



PRO SE / SELF-REPRESENTED GUIDE

Tenant Rights Lawsuit Exhibit Guide

Suing your landlord for security deposit, habitability issues, or lease violations? Organize your evidence to prove your case.

Tenants can sue landlords for security deposit returns, uninhabitable conditions, harassment, illegal entry, or lease violations. Strong documentation is essential to prove what happened and what damages you suffered. This guide helps you build a compelling case with organized evidence.

Lease & Move Documentation

- Signed lease agreement**
Shows the terms your landlord agreed to
- Move-in condition report**
Documents condition when you moved in
- Move-out condition report**
Documents condition when you left
- Security deposit receipt**
Proof of deposit paid and amount
- Final walkthrough documentation**
Notes or video from final inspection

Habitability Evidence

- Photos of problems**
Mold, pests, broken fixtures, water damage, etc.
- Videos of issues**
Leaks, heating problems, pest activity
- Health department reports**
Inspection reports documenting violations
- Medical records**
If conditions caused health issues

Repair Request Documentation

- Written repair requests**
Emails, letters, or texts requesting repairs
- Landlord responses**
Any responses to your repair requests
- Repair timeline**
Log of when you reported issues and what happened
- Repair receipts**
If you paid for repairs yourself

Financial Records

- Rent payment history**
All receipts, bank records, or cancelled checks
- Security deposit demand letter**
Your written request for return of deposit
- Itemized deduction list from landlord**
If landlord provided one, showing claimed deductions
- Receipts for replacement housing**
If you had to move due to uninhabitable conditions

Communication Records

- All landlord communications**
Texts, emails, voicemails, letters
- Illegal entry documentation**
Records of landlord entering without notice
- Harassment documentation**
Any threatening or harassing communications

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. Not documenting the condition of the unit with photos at move-in AND move-out
2. Making repair requests verbally instead of in writing
3. Waiting too long to sue after the issue occurred (check statute of limitations)
4. Not sending a demand letter before filing suit
5. Claiming damages you cannot prove with documentation

ORGANIZATION TIPS

- Create a timeline showing when problems started and what you did
- Take dated photos with something showing scale (like a ruler)
- Keep all originals and make copies for court
- Organize communications chronologically
- Calculate your damages with specific documentation for each amount

COURTROOM PREPARATION

- Send a formal demand letter before suing (required in many states)
- Know your state's security deposit laws and deadlines
- Calculate damages specifically - lost deposit, repair costs, rent abatement
- Bring a witness if someone else saw the conditions
- Be prepared to explain what you want the court to award
- Check if your state allows double or triple damages for deposit violations

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