

# SIGNING A LEASE



You've found an apartment that's right for you and your family. Before you can move in, there's just one thing left to do—sign a lease.

A lease is a legal agreement between you and your landlord, which sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, as well as the rules you and your landlord have agreed on. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) offers the following tips about what a standard lease includes, and what you should know before you sign one:

- Many provinces have a standard one- or two-page lease form. You and your landlord can agree to add things to this form, but nothing that is added can go against the provincial landlord and tenant laws. For example, it is illegal for a landlord to restrict who can visit your apartment, so long as your visitors don't damage the property or disturb the other tenants. If you're not sure whether or not anything that your landlord has added to your lease is legal, contact your province's tenant office.
- Never sign a lease until you fully understand everything it says. Read every word carefully, especially if anything has been added or removed. Take your time, and if there is anything you don't understand, take it to someone you trust who can explain it to you.
- If the landlord agrees to change the lease, make sure they put the changes in writing. If your landlord agrees to make any repairs or renovations before you move in, ask them to list those repairs in the lease.
- Most leases are for a period of 12 months. Sometimes, a landlord will ask you to sign a lease for a period longer than 12 months. This is not illegal, but make sure you understand and are okay with the longer term. Sign the lease only if you know you will be happy in the apartment for the entire period of the lease, and you are sure you can keep your part of the agreement.
- Your lease should also specify in writing how much you will be paying each month in rent, what the rent includes (for example, whether or not it includes utilities, parking or cable TV), and when your landlord can legally increase your rent. This can vary from one province to another.
- In Ontario, for example, landlords can increase the rent on a certain anniversary date each year, whether you have lived in the apartment for one month or 11 months. In British Columbia, the landlord can only increase the rent after your lease ends.

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- When your lease ends, you do not have to sign another lease. Instead, you could decide to rent on a month-to-month basis. When you rent month to month, everything in your former lease is still binding. But instead of having to wait until the lease ends to move out, you can move out at any time by giving two months' notice.
  - Lastly, always keep your lease in a safe place. If you and your landlord have any disagreements or misunderstandings in the future, having a copy of your lease will make it much easier to resolve them.

To find out the lease guidelines for your province or territory, contact your local rental or tenant office, or call your community's local tenancy hot line.

For more housing information, please visit Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation at [www.cmhc.ca/newcomers](http://www.cmhc.ca/newcomers).