

Being a good tenant



Great neighbourhoods start with you.



How to reach us

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E-NEWS UPDATES

Visit waterloo.ca/subscribe and sign up to receive monthly updates on all things neighbourhoods.

Waterloo Neighbourhoods e-newsletter includes information about neighbourhood projects, grants, ideas, and what's happening.

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This material is available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

Please contact us a minimum of 3-5 business days before it is required.

About this guide

Are you:

- Looking to rent?
- Moving to a new rental property?
- Struggling with your current landlord?

This guide is here to help. Renting can sometimes be tricky and poor relationships between tenants and landlords can be frustrating and make the experience difficult. As a tenant, you can't control your landlord, but there are some things you can do to be a good tenant and help develop positive relationships.

This guide is here to support tenants by providing information including: tenant responsibilities, tips for prospective renters, and recommendations for how to create a sense of community.

General tips for being a good tenant

PAY YOUR RENT ON TIME.

Paying your rent on time is an important way to be a good tenant. Each month, make sure to pay your landlord the full rent amount by the agreed upon date.



Supplying your landlord with post-dated cheques or setting up preauthorized payments, can help relieve the pressure of having to remember when to pay rent. While these may be helpful practices, it is important to know that landlords cannot mandate these forms of payment. If an alternative payment method works better for you, let your landlord know.

KEEP THE RENTAL UNIT CLEAN AND DAMAGE FREE.

Maintaining and keeping the property clean is a great way to keep the relationship with your landlord strong. Monitoring cleanliness in common areas, like hallways, garages, and outdoor spaces are a shared responsibility. It is a good practice to treat your rental as if you own it.

QUICKLY NOTIFY YOUR LANDLORD IF DAMAGES OR ISSUES ARISE.

If something goes wrong at the property, immediately submit a maintenance request and notify the landlord. Costs associated with damages commonly increase the longer a problem goes unaddressed. The landlord must be made aware of the problem right away to make arrangements for maintenance.



Work with your landlord to develop a clear communication process. Ask your landlord what method of communication works best to report concerns. Depending on your landlord this may be email, phone, text, or submitting a formal work order.

BE FRIENDLY.

Be kind towards your landlord and neighbours. A simple wave and greeting makes others feel welcome and promotes positive relationships. For inspiration on other ways to be a great neighbour, check out the Being Neighbourly guide on [the neighbourhoods website](#).

ASK BEFORE MAKING CHANGES.

If you want to make changes to the space you are living in, such as painting or changing light fixtures, contact your landlord to ask permission. A written agreement between the tenant and the landlord is required to make changes to a rental property.

GET INSURANCE.

Obtaining insurance is a good investment: your landlord's property insurance will not cover your liability or belongings in the event of a fire, theft, or damage. Renters, or tenant insurance, can cover the contents of the unit, personal liability, and living expenses if you are displaced from your rental space due to damages (such as fire or flood). To learn more about renters insurance, average costs, and coverage, check out [this article](#).

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

There are laws in Ontario to protect both landlords and tenants. It is important to review these laws and understand how they apply to you as a tenant. Rules surrounding evictions, leases, rent increases, and more can be found at the [Government of Ontario website](#).

To help tenants understand their rights, the Social Development Centre has created a helpful infographic that outlines tenant rights, responsibilities, and who to contact when rights have been violated. For more information, check out this [infographic](#).

In Ontario, the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) dictates the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords and helps resolve disputes between these two parties. For legal assistance or questions, contact the Landlord and Tenant Board.



The LTB offers a variety of helpful brochures on their website. These brochures provide information about the responsibilities of landlords and tenants as well as LTB processes. Below are links to some important resources:

- Information for New Tenants
- Summary Guide to the Residential Tenancy Act
- How a Landlord Can End a Tenancy
- How a Tenant Can End Their Tenancy

BE MINDFUL OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION.

In Ontario, the *Human Rights Code* applies to both tenants and landlords. Under the *Code*, everyone has the right to equal treatment in housing without discrimination and harassment. Landlords are also responsible for making sure housing environments are free from discrimination and harassment.

For more information on the policy of human rights and rental housing, visit the Ontario Human Rights Commission's website.

Bylaws

City and Regional bylaws do not just apply to property owners. As a tenant, make sure you are aware of noise, parking, garbage, snow removal, and rental licensing bylaws.

NOISE

The City's noise bylaw sets out different standards for different types of noise. Some general rules include:

- Persistent barking or pet noise is prohibited at all times
- Persistent yelling, shouting, and loud voices are prohibited from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (9:00 a.m. on Sundays)

- Residential renovation noise is prohibited from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (9:00 a.m. on Sundays)
- Commercial construction noise is prohibited from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (all day on Sundays and holidays)

To make a noise complaint or learn more about this bylaw, visit the [City of Waterloo website](#).

