

Property Inspection Checklist

 LandlordVision



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A Property Inspection Checklist for Landlords - First published August 2019

V2 March 2021

V2.1 October 2022

V2.2 September 2023

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A property inspection should be carried out at the start of a tenancy, when a tenancy ends, and at periodic intervals during the tenancy. Failing to carry out a regular property inspection is inadvisable for many reasons, not least the fact you could end up missing a host of serious problems.

Inspecting a property at the start of a tenancy verifies the condition of the property before the tenant moves in. It's important to take a proper inventory at the start of the tenancy, before the tenant moves in. If property damage occurs during the tenancy it is vital that both parties can refer to an inventory to settle any subsequent disputes.

For the same reason, it is essential that you carry out a full property inspection once a tenant moves out. The tenant should return the property to its original condition, subject to normal wear and tear, of course. And if there is any damage to be rectified you can make a claim against the security deposit.

Carry out Periodic Property Inspections

How often you inspect your property should be noted in the tenancy agreement. Yearly inspections are the norm, but it is wise to inspect the property bi-annually or even quarterly in the first year until you are sure that more frequent inspections aren't needed. Any more than that and your visits are likely to be viewed as a nuisance.

Pro tip: schedule a property inspection in the first three months. This will give the tenant an opportunity to ask any burning questions they may have, such as how appliances work and where the bins need to be stored. It will also give you a chance to spot any potential problems before they have chance to take hold, such as maintenance issues.

In the long-term, the frequency of property inspections will largely depend on the type of tenants you have and what kind of relationship you have with them. Once

your tenants have been there more than two years and you are happy that they are looking after the place, you might be happy enough to just do an annual inspection.

Can I carry out an inspection during lockdown?

Social distancing and lockdown restrictions have made it difficult for landlords to carry out regular checks on their properties. However, they are still under legal obligation to keep their property safe and in working condition.

Routine inspections can be carried out via Facetime or Zoom as a temporary measure, but if essential work such as a boiler repair is required, social distancing and hygiene measures should be taken. [A person who is self-isolating should only have repairs done if the issue is a threat to their safety.](#)

Give Notice Before an Inspection

Landlords can't just turn up uninvited. You must give a tenant notice before you carry out a property inspection.

Give your tenant at least 24-hours' notice, preferably in writing via email or in a letter through the post/hand-delivered. Ideally, give the tenant at least a week's notice, in case they need to book a day off work to let you in.

If the [tenant refuses you access](#), find out why. Be flexible and willing to adjust your schedule to fit in with theirs. If all else fails, remind the tenant this is for their benefit, as you need to check the property to make sure it is safe and habitable.

If you're having difficulty contacting your tenant to arrange an inspection you should send letters via recorded delivery.

Statutory Inspection Checks

Fail to carry out these checks at your peril. The checks in this section are required for health and safety. Carrying them out regularly can save lives.

Smoke Alarms

Test all smoke and CO alarms and replace batteries if necessary.

Heating and Hot Water

Verify the property has hot water and the heating works. Carry out a visual check of the boiler and other hot water/heating appliances. Check your records to see when they were last serviced. If you spot any issues, call in a qualified engineer.

Appliances

Check all appliances. Do they work? Are they in good condition? Do any appliances need replacing?

Electrics

Check the electrics, such as sockets and light fittings. Is there any sign of damage? If there are any issues, take remedial action immediately. Faulty electrics are a major hazard.

Fire Escapes

Fire escapes must be clear of debris and other impediments. Does the fire door close properly? Is it blocked externally?

Tenancy Breaches

While the majority of tenants will look after your property there may be tenants who breach their tenancy agreement. During an inspection you should look out for signs of a tenancy breach and take steps to mitigate any damage caused by these.

Smoking

If you are a landlord that bans smoking in your properties you should be on the lookout for any evidence that this ban is being breached. If you are a non-smoker it will be easy to detect the smell of cigarette smoke in your rental property. Strong room fresheners and other highly perfumed scents may be used to mask the smell of smoke. Another indication of smoking within a property is nicotine stains on walls and ceilings, it tends to leave a yellow / orange tinge, especially on lighter décor. The damage caused by smoking can be time consuming and costly to put right, so this is something you should deal with straight away if you notice it.

Pets

If you don't allow pets in your rental properties you should look out for signs of pets during an inspection. Pet hair, scratched doors, carpet damage and pet mess in the garden are indicators that pets live in the property. If the tenant asks you not to enter a room in the property this can be another indicator of a pet being present. If there is evidence of a pet at the property you should discuss this with your tenant.

