

Signing a Lease? Know What Are You Agreeing to Do

A lease agreement is a binding contract. You can't escape the consequences of a lease agreement on the basis that you never read it and/or didn't know what you were signing.

As a result, it is very important that you read and understand a lease before signing it.

At a minimum, answer the following before signing a lease agreement:

- (1) What is the total cost of the rental property each month? Can you afford it?
- (2) Who is responsible for utilities, you or the landlord? What is the cost? Can you afford it?
- (3) How much is the security deposit? Is any of it deemed "non-refundable" under the lease agreement?
- (4) How much time does the landlord have to return your security deposit after you move?
- (5) What happens if you pay the rent late?
- (6) How much notice are you required to give the landlord before moving out?
- (7) What happens if you fail to give proper notice to the landlord before moving?
- (8) Are pets permitted? Is there a pet deposit? Is it refundable? Are you required to pay pet rent?
- (9) What happens if you have to move before the lease expires?
- (10) Will the landlord allow you to see the unit you are going to rent before you move in? Does anything need to be repaired before you move in? Is there any pre-existing damage that you need to bring to the landlord's attention (and record), so that you aren't held responsible for it when you move out?