



Resources for Tenants

Sample letters to landlords
online: droprentsc.com/landlord-letters

Templates for how to communicate with your landlord

Tenant organizing guides
online: droprentsc.com/organizing-guides

Step-by-step guides for organizing fellow tenants and beginning the process for a rent strike. Includes links to resources, printable flyers, forms, and letter samples, and information about joining a tenants union.

California Tenant Rights
online: droprentsc.com/rights

Visit our website for a comprehensive guide for California tenants and landlords written by the Dept. of Consumer Affairs. Includes relevant info regarding lease agreements, landlord responsibilities & behavior and uninhabitable conditions.

Legal Explanations

- If you've lost income as a result of the coronavirus and you can't pay your rent, **it's illegal for your landlord to evict you for not paying.** You must contact your landlord to notify them you cannot pay. Evidence that you've lost income can include pay stubs, messages from a supervisor, cancellations from clients, etc. Stopping work to care for someone is also a protected reason for lost income.
- The new laws do not release you from having to pay back rent at some point, though if you do decide to rent strike CA courts have postponed all evictions until 90 days after the coronavirus state of emergency is lifted. For Santa Cruz County, an eviction moratorium (ending May 31st) prevents landlords from applying for evictions if a tenant can't pay rent due to Covid-19. Your landlord can still try to terminate your tenancy for other reasons, including for "public safety." **Please get in touch with us or a lawyer you trust before signing any kind of payment plan, and keep yourself informed with changes to court decisions as they are changing rapidly.**
- **It is illegal for a landlord to try to get you to leave your home through means beside the court,** including lock changes, utility shutoffs, illegal entry, or other kinds of coercion and threats.
- **Your landlord is required to give you notice before coming to your home, usually 24 hours.** You have a right to reasonably refuse their entry to accommodate your own needs.
- **It is illegal for a landlord or property manager to ask about your immigration status before or during your tenancy.** It is also illegal for them to tell individuals or government organizations (including immigration authorities) about your immigration status, especially for the purpose of intimidating or harrasing you.

Quick Tips for Tenants Considering a Rent Strike (during social distancing)

- **Seek out your fellow tenants,** if you live in a complex, leaving a leaflet under doors with your contact info is the quickest way to get in touch about rent striking while maintaining social distancing. Collect as many numbers/emails as you can, even if someone isn't immediately interested in organizing, make your communication network as big as possible.
- Once in contact, **plan one-on-ones via phone or zoom.** If you live in a single unit, try googling your landlord's name to find other properties they are renting out, or reach out for support.
- **Look for collective skills** amongst tenants find out what yours collective needs are and who can provide them. Seek out community leaders/orgs who people already trust.
- **Organize virtual tenant meetings,** via communication channels that everyone has access to (zoom, google hangout, facetime, skype), follow up repeatedly before and after meetings and keep everyone in constant contact
- **Delegate tasks,** let others take ownership over steps in the process. This is key to keeping folks invested in the group, and in maintaining relationships and building trust.
- Always try and **reach a consensus – make sure everyone agrees before taking collective actions.**
- **A rent strike is a tool,** not a demand. Create a concrete list of demands with your group, and present them to your landlord for negotiaton, in the form of a Strike Pledge. This creates a **tenants council,** and can give you some legal protections. It also allows you to set up negotiations with your landlord and get their intentions on record, as well as ask for rent forgiveness or rent reduction as needed. **Any agreements decided with landlord must be in writing for your protection**
- Be sure to inquire about late fees that may be incurred by non-payment. **A full rent strike** is a last resort once landlords refuse to neogtiate and **should be decided on by the majority of tenants,** even if they can afford to pay rent.
- Once a strike is agreed upon, **come up with back up plans and support networks.**
- **Build support networks** on social media with online petitions, landlord shaming, and reporting to local media outlets, as well as with community members that you trust.
- Consider joining a **tenants union.**

Further resources for undocumented tenants:
online: droprentsc.com/undocu

More info on mutual aid: (groceries, medicine, errands help)
online: droprentsc.com/mutual-aid