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Leases



What Is a Lease?

A lease is an agreement to rent a house or apartment made between a tenant and a landlord. A lease is both a contract (an agreement between two or more parties) and a conveyance (a transfer of a property interest). A lease can be oral (spoken) or written. A lease term (length) can last for any period of time, including month-to-month, year-to-year, or a definite period of time (e.g., one year). A lease for more than one year must be in writing.

A tenant should carefully read a lease before signing it. If you have a problem with any part of the lease, discuss your concerns with the landlord to see if changes can be made. Get the changes in writing.

What information should be in a Lease?

Most leases contain the following information:

1. Names of the landlord and tenant;
2. Address of property;
3. The date the lease begins and ends;
4. The amount of rent;
5. The date the rent is due;
6. Where the rent payment is made;
7. The amount of security deposit;
8. Who pays each utility (gas, electric, water, sewer, trash);
9. Who makes which repairs and who pays for those repairs;
10. Who is allowed to live in the property;
11. Whether the landlord will provide appliances, and who is responsible for repair;
and
12. The phone number and address for the landlord.

Prepared by Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Inc. (LSEM). LSEM provides this educational information as a public service. It is not legal advice. Sometimes the laws change. Always consult a lawyer, if you can, before taking legal action. The mission of LSEM is to provide high-quality civil legal assistance and equal access to justice for low-income people in Eastern Missouri.

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