

Tips for Tenants:

Showing Your Future Landlord that You are a Responsible Pet Owner



Considering the many benefits that living with a companion animal can bring, it is unfortunate that so many building associations and individual landlords reject all tenants with pets. The behavior of a small numbers of irresponsible pet owners has resulted in severe limitations for responsible pet owners. Overcoming the general inclination of landlords not to rent to you will take a little extra thought and preparation on your part. However, the opportunity to keep your pet makes this effort very worthwhile. The following suggestions may help convince a potential landlord of your commitment to your pet, your respect for the landlord's property and your willingness to abide by the rules of the community.

1. Make your request to have a pet to the individual or group who has the ultimate authority to grant you permission. Usually, this will be the owner of the house or apartment. The owner may, however, delegate the decision to a property manager or resident manager. Check to see if, in addition to your own landlord's approval, you must also submit a written request to the building's board of directors or a pet committee.
2. Invite the landlord to "interview" your freshly groomed, well-behaved pet, possibly at your current home, to show that your pet has not caused any damage.
3. Provide your landlord with letters of reference from previous landlords, condominium associations, neighbors, obedience instructors, veterinarians, or anyone else who can attest to your pet's good behavior and your own conscientiousness.
4. Ask your landlord if his or her no-pets policy is a result of a negative experience with a previous tenant. By addressing up front your landlord's prior experience, you will gain insight into how to best present your own request. Consideration of your landlord's position will encourage him or her to be more open to yours.
5. Responsible pet owners take good care of their pet's health. Offer copies of health certificates showing that your pet's vaccinations are up-to-date, and maintain an active flea and tick control program.
6. Have your pet spayed or neutered. An altered pet is less likely to create a nuisance.
7. Offer to sign a pet addendum to your rental agreement that makes you responsible for possible damage to property, injury to others, or any pest infestation caused by your pet.
8. Let the landlord know that you share his or her concern about cleanliness. Point out that your pet is housetrained or litter trained. Emphasize that you will always clean up after your dog outdoors and make sure that you do.
9. Let the landlord know that you keep your cat inside and your dog under control at all times and that you understand the health and safety benefits of doing so.
10. If you are seeking a rental unit in a condominium, request a copy of the building's house rules pertaining to pets. Let the landlord know that you will abide by the rules set for the broader community and respect the concerns of residents who do not own pets.
11. Once you obtain permission to have a pet, be sure to get it in writing. If your lease has a "no-pets" clause in it, simply getting verbal permission is not enough. The "no-pets" clause should be crossed out of the lease before you sign it and be sure it's crossed out on the landlord's copy, too.
12. Invite the landlord to check on the pet after you move in, to make sure the pet is adjusting to his or her new home. 