

Cleaning Guide

Before you rented from us, we made every effort to ensure the home was clean and comfortable. We expect it to be returned in the same condition so the next Tenant is afforded the same quality rental. The following is a guide to assist you with preparing for move-out. Keep in mind it is not all-inclusive and there may be additional requirements for your rental. If you aren't sure, call the office and we'll be happy to answer your questions.

At the end of this guide is a table showing estimated costs of common cleaning or repair items. Our goal is always to return 100% of the deposit but we are legally obligated to hold you accountable for anything beyond "ordinary wear-and-tear."

General

- Remove all personal belongings.
- Repair any damage you may have caused. If substantial, hire a professional.
- Remove all trash from the property.
- Test smoke detectors and CO2 detectors. Replace batteries, as needed.
- Clean fireplace, hearth, and mantle. Remove ashes and debris from property.
- Repair pet damages.
- Treat the property for fleas or other pests.
- Ensure plumbing flows freely. Report any drips, leaks, clogged or slow drains.
- Leave all utilities in your name until your final occupancy date.

Windows, Glass, Patio Doors

- Vacuum and clean window and door tracks.
- Clean screens on windows, sliding glass doors, and storm doors.
- Clean interior and exterior window panes and glass doors. Ensure they are free of streaks.
- Clean mini and vertical blinds. Clean window sills, curtain rods, drapes and valances.
- Replace broken or missing window panes and screens.
- Replace all damaged or broken window coverings.

Floors

- Sweep all vinyl, linoleum, laminate, and hardwood floors per manufacturer directions. All non-carpeted floors must be cleaned, mopped and free of dirt and grime.
- Do not use bleach or ammonia-based cleaners on laminate or hardwood floors. Use only a damp mop.
- Vacuum all carpets in preparation of professional carpet cleaning.

Doors

- Clean all exterior doors, front and back.
- Remove all unauthorized bedroom locking door knobs installed by Tenants.
- Check for damages and proper operation.

Light Fixtures and Ceiling Fans

- Remove all globes, fixtures, etc. Clean inside and out. Replace broken globes and burned Out lights. Ensure light bulbs are of the appropriate wattage and style (dimming, globe, candle, etc.)
- Clean ceiling fan blades on top, bottom, and edges. Check the ceiling to see if dust has Collected above the ceiling fan and clean it if it has.

Walls and Ceilings

- Spot clean all walls and ceiling to remove grease, food, mold, grime, fingerprints, crayon or furniture marks, etc.
- Remove all nails, screws, staples or other devices you used to hang items. Do not spackle or paint! Any holes larger than a nail hole must be repaired professionally. Touch-up paint must match the existing color and sheen. If it does not match, you will be charged.
- Wipe off all baseboards.
- Remove dust from air vents.
- Clean all wall switch plates, particularly light switches. Replace any broken cover plates for light switches or electrical outlets.

HVAC Unit and Vents

- Remove vents and clean.
- Clean the floor surrounding vents.
- Vacuum the intake area under the HAVC unit, if possible.
- Replace all air filters.

Furnace and Water Heater

- Wipe exterior of furnace and water heater. Do not dismantle anything!
- Clean cold-air return vents and install new filter.
- Replace all air filters.

KITCHEN

Oven (Do not use oven cleaner on a self-cleaning stove as it will damage the interior!)

- Clean inside of oven, oven racks, broiler pan, and drawers.
- Clean top, bottom, and sides of oven door.
- Remove all cleaner residue or ash from interior.
- Clean underneath the elements.
- Do not attempt to pull gas ovens away from the wall!! Clean underneath by removing the Drawer.

Stove / Range/ Range Hood / Bottom of Micro Hood

- Remove vent hood filter. Soak in very hot, soapy water for ten minutes. Clean, rinse, and Dry before putting it back in.

- Scrub all rims, ridges and underside of hood to remove grease splatter and grime.
- Clean stove top range hood.
- Clean all metal parts of burners, including the prongs of cooking elements.
- Remove lower drawer and clean out. Clean underneath the oven before replacing drawer.
- Clean control knobs. Replace and that are broken.
- Was and dry outside of the stove.
- Lift lid of stove top and clean underneath.
- Replace drip pans.

Dishwasher

- Clean racks, baskets, rollers, gaskets, door edges and walls so they are free of food and soap.
- Clean top, bottom, and side of dishwasher door, particularly around the rubber strip.

Refrigerator

- Remove all food from the refrigerator.
- Unplug while cleaning.
- Clean thoroughly inside and out with a disinfectant cleaner or warm water.
- Clean top and bottom of shelves. Clean inside and outside of drawers.
- Clean storage compartments.
- Defrost freezer and clean.
- Remove and clean “kick plate” on the bottom of fridge.
- Vacuum out coils.
- Remove, empty and clean drain pan.
- Clean folds in the rubber seals on doors.
- Pull away from wall to clean exterior portions, including the top and to sweep and mop behind the fridge.
- After the fridge is clean and dried, plug it back in and close the doors.

