



FACT SHEET 7: STARTING A TENANCY

Sign the residential tenancy agreement

The residential tenancy agreement is a legal contract. You and the lessor/ agent agree to the conditions listed when you sign it. The agreement states:

- who is renting the property and who can live there.
- when the agreement starts and ends.
- the amount of rent to be paid per week, and how often and which method you will use to pay the rent (for example electronically, weekly or fortnightly).
- standard and special terms of agreement.

Before signing the residential tenancy agreement, make sure you read and understand it. Ask someone you trust to go through it with you.

You must sign and return the agreement **within 5 days** of receiving it.

When you sign the tenancy agreement, the lessor/agent must give you:

- A signed copy of the *Residential Tenancy Agreement*
- Two signed copies of the Entry Condition Report, which have been completed by the lessor/agent (see Section 3 below)
- The booklet *Renting a home: A tenant's guide to the rules for renting in Queensland* (Information Statement 17A)

You should keep these documents in a safe place.

Pay the bond and rent in advance

- **What is a bond?** Money you pay at the start of your tenancy that the lessor/ agent can claim if you breach the agreement and owe money for rent, damages or other costs at the end of the tenancy
- **How much bond will you pay?** If your rent is \$500 a week or less, the maximum bond a lessor/agent can charge is equal to 4 weeks rent. The lessor/agent can charge any amount if the weekly rent exceeds \$500.
- **What happens to my bond money?** Your bond money is lodged with the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA), where it is held in trust while you live in the property. The RTA sends you an official receipt with your Rental Bond Number on it. Keep this receipt in a safe place, such as in a folder with the copies of your rental agreements.
- **What if I don't have enough money for the bond?** If you cannot afford to pay the full rental bond, ask the lessor/agent if you can pay in installments and/or check if you may be eligible for a Department of Housing Bond Loan. Information on how to apply for this bond loan is available at your local Department of Housing office or at <http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/loans/bond/index.htm>

- **How can you get your bond back at the end of your tenancy?** When you leave the tenancy, **you** should apply to the Residential Tenancies Authority to get your bond back by completing a Form 4 Bond Return Form, as soon as you return the key to the lessor/agent. You should send this completed form direct to the Residential Tenancies Authority.

Complete the condition report

- a) The lessor/ agent fills out and signs two copies of the condition report.
- b) They must give you two copies of the filled out condition report for you to fill in.
- c) You must fill out the 'tenant' section. If you do not agree with their comments, add your own comments in the tenant column of **both** copies, before you sign the report. It is important that you check and comment on what is on the form as this may be important if there is a dispute about the condition of the property at the end of the tenancy.
- d) You must sign and return one copy of the condition report to the lessor/agent **within three days** after the day you are allowed to move in.
- e) Keep your copy safe with your residential tenancy agreement.

Pay the rent

- Rent is usually paid weekly, fortnightly or monthly. You and the lessor should agree on how much rent you will pay, when you will pay and the method of payment **before** you sign the tenancy agreement.
- Most lessors require tenants to pay **rent in advance**. You will need to make your first rent payment before you move in. This means for example you would have to make a pre-payment of 2 weeks rent so you can live in the premises for the next two weeks. You cannot be asked to pay anymore rent until the rent in advance is used up, that is until the end of the two weeks you have already paid for.
- Paying by direct debit through your bank, employer or Centrepay (a free direct bill-paying service for Centrelink customers) is one way to make sure you rent is paid on time. If paying by direct debit, make sure you have sufficient funds in your account. You need to allow time for the processing of the fund transfers or you could end up in arrears or be charged fees by the bank.
- If you deposit the money into a bank account or pay by direct debit or Centrepay, write to the lessor/agent and ask for a copy of your rent payment record. Be clear about how often you want this record sent to you, for example monthly or three monthly. If you pay your rent by cash or cheque, the lessor/agent must give you a receipt. Keep these receipts with your copy of the residential tenancy agreement.

Moving in

Once you have signed the residential tenancy agreement, paid the bond and rent in advance and received the keys, you are ready to move in.

You will need to have the gas, electricity and telephone connected in your name and pay deposits if required. You may be able to choose your gas and electricity suppliers.

Read *Renting a home: A tenant's guide to the rules for renting in Queensland* for information about what to do during your tenancy. This guide should be given to you by the agent/lessor after you sign the tenancy agreement.

For further information

This fact sheet is part of a series of fact sheets, including:

- Fact Sheet 1 – *Identifying your housing needs*
- Fact Sheet 2 – *Documents you need to rent a property*
- Fact Sheet 3 – *Finding a property to rent*
- Fact Sheet 4 – *Making a good impression*
- Fact Sheet 5 – *Inspecting a property to rent*
- Fact Sheet 6 – *Applying for a tenancy*
- Fact Sheet 8 – *Where to get help when renting*
- Fact Sheet 9 – *Tenancy databases*

Contact us

For more information, visit <http://www.housing.qld.gov.au/contact/offices/index.htm> for your local Department of Housing office's contact details.