WASTE

The Region of Waterloo has bylaws that govern waste collection. These bylaws dictate what types of waste can be collected, the types of waste that are banned from landfills, and rules for curbside pick-up. For more information on waste collection, visit [the Region of Waterloo webpage](#).



If you live in a single-family home, legal duplex, eligible townhouse unit, or a small apartment building (six units or less) you will receive curbside pick up. After waste is picked up, make sure to collect your empty bins in a timely manner.

PARKING

Traffic and parking bylaws regulate where you can park, stop, and drive on roads in Waterloo. Some key rules include:

- Overnight parking on city streets and city lots is prohibited from 2:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Visit [the City of Waterloo parking page](#) to apply for an overnight parking permit
- Parking on residential yards or over the edge of a driveway is prohibited
- To ensure safety and accessibility, vehicles cannot block a sidewalk or overhang curbs
- After a significant snowfall, the city will issue short notice parking bans. To receive updates on parking bans, sign up for service alerts at the [City of Waterloo website](#)

For more information on traffic and parking bylaws, check out [the full PDF](#).

SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL

According to the City's bylaws, landlords are responsible for snow and ice removal within the private property, unless an arrangement has been made with the tenants. Further, the City's sidewalk snow and ice bylaw requires that property owners clear the municipal sidewalk adjacent to their property, within 24 hours after the end of a snowfall.

If a property owner fails to clear their sidewalk in a timely manner, crews contracted by the City may be sent to clear them. The costs associated with this work, including potential administrative fees, will be invoiced to the property owner. If this invoice is not paid, the costs may be added to the tax rolls for the subject property.



Residential landlords and tenants may develop separate service agreements for snow and ice removal. These service agreements may assign the responsibility of snow and ice removal to the tenant. For more information, check out [this article](#).

RENTAL HOUSING BYLAW

The Rental Housing Bylaw requires landlords of residential rental units, in buildings up to three floors, to have a current rental license. Annual licenses ensure accommodations are safe and guarantee that property owners have insurance, functioning HVAC, safe electrical hardware, valid fire inspections, and meet zoning compliance. Check the rental license status on your rental address [online](#).

PROPERTY STANDARDS BYLAW

The property standards and adequate heat bylaws set out minimum standards for all residential rental units in Waterloo. Examples of property standards include:

- elements such as stair railings, plumbing, electrical, fences, foundations, walls, windows, and roofs must be in a state of good repair;
- the dwelling must be free of accumulations of airborne contaminants that could pose a health concern; and
- an extensive accumulation of mold must be immediately cleaned and removed by the property owner.

For a comprehensive list of standards, review [the full bylaw](#).

The adequate heat bylaw mandates a minimum air temperature of 21°C in rental units. If the property owner pays for heating, the minimum temperature must be provided. For more information, review [the full bylaw](#).



The City of Waterloo provides a variety of supports for tenants. If you believe your rental is not meeting the minimum property standards, you are encouraged to report the concern, in writing, to your landlord or property manager and provide them an opportunity to address the concern. After doing this, if you feel that your concern has not been adequately addressed, you can contact the City to report your concern. For more information or to report a concern, visit the [City of Waterloo website](#).

FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY

In accordance with the Province of Ontario Fire Code, landlords are responsible for ensuring that working smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors are installed and maintained in rental properties. Tenants also have a responsibility to make sure that smoke and CO alarms are in working order and are not tampered with. If a smoke or CO detector is disconnected, not operating, or is impaired in some way, tenants are required to notify their landlord.

In addition to ensuring working smoke and CO alarms, here are some other helpful tips to promote fire safety at home:

- Cooking is the leading cause of fires in the home. To prevent cooking fires do not move pots with hot grease and never leave cooking unattended. If a cooking fire occurs, put the lid on the pot and turn the stove off (if it is safe to do so). Never put water on a grease fire.
- Do not leave candles and open flames unattended. Ultimately, avoid the use of candles if possible.
- Know all exits out of your home in case of a fire and always plan two ways out.
- Never store personal items next to your furnace or water heater and do not block or store items in the pathway of your exit.

Communicating with your landlord

Maintaining open and honest communication with your landlord is a good practice. If there is an issue at the property, quickly contact your landlord. As the property's owner, they must be made aware of any issues so they can address them.

While communication is important, recognize that your landlord may be busy. While it is perfectly acceptable and preferable to bring up serious issues, not every problem can be solved by your landlord. Recognize that some problems may not warrant a complaint. For example, if you are having issues with a noisy neighbour, this may not be a problem your landlord can solve. Consider discussing the issue directly with your neighbour. Sometimes a simple discussion can help solve the problem. If the noise persists, consider contacting the bylaw team.