Cabinets and drawers

- Clean al food, grease, dirt, dust, and hair from shelves, drawers, lazy Susans, cutting boards, etc.
- Clean both sides of cabinet doors and drawers.
- Clean exteriors of cabinets and drawers to remove fingerprints, food, grease, etc.
- Wash cupboards inside and out.
- Wipe out drawers.
- Clean and disinfect all countertops.

Sink and surrounding areas

- Garbage disposal should be empty and functional.
- Clean sink, drain, chrome fixtures, and pipes under sink.
- Clean and shine faucets and handles.

- Clean backsplash area to remove grease, dried food, dust, etc.
- Clean all countertops.
- Clean microwave inside and out. Pay particular attention to vents.

BATHROOMS

Toilets

- Scrub with disinfectant cleanser.
- Remove all dirt and stains.
- Clean top of tank, lid, top and bottom of seat, bowl, and base.
- Scrub toilet bowl of rust, lime and scale buildup.

Sinks

- Clean sink, drain, chrome fixtures, and pipes under sink.
- Check for drips leaks, clogged or slow drains.

Mirrors

- Clean mirrors so they are free of dirt and streaks.
- Clean all glass (e.g. shower door, windows)

Floors

- Sweep, mop, or vacuum.
- Vacuum and / or wash rugs.
- Clean baseboards, particularly around toilet and shower/tub.

Shower and tub

- Clean shower walls, bathtub interiors and shower doors meticulously to remove all dirt, Soap buildup, mold, and hair.
- Bleach grout.
- Clean shower doors, frames and tracks.

Vanities and cabinets

- Clean the medicine cabinet shelves.
- Clean interior and exterior of cabinets and drawers.
- Clean out bathroom drawers and vanity.
- Replace missing or broken towel racks and paper holders.

Lights, ceiling, and ventilation

- Clean vent fan cover.
- Remove exposed bulbs (be sure they are cold), clean and replace after they are dry.

- Wash walls and ceilings.
- Clean light fixtures.
- Replace any burned out bulbs.

Bedrooms

- Vacuum carpet thoroughly.
- Clean light fixtures and ceiling fans. Remove any dead bugs/dirt from light fixtures.
- Clean and replace bulbs, as necessary.
- Clean closets, wipe down shelves.
- Dust heating/cooling vents.

Windows and doors

- Wash windows inside and out, clean tracks and screens.
- Clean all blinds, window dressings, and hardware.
- Close all windows and lock
- Wipe down window sills.
- Remove all unauthorized locking bedroom door knobs installed by Tenants.

Laundry area

- Sweep and mop the floor.
- Wash down walls and doors.
- Clean baseboard and door frames.
- Clean light fixtures. Remove any dead bugs/dirt from light fixtures.
- Clean and replace bulbs, as necessary.
- Wash windows inside and out, clean tracks and screens.
- Clean all blinds, window dressings, and hardware.
- If the washer and dryer belong to the unit:
 - Wash down tops and sides of both appliances.
 - Clean inside washer lid, particularly around soap dispenser.
 - Clean dryer lint filter.

Living areas and hallways

- Vacuum carpet thoroughly.
- Clean closets inside and out.
- Dust air vents thoroughly.
- Clean light fixtures and ceiling fans. Remove any dead bugs/dirt from light fixtures.
- Clean and replace bulbs, as necessary.
- Wash windows inside and out, clean tracks and screens.
- Clean all blinds, window dressings, and hardware.

Exterior

- Neatly mow the entire lawn.
- Edge around driveway, walkways, patios, etc.
- Trim around foundations, flower beds, shrubs, and fences.
- Rake grass clippings and leaves.
- Remove weeds and dead plants from flower beds.
- Remove all trash, debris, and animal droppings.
- Fill, level, and seed any holes from pets. Repair any other damage caused by pets or People.
- Prune trees and shrubs.
- Clean all exterior light fixtures, to include removing dead bugs.
- Clean light bulbs and replace as necessary.
- Sweep patios, balconies, storage units.

Garage and storage

- Remove all items, garbage, boxes, and debris.
- Sweep out or vacuum.
- Sweep between wall studs and around garage doors to remove cobwebs, debris, and dirt.
- Clean cobwebs from walls and rafters.
- Clean out all closets, storage spaces, and shelves.
- Clean light bulbs and replace bulbs, as necessary.
- Clean light switch and outlet covers.

Driveway

- Sweep entire driveway.
- Clean up oil stains.
- Haul away garbage. Do not leave trash, personal items, or furniture.

Estimated cost of cleaning or repairs

The below table is provided as a guide. It lists common cleaning and repair charges and an estimated cost for each one. Actual costs may vary.

Clean appliance	\$100 per appliance
Replace missing/burned out bulbs	\$5 + each
Light globe replacement	\$50 each
Sweep, mop, or vacuum floor	\$