

Residential Lease Checklist

What to review before signing a Pennsylvania rental agreement — Ament Law Group, P.C.

A lease is a binding contract. Once you sign, you are committed — usually for a year or more. These are the terms most commonly overlooked by tenants before signing.

Basic Terms

- Lease start and end dates are clearly stated
- Monthly rent amount and due date are specified
- Grace period for late rent — PA law does not require one; check if the lease provides one
- Late fee amount and when it applies**
PA law limits late fees to 10% of monthly rent — any higher amount is unenforceable
- Who is responsible for which utilities
- Rent increase policy — can landlord raise rent mid-lease?**

Security Deposit

- Security deposit amount is stated
- PA limits deposit to 2 months rent in year 1, 1 month rent in year 2+
Any deposit above these limits violates the PA Landlord Tenant Act
- Deposit return terms — PA requires return within 30 days with itemized deductions
- Deposits over \$100 must be held in a PA bank escrow account**
- What counts as damage vs. normal wear and tear

Maintenance & Repairs

- Who is responsible for repairs — landlord vs. tenant?
- Process for requesting repairs — in writing? Response timeline?
PA law requires landlord to maintain habitable condition — this cannot be waived
- Who handles pest control, lawn care, snow removal?
- What happens if a major appliance breaks?**
- What alterations can the tenant make?**

Occupancy, Guests & Pets

- All authorized occupants are named on the lease
- Guest policy — how long can guests stay?**
- Pet policy — permitted? Restrictions? Pet deposit?
Pet deposits count toward the overall security deposit limits under PA law

- Subletting — permitted? Requires landlord consent?**

Entry & Privacy

- Notice required before landlord entry
PA requires "reasonable notice" — typically 24 hours, except emergencies
- Circumstances for entry without notice — emergency only**

Early Termination & Renewal

- Early termination clause — can you end early, and at what cost?**
- Month-to-month conversion — does lease auto-renew? What notice is required?
Missing the renewal notice deadline can automatically bind you to another full term
- Buyout clause — can landlord terminate early to sell or move in?**

Move-Out

- Move-out notice requirement — how many days?
- Move-out inspection with tenant?
Photograph everything at move-out — primary protection against deposit deductions
- Cleaning requirements — is professional cleaning required?**

Before moving in: Photograph every room, wall, and appliance. Note all existing damage in writing and give a copy to the landlord. This is your primary deposit protection.

Not sure about something? Questions about a lease term? Want it reviewed before signing? Call (724) 733-3500 or visit ament.law.