



Housing Tips for Tenants

Roles and Responsibilities of Tenants in British Columbia

What are my rights and responsibilities as a tenant?

The main rights of a tenant are:

Right to documentation at the beginning of your tenancy

- You should receive paper copies of the following documents:
 - Residential tenancy agreement (or lease) outlining the terms and conditions of the tenancy, including the rent amount, due date, security deposit and any rules or regulations specific to the rental property.
 - Condition inspection report documenting the condition of the rental unit and any existing damage.

Right to not be harassed/discriminated against:

- A landlord cannot refuse to rent to you, harass you or treat you unfairly because of your identity (i.e., race, religion, sex, familial status, physical/mental disability, age).
 - You also cannot be refused a tenancy because you receive income from welfare, disability benefits or student loans.

Right to quiet/reasonable enjoyment:

- Landlords have a responsibility to make sure that you can live in your rented space peacefully and without disturbance.



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Responsibilities of a tenant are:

- Pay rent and other fees outlined in the lease agreement on time.
- Keep the rental place clean and fix any damage caused by you or someone you allow into the unit.
- Let the landlord know right away if there is a big problem with the rental place that needs fixing, such as pests or emergency repairs.
- Treat the landlord and other tenants respectfully.
- Don't disturb other people living in the building or property beside you. Don't let your guests do so either.
- If the landlord needs to come in for repairs or to show the place to potential new tenants or buyers, allow them to do so after they give you proper notice.
- Permanently leave the property when your lease ends.
- When moving out, remove all your belongings, tidy the unit and hand over all keys to the landlord.



For more information, see:

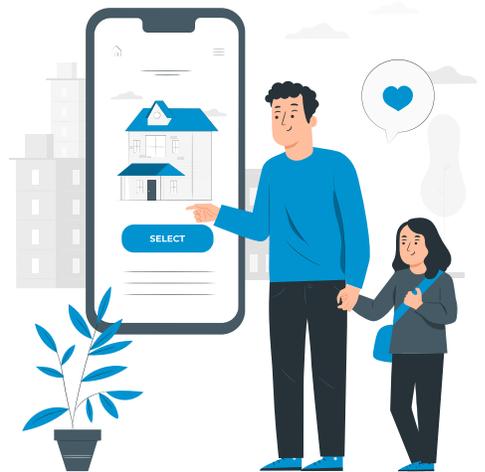
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/residential-tenancies/policy-guidelines/gl01.pdf>

House Hunting Tips

Where to look for housing

- Search for rental listings on Realtor.ca as house listings there are more likely to be checked for legitimacy.

Tip: You can use filters on Realtor.ca to find housing that best suits your needs. To view available rentals, click on the filter button, view 'Transaction type' and change it to 'For rent.' You can also customize by price, number of bedrooms and building type.



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- You can also search for rentals on Facebook marketplace or Kijiji. However, use caution with these sites because listings are not checked for legitimacy and scammers may post fake ads online. See below for information on how to avoid speaking to scammers.
- BC Housing offers government-funded housing to people who live in BC and need help paying rent. Government-funded housing is called ‘subsidized housing.’



- **For more information on subsidized housing, eligibility and how to apply, see:**
<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing>
- **To search for affordable housing in your area, you can visit:**
<https://housingsearch.bchousing.org/>

Need further assistance with finding housing?

- Speak to your settlement worker about your housing needs and they can help you find available housing. If you do not have a settlement worker, you can be connected to one through your local settlement service providers.
- BC211 is a free and confidential service that connects people to resources in the community, including housing. Call or text 2-1-1 and ask for information on housing according to your budget and family needs.

Tips for avoiding fraud

Who are scammers?

- Scammers are people who lie to you and try to get money by selling or renting you a fake rental or housing unit.
- Scammers may post fake advertisements on housing sites (such as Facebook Marketplace, Kijiji or Craigslist). The house posted may be edited to look better, larger or cleaner than it is, or the house may not even exist.



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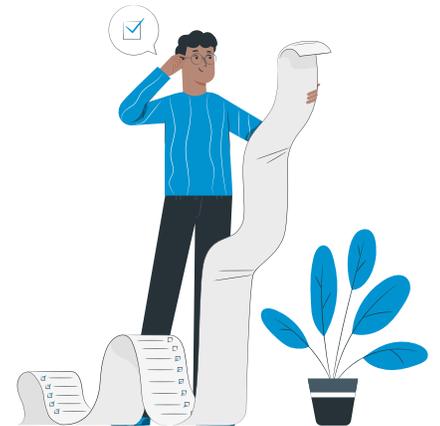
WelcomeBC



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How can I tell if I am talking to a scammer when searching for housing?

- If the person you are speaking with does not want to meet in person so you can view the rental listing.
 - Always meet with the person you are in contact with before settling a lease or paying any fees.
- You are asked to pay a security deposit or rent BEFORE signing a lease.
- You are asked to pay money to someone who lives overseas (e.g., through MoneyGram or Western Union) and whom you have never met in person.
- A property owner may live abroad, but they should have a property manager who lives close by/in town.
- A rental unit seems too cheap for what you are getting.
- Search for other rental units with comparable locations, sizes and amenities to get a good idea of the average cost of similar units. You can also ask your settlement worker for help.
- The rental listing only shows images of the outside of the house (not the inside) or only a few images (2 or 3).



What to do if I gave money to a scammer

- Contact the police right away. Make sure to keep copies of any messages, emails or voice messages you exchanged with the scammer to provide to the police. Also, ask the police to give you a copy of the police report to give to your banking institution.
- Contact your banking institution and tell them about the scam so they can protect your banking account.



TIP: Double-check any housing ads you see with a settlement worker to ensure they are legitimate.

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How to Get Help with Tenancy Disputes

What is my landlord not allowed to do?

- Respond too slowly to, or ignore your requests for unit maintenance and repairs.
 - Generally, for emergency repairs (such as a broken water pipe or heating issues during winter), your landlord should respond promptly, often within hours.
 - For less urgent repairs (such as a non-functioning refrigerator or leaky faucet), a response within 24–48 hours (about 2 days) is expected.
 - For routine maintenance or non-urgent repairs, landlords have a few days to a week to respond.
- Invade your privacy (e.g., let themselves inside your unit without giving you proper notice ahead of time).
- Increase your rent cost more than once every 12 months since you signed your lease agreement.
- Increase your rent without giving you 3 months' notice.
- Break one or multiple terms of your lease agreement.
- Discriminate against you based on race, sex, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, disability, etc.
 - **See this link for the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal's statement on prohibiting discrimination:**
<http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/human-rights-duties/characteristics.htm>
- Try to evict you without providing you with proper notice (including a reason and length of time).



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What should I do if I think my landlord is breaking a lease agreement or is evicting me from the unit?

- First, try communicating with your landlord before involving others. Ask them if you can review the lease agreement together and talk about your concerns with them.
 - If speaking with them is not effective, try written communication instead. For example, if you tried to speak with your landlord about a repair that you need done and a couple days go by without them having addressed the issue, send them a written request asking for the repair.
- If communicating directly with the landlord is not effective, then other parties should get involved.
- Other parties may include a settlement worker or a representative from the British Columbia Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB).



Tip: If calling or visiting an RTB location, have your questions written down ahead of time and have any documents relating to your tenancy issues with you. This will make the conversation more efficient and will ensure that all your questions are answered.

Phone: 604-660-1020 (Lower Mainland) or email: HSRTO@gov.bc.ca

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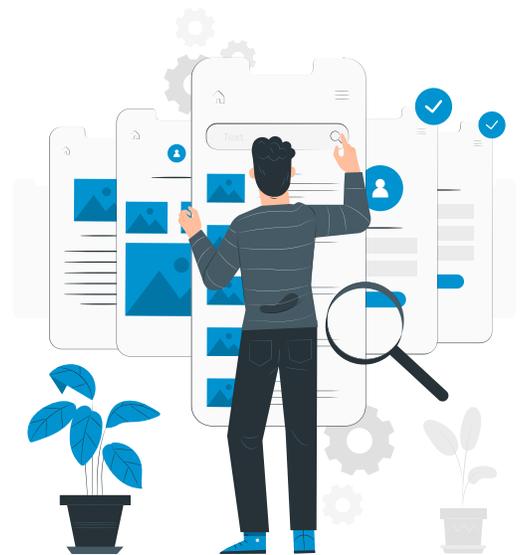
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What other resources or services are available to help me handle a dispute with my landlord?

- **You can get support from a settlement worker.**
 - If you are having trouble communicating with your landlord, the settlement worker can accompany you to speak with the landlord. They can also guide you on what next steps you should take if a resolution cannot be met.
- **You can contact the British Columbia RTB.**
 - The RTB handles tenancy disputes and eviction requests.
- **You can contact PovNet.org's Tenant Resource and Advisory Center (TRAC).**
 - TRAC's Housing Law Clinic offers free representation for tenant disputes and cases at the RTB and free help for challenging RTB decisions, enforcing financial orders and dealing with housing problems outside of the RTB.
 - To check eligibility, contact Ana De Pablos at 604-255-3099 ext. 230.

What if I'm at risk of experiencing homelessness?

- Emergency shelters can provide you with a temporary but immediate place to stay. Many shelters provide meals, beds, laundry, showers and support staff.
- **For more information, visit:**
 - <https://smap.bchousing.org/>
 - <http://shelters.bc211.ca/bc211shelters>



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