

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