For more tips on communicating with your landlord, check out the list below:

- Work with your landlord to establish a process for reporting damages or repairs. Developing a clear process early on can prevent future confusion.
- Offer multiple avenues for communication. Provide your landlord with your phone number (for calls and/or texts) and an email.
- Respond to your landlords inquiries in a timely manner.

Navigating property management corporations

Property management corporations manage rental properties on behalf of property owners. These companies:

- advertise units,
- find and screen tenants,
- collect rent,
- communicate with tenants,
- conduct regular property inspections,
- perform maintenance and work orders, and more.

If you are renting a property through a property management company, you will not communicate with the landlord directly. All communication, including work orders and payment, will be through the property management company.

There are certain benefits associated with renting from a property management corporation. These include:

- Property managers have their own contractors and maintenance professionals readily available. When there is an issue at the property, maintenance staff are commonly sent in a timely manner.
- Many companies have 24/7 contact numbers. If you require assistance, you can reach out immediately.

In addition to the advantages, there are also some disadvantages to consider:

- The property managers do not own the property. They may be less attentive to certain issues.
- Property management corporations often handle many properties. Sometimes they may be difficult to contact for minor issues.

Overall, be sure to investigate whether you are renting from the landlord or a property management corporation, consider the advantages and disadvantages, and make an educated decision!



If you are thinking about renting from a specific property management corporation, check out online reviews from previous customers. This will help you decide if you want to rent from this company.

Tips for prospective tenants

RENT WITHIN YOUR MEANS.

Develop a budget before beginning your rental search to determine what rent expense you can afford. When viewing units, consider if expenses like utilities, internet, and parking, are included in the rent amount.

KNOW YOUR NEEDS.

Before beginning your rental search, develop a list of needs and wants for your future place. This may include a specific number of bathrooms or bedrooms, a certain location, proximity to public transit, or a feature like in-unit laundry. Bring this list when viewing prospective rentals.

THINK ABOUT YOUR ROOMMATES WANTS AND NEEDS.

If you are planning on living with roommates, work together as a group to clarify your wants and needs for your new rental property. Make sure everyone is included throughout the rental search and selection process.

Embracing community in multi-unit buildings

Despite seeing neighbours in common areas, like the lobby, elevator, and hallway, it is often difficult to form connections with your neighbours in multi-unit buildings. To develop a sense of community, consider the following:

- (1) Plan an event and invite all residents. Barbeques, craft nights, or fitness classes are great ways to involve your neighbours. Advertise the event on a building message board or on an online portal. If your building has common areas, like an outdoor patio or party room, take advantage of them.
- (2) Be friendly and greet your neighbours! Strike up a conversation in the elevator, say ‘hello’ as you pass someone in the hall; the little things can make a huge difference.
- (3) Organize a charity event, like a building-wide food drive. Advertise the initiative and invite all neighbours to participate.
- (4) Create welcome packages for new residents in the building. New residents may be new to the neighbourhood, city, or the country! Provide them with a welcome letter, highlight some of your favourite local shops and restaurants, and consider providing your contact information to foster future communication.



Do you want to establish a strong sense of community in your neighbourhood or multi-unit building? Visit the City of Waterloo [neighbourhoods website](#) for inspiration or email neighbourhood@waterloo.ca.

Resources

- City of Waterloo Bylaw – For more information on bylaws relating to noise, parking, open air fire, snow removal, graffiti on private property, maintenance issues at a rental property, and rental licensing, visit the City of Waterloo website.
- Landlord and Tenant Board - For legal concerns, contact the Landlord and Tenant Board.
- Lutherwood Housing Support Services - Provides housing support and drop-in services for residents across the Region of Waterloo. Housing advisors offer support to help families maintain their tenancy or find new housing, provide landlord negotiation and mediation, and help with housing search.
- Ontario Human Rights Commission – Visit this website to learn more the policy on human rights and rental housing.
- The City of Waterloo Neighbourhood's Team – The neighbourhood's team provides support and resources to help you develop neighbourly connections and promote a sense of belonging in your community. For more information on supports and funding available, check out the neighbourhoods website. If you have any questions, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca.
- Waterloo Region Community Legal Services - If you receive paperwork from your landlord and are unsure what to do, contact the Waterloo Region Community Legal Services for advice.
- Waterloo Fire Rescue - For more information on fire safety and your responsibilities as a tenant, please reach out to the Fire Prevention Division at 519-884-2121 or check out the fire services website.