Signs of Illegal Activity

It is very rare that you will find any signs of illicit activity at your rental home, but in a small percentage of cases it may happen. Where properties are used for illicit purposes it is usually easy enough to spot the signs. Be alert to unusual smells and look out for drug taking paraphernalia. In the worst case scenarios you might find

parts of the property blocked off to you, or you will find that there is significant property damage.

Sub-letting

Some landlords are perfectly fine with sub-letting, if this is the case you won't need to look out for this during your inspection. In recent years though there have been some sub-letting scams whereby someone rents the property from the landlord and then overcrowds it with tenants. It is wise for landlords to be vigilant against these kinds of scams.

Look for indications extra adults are living in the property. Extra mattresses, pillows, and bedding are indications of this. Be alert to possible signs that the property is being sub-let. For example, if you rent to a single person but it looks like a family are living in the property. Always talk to your tenants about this, they may have family or friends staying with them for a short while.

Property Damage

During an inspection you should look for any signs of property damage. For the most part, tenants will report any property damage that occurs during their tenancy, but it's a good idea to look out for discrepancies. If you notice damage that the tenant hasn't reported you can then talk to the tenant about the importance of reporting all damage. If you do notice damage make sure to take photographs and to arrange for a repair as soon as possible.

Health and Hygiene

[The Homes \(Fitness for Human Habitation\) Act](#) means landlords have a duty of care to their tenants and must provide a habitable property. Therefore, mould, mildew, insect infestations, and worse are best avoided.

Damp and Mould

Serious cases of damp are not difficult to spot. Flaking paint, dark patches, salt on the walls, and an unpleasant musty smell indicate damp is an issue. Spongy areas underfoot are also indicative of rotten floorboards.

Even if it hasn't quite reached this level, watch out for peeling wallpaper and suspicious dark patches. Damp is rarely an issue in modern homes, but in older properties, it is a common problem.

Watch out for penetrating damp as well as rising damp. Again, penetrating damp is more common in older properties where the mortar has weakened over time. It can also be a problem where there is a leaking gutter, pipe, or a blocked drain.

Mould is unsightly and a health hazard. Check bathrooms for mould and mildew. Poorly ventilated homes are also a prime candidate for mould and mildew. If a property smells musty, there will be mould lurking somewhere.

Leaks

Check taps and plumbing for leaks and drips. Dripping toilet cisterns and taps are easy to fix.

Check gutters for signs of wear and tear. Blocked gutters can cause leaks and water damage. Ideally, arrange for gutters to be cleared out at least once a year.

Look for missing tiles and roof damage. It doesn't take much for water to find a way in, which will cause a lot of damage internally.

Pest Infestations

No landlord wants to be greeted by a party of cockroaches when they set foot inside a rental property. Unfortunately, cockroaches are not the only pest you need to worry about. Fleas and bedbugs are difficult to eradicate and an absolute menace. If a

property is infested with fleas, a hot cup of tea or coffee placed on the floor will be a magnet for them, as will your legs.

Look for wasp nests too. These can cause problems in late summer when wasps drunk on fermenting fruit are more inclined to attack.

Blocked Drains

Blocked drains stink to high heaven. They can also cause damp issues when water is allowed to pool outside. If a drain is blocked, have it cleared and find out what's causing the blockage.

Poor Cleaning Habits

The majority of tenants look after their homes and generally keep them clean. Where this isn't the case though you may need to ask your tenants to keep the property in a cleaner state and educate them on how to do this.

General Wear and Tear

Rental properties suffer greater levels of wear and tear compared to regular homes. That's par for the course. Because of this, fixtures and fittings will need replacing sooner. Be alert to this when you carry out a property inspection.

Look closely at kitchens and bathrooms, flooring, and if a property is furnished, the furniture. Make a note of anything that looks worn out. Whilst it might not need replacing immediately, it is wise to budget for replacement in the next 12 months.

Be Methodical

Work through each room in order, so you don't inadvertently miss a room. Make a note of the condition of each item on your checklist. Compare its condition to the previous visit. Take photos to act as a visual aid in case of a future dispute.

Once you have completed your property inspection, discuss the outcome with the tenant. If repairs or replacements are needed, inform them of an estimated timescale and make sure access is not a problem. Sign and date your property inspection checklist and ask the tenant to sign and date it too.

Use a standardised property inspection form for all of your properties. This makes the process quicker. Don't forget to back up written notes with photos and video evidence.

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Safely store important property and tenant information

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