

MRLANDLORD.COM Tips on Management by Jeffrey Taylor

Long Term Tenants

I'm not in the hotel business. I want all our tenants to stay forever. Here's a question to ask on your application: How long will you live here? One year? Two years? Three or more years? It just makes everything so much easier.

We are communicating a big subliminal message to applicants with this question. What box do you think most people check? Most check the three years plus box. This is awesome. We're grooming them mentally for our long-term relationship. In fact, as far as marketing and conversation at first contact, we can offer less than market rent for our residents because we don't have the turnovers other landlords and apartment communities experience. Those costs are passed on to the residents. If an applicant checks the one year box, we frown on it greatly.

Give Your Residents the House Rules

One of the keys to success in managing rental properties is to develop an efficient system that reduces the time you spend managing your rentals. A good way to minimize your phone calls from tenants and to help encourage them to properly care for your rentals is to provide residents with a set of House Rules outlining all your property policies regarding resident conduct and property upkeep that are too detailed to include in your lease or rental agreement. *AOA Members should download this form from the AOA website and include it with the move-in process.*

Three Costly Mistakes When Going To Court

1. Not understanding that the burden of proof is mostly on the landlord

Examples include if you made deductions from a resident's deposit, if you are evicting someone, or if you are suing for money damages — the burden is on you to show your actions were justified. The judge will often rule in favor of the resident, even if the scales balance equally on both sides of the argument. You must make the scales tip to your side in order to win.

2. Coming to court unprepared

Just because you have never had a tenant show up to contest an eviction does not mean it will not happen. Be prepared every time you go to court. Bring all documentation, including rental lease, notices, ledgers and receipts. Showing up in court without complete documentation or coming unprepared can cost you the case.

3. Giving improper termination notices

Know and make reasonable attempts to serve the notice according to the law of your state or area. In some states serving the notice personally may be acceptable. In others states, you may only need to post the notice and mail another copy to the tenant's address. It is

vital that you make sure you serve the tenant according to the requirements in your area. Do not have your whole case thrown out for improper service.

These tips are from contributors to the MrLandlord.com website and newsletter. To review the landlord-tenant laws for every state, visit their informative website at MrLandlord.com and register to win a free landlording book.