

Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Renter

Landlord-tenant relations in Wisconsin are governed primarily by two sets of regulations: Wisconsin Statute Chapter 704 and Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter ATPC 134. Additionally, Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter ATPC 125 specifically addresses manufactured home community operator-tenant relations.

Rights as a tenant

Exclusive Possession

You, and only you, have the right to be in the unit, even though someone else owns the property. There are some exceptions to this (see the section "Do I ever have to let the landlord enter my apartment?" in the article [How to be a Smart Renter](#)).

Peaceful Enjoyment

You have the right to live without too much noise or repeated disturbances.

Habitability

The landlord must provide you with housing that is safe to live in.

Safety

If you or your child faces immediate danger from someone on the property, you can end your tenancy by providing notice and a legal document proving the threat. You won't be responsible for rent after the following month.

You have the right to contact law enforcement, health, or safety services without retaliation.

Complaints

You have the right to make good faith complaints about defects in the premises to local enforcement agencies, elected officials, and the landlord without retaliation. This does not apply if your negligence or improper use caused the defect.

Eviction Process

You have the right to the eviction procedures laid out in Wisconsin law. Landlords cannot perform self-help evictions (changing the locks, removing doors, disconnecting utilities, etc.).

Fair Housing

You have the right to equal opportunities for housing no matter your sex, race, color, sexual orientation, disability, religion, marital status, family status, status as a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking, lawful source of income, age, or ancestry.

Responsibilities as a tenant

When you have a rental agreement, whether written or oral, you have entered a legally binding contract. In Wisconsin, having a rental agreement means you agree to take on several responsibilities outlined in state statutes. Here are the key responsibilities:

Pay Rent

You must pay rent in full and on time as agreed upon in the rental agreement.

Maintain the Premises

You must keep the rental unit in a clean and safe condition, following reasonable health and safety standards. More specifically:

Perform minor maintenance

- Such as changing light bulbs, smoke alarm batteries, and unclogging drains.

- If a smoke alarm is non-functional despite new batteries, that is a problem to bring immediately in writing to the attention of the landlord.

Repair, or pay the landlord to repair, all damages cause by you/your guests

- This includes damages caused by your inactions.

Example: You leave on a two-week trip in the middle of January and turn off the heat completely since you won't be home. The pipes freeze and burst while you're gone, and flood the unit. By failing to keep the thermostat set at a reasonable temperature to prevent freezing of the pipes, you caused damage and would be responsible for repairs.

- This includes pest problems, like bedbugs, if they were caused by you or your guests. For instance, if you bring in used upholstered furniture that has been discarded and left outside, and bedbugs appear soon after that, the landlord may argue that the furniture is a likely source of the bedbugs.
- If the landlord chooses to do the repairs themselves, the landlord can charge a reasonable rate for their materials, labor, and time, including time spent hiring and supervising any third-parties like contractors.

Follow local housing codes

Use the Premises Properly

You must only use the rental unit for its intended purpose. Don't engage in illegal activities or disturb your neighbors.

Follow the rental agreement

You must follow all of the terms and conditions of the rental agreement, including rules set by the landlord regarding smoking, pets, and other aspects of tenancy.

Caution: It is important to take these responsibilities seriously, because a violation of any of these could result in your landlord beginning eviction proceedings.

Last updated on February 13, 2025.

[How to be a Smart Renter Renting Housing](#)

How helpful do you find the information on this page?

- ☐ Not helpful
- ☐ Somewhat helpful
- ☐ Very helpful

Save

Please tell us why this page wasn't helpful

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Not related to my issue
- ☐ Not enough information
- ☐ Unclear information

Comment

[About text formats](#)

Plain text

- No HTML tags allowed.
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.
- Web page addresses and email addresses turn into links automatically.

This question is for testing whether or not you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.

Save

Print

Table of Contents

Our Partners

This website is supported by

LSC | America's Partner for Equal Justice

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

LSC's support for this website is
limited to those activities that are
consistent with LSC restrictions.



PDF downloaded from <https://www.wislawhelp.org/node/425/your-rights-and-responsibilities-renter>