

When you agree to rent an apartment from a landlord for a specific monthly rent, you and the landlord have entered into a contract most often referred to as a lease agreement. This is a legally binding document and cannot be changed without the consent of both parties. There are two types of leases: term lease and periodic lease. A term lease states how long the tenancy will last (six months, a year, etc.). A periodic lease has no specific end date. Usually, these leases are month-to-month.

A lease agreement will typically include the following:

- The names of the landlord and the tenant.
- The address of the rental unit.
- The amount of rent.
- When rent is due, to whom, and where it is to be paid.
- Who is responsible for utilities.
- The amount and purpose of the security deposit.
- The amount of a returned check fee.
- Whether pets are allowed.
- The smoking policy.
- The number of occupants allowed.
- Lock policy. No additional locks can be installed on any door without the written consent of the landlord.
- Condition of Premises. Before you take possession of the apartment, the landlord should give you a checklist that lists all the rooms, fixtures, and appliances in the apartment. Inspect the apartment and make note of the condition of the various items on the list. If you notice any damage make sure to photograph it and report to the landlord. Be very thorough!
- Use of garage or parking space(s).
- Reasonable time for repairs. What is "reasonable" depends on the needed repair.
- The conditions under which the landlord can enter your rental unit. Typically this is for repairs, to show it to prospective residents, workmen or contractors. The landlord should provide notice to the tenant.
- The conditions under which a lease can be terminated.

Before you sign a lease, you should carefully read and understand the entire document. Do not feel rushed into signing. If you don't understand something, ask the landlord to explain it to you. If you still don't understand, discuss the agreement with a friend, family member or legal aid organization.

It is strongly recommended that you keep a file that includes copies of all lease agreements, notices, letters, receipts and other communication between you and the landlord.

More information about leases and tenant obligations can be found at [www.ndaa.net](http://www.ndaa.net).

