

# Preparing your dispute evidence



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“The majority of deposit issues are overcome by letting agents and landlords speaking directly to their tenants, however as a last resort mydeposits offer a free dispute resolution service to resolve deposit disputes. In the unlikely event of a formal dispute, you will need to provide evidence to support your claim of withholding any amount of the deposit.

The adjudicators are only able to consider the evidence you submit and in some cases landlords and letting agents are losing disputes because of poor quality evidence. This checklist highlights the key documents and evidence that you will need to support your claims in a dispute.”

**It's important to remember that preparing for a dispute starts at the beginning of the tenancy**

Completed

## At the beginning of the tenancy:

### 1. Tenancy agreement

- a) This is the legal contract between you and your tenant, therefore ensure that it is fair, clear, concise and well worded. Make sure that your tenant knows what is required of them. Badly worded tenancy agreements are a leading cause of landlords and agents losing disputes.
- b) Include thorough details such as deposit amount, rent payments, payment dates, default fees, garden maintenance.

### 2. Inventory reports

The inventory provides a complete record of fixtures, fittings and decor allowing you to record the standard of the property before your tenant moves in.

- a) At check in we recommend that both you and your tenants are in attendance to sign and date the inventory.
- b) Besides an accurate list of contents, a good inventory will thoroughly describe the condition and cleanliness of the contents and the property itself.
- c) Be sure to compile the inventory after the previous tenants have left and removed their own possessions.
- d) The written word is key, however photographic evidence should be used to support your inventory. Digitally dated photographs can be incorporated in the main inventory along with indexed video evidence. Any images which are not included within the main inventory should be signed and dated by you and your tenant. Remember to keep copies.
- e) You can use a professional inventory service to do an inventory on your behalf.

### 3. Invoices and receipts

- a) Keep receipts for proof of purchase for anything you buy at the beginning of the tenancy in the event of any damage. Receipts may be used to show the original value and your calculation in withholding the deposit.
- b) Where relevant, remember to provide instruction manuals or special conditions regarding treatment to the tenant.

### During the tenancy:

#### 4. Rent Account Statements

- a) Keep accurate records of rent received from tenants and any unpaid rent.
- b) Have an arrears procedure and ensure that you inform the tenant in writing of any lapses. Be aware of the Tenant Fee Act rules on charging interest on any tenancy agreement signed after 1st June 2019.

#### 5. Invoices, receipts, utility bills for charges incurred during the tenancy

- a) Document payments such as cleaning charges, damages, repairs etc with invoices and receipts.
- b) Costs for changes made to the property.
- c) Keep bank statements as evidence of costs incurred.

#### 6. Other evidence

- a) Keep copies of any correspondence such as emails and letters between you and your tenant.
- b) Record any witness statements in writing.

#### 7. Reminder to the tenant

- a) Remind the tenant of their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement before it ends, preferably in writing.

### At the end of the tenancy:

#### 8. Check out report

The check out report reviews any damage and standard of cleanliness in the property at the end of the tenancy and compares it with the inventory and check in reports from the start of the tenancy.

- a) It is good practice for both you and your tenants to attend the check out, the tenant should be packed and all belongings removed.
- b) This is a good time to highlight any concerns. Use the check in as a reference and ensure tenant's comments are noted. If you annotate this by hand, ensure that it is legible.
- c) Use the same descriptions in the report as in check in eg. bedroom 1, 2, 3; cleaned to a good/fair/poor domestic standard. If you use an Inventory Clerk for check in, ideally use the same person for check out.
- d) Take photographs again, sign and digitally date.

Remember to allow for fair wear and tear at the end of the tenancy. Consider what is wear over time, the age of items and what is actual damage. Take into account the length of the tenancy, the number and age of occupiers. For a detailed guide of fair wear and tear, see our guide.



Discuss any issues with your tenant; it will help to prevent a dispute by highlighting areas for concern.

**NOTE:** This checklist is for guidance only and does not guarantee a successful ADR result. The adjudicator's decision is impartial and will depend on the evidence submitted by both parties and the individual circumstances of the dispute.