Four things to do before you rent a home:

Renting a home is an important decision. Following a few simple steps before moving in can help you and your family later if something goes wrong with your landlord.

- Inspect the home before you agree to move in.
- Insist on a written lease and understand it before you sign.
- Keep a copy of the written lease in a safe place.
- Complete a move-in checklist and keep a copy of it in a safe place.

Scan the QR code to find a move-in checklist anyone can use!

We make **equal justice** happen.

LegalAidofNebraska.org

Legal Aid OF NEBRASKA | Native American Program

Native American AccessLine 800-729-9908

Legal Aid OF NEBRASKA

Tenants' Rights & Best Practices

What to know and do before you rent.



Inspect the home

Q: Why should I inspect the rental property?

A: There may be parts of the property that are broken or damaged that you may be accused of damaging. You may have to pay for these if they are not mentioned before inspecting the property.

Q: What should I look for when inspecting the rental property?

A: Look for anything that doesn't work, like: light switches, AC, toilets, furnace, water heater, appliances, etc. Also, watch out for anything that is damaged or dirty, such as: broken windows, loose electrical wires, mold, stains, etc.

Q: What else should I do before I agree to rent?

A: Ask your landlord to sign & date both a move-in checklist & a written lease agreement.

Get a written lease

Q: Why sign a written lease?

A: It is harder to defend your rights without a written lease. A lease is the only proof of what you and your landlord agreed to. With a lease, it is easier to hold your landlord to the agreement.

Q: What should I look for in my lease?

A: Make sure that any lease you sign is clear about its terms. It should say: when the lease starts, stops, how much is rent and when it's due, who pays for utilities/repairs, how many people and who can live with you, etc.

Q: What if I'm renting from Tribal Housing?

A: Make sure you know what info they need updates on & when you need to tell them, such as: your income or family size.

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Understanding a lease

Q: What if something is in the lease that I don't understand?

A: Have family or friends help you understand the lease, or better, ask an attorney to review it. Contact Legal Aid's Native American Program at 1-800-729-9908, M-F 9 am – Noon CST.

Q: What if the landlord won't give me time to review the lease?

A: A reputable landlord should allow you time to review and understand the lease before signing it. If a landlord refuses to allow that, it is a red flag and you should think twice about renting a home from that landlord.

Move-in checklist

Q: What is a move-in checklist?

A: A move-in checklist is a list of broken, damaged, or dirty things that you found when inspecting the home.

Q: Why make a move-in checklist?

A: If your landlord tries to charge you for any damages to the property, your checklist will be evidence the damages were already there when you moved in.

Q: How do I complete one?

A: Make a note of everything that isn't right. Ask the landlord to sign & date the checklist. Keep a copy for yourself & give a copy to the landlord. It is good practice to take a photo or video to verify your checklist.

Q: What if my landlord won't sign it?

A: You should sign and date it, mail a copy to your landlord, & keep a copy for yourself.

Q: What should I do to get things repaired before I move in?

A: Ask your landlord to fix them before you move in and before you sign a lease. Or, ask them to sign and date an agreement describing the repairs they'll make and when they'll be done. Keep a copy of anything you both sign.