

## What is a security deposit?

When you move into a new apartment, most landlords will ask you for a **security deposit** in addition to the **first month's rent**. Some landlords also ask for the **last month's rent** upfront. Some other things to know about security deposits are:

A security deposit is usually equal to one month's rent, but there is no limit to what a landlord can charge for a security deposit.

Landlords have to put the security deposit into a separate bank account. If they don't, they can't try to keep your deposit for any reason after you move out.

The landlord can only keep your security deposit for the cost of unpaid rent or utilities, fees, or damages you or your guests caused to the apartment.

Some landlords charge a **non-refundable move in fee** instead of a security deposit. Read your lease and make sure the deposit you paid is refundable.

## How do I make sure I get my deposit back?



1. **Schedule a walk-through** with your landlord within **4 days** of moveout.
2. Your landlord may make a list of repairs or fees. **Do not sign this unless you agree with everything on the list.**
  - a. If you disagree about **anything** on their list, **dispute the items** on their list and **sign your name**. Make and sign **your own list** that you believe is correct.
  - b. Make sure to make **two copies** of your list. Sign and date them both, and **give one to your landlord**.
3. Give your **new address** to your landlord where you want the deposit to be sent.
4. Your landlord must return your security deposit to you and include a **written summary of any repairs and charges**. If you didn't damage the place and you paid your landlord all the money you owe, **your landlord should give your security deposit back**.

If your landlord doesn't return your deposit, call Legal Aid or visit [help4tn.org](http://help4tn.org) to speak with an attorney.

## What do I need to do when I move out?

### 60 days before you leave...

- **Read through your lease** to see what it says you have to do when you move.
- **Email your landlord** that you want to move out. Give them your new address, ask them to return your security deposit, and ask for a walk-through inspection.

### Before your last day...

- **Pay what you owe.** Pay your landlord for any money you still owe them, like rent or utilities.
- **Start packing as soon as possible.** Clean the place before you leave. Be sure to sweep and dust. Do not leave trash in or around the place.
- Remember to check closets, attics, basements, and garages.

### On the day you leave...

- **Move all your belongings out** of the rental property. If you leave anything behind, you could be charged for the removal.
- **Take pictures and videos of the empty unit.** This is to protect you in case your landlord tries to charge you. You can ask a friend to walk through the unit with you.



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