

**Ask Dr. Ca\$h Flow**  
**Security Deposit Refund: Pictures Worth**  
**A Thousand Words**  
*By Nick Sidoti, R.A.M.*

**Q: How do I avoid getting into a disagreement with my tenants over the condition of the apartment when they vacate, in regards to damage and the refund of their security deposit?**

A: Many a landlord-tenant dispute over this issue could have been avoided if a pre-move-in inspection was done. Both the tenant and the landlord must do a pre-move-in inspection every time the apartment is rented.

Tenants will benefit from this because they won't be blamed for any pre-existing conditions. They shouldn't need to worry about having the cost of repairing an existing problem deducted from their security deposit when they move out.

It is imperative that both parties do a pre-move-in inspection checklist should list each room including kitchen, dining room, bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms, hallways, and common areas.

The landlord will no longer have tenants trying to tell them that the damage was there when they moved in. It is imperative that both parties do a pre-move-in inspection checklist should list each room including kitchen, dining room, bedrooms, bathrooms, living rooms, hallways, and common areas. Your checklist should list all of the components of each room including all windows, doors, walls, floors, ceilings, appliances, fixtures, cabinets, stairwells, furniture, and anything else that is in the unit.

For example, the bathroom walls, floor, ceiling, tub, shower, sink, commode, windows, mirrors, cabinets, and towel rack should all be recorded. If there is a chip in the sink, document it. If the room was freshly painted, document it. Get it in writing at the beginning of the relationship and you'll avoid problems later.

Include photos with your documentation. Take the tenant's picture in the property in key spots. If you end up in court, these Polaroid photos will provide evidence of the conditions when they moved in.

*Nick Sidoti, R.A.M. is a registered apartment manager, licensed real estate agent, investor, lecturer, author of several real estate courses and President of the Western NY Real Estate Investors. For information on his courses or to submit questions for Nick's column, please email [drcashflow@adelphia.net](mailto:drcashflow@adelphia.net) or visit [www.drcashflow.net](http://www.drcashflow.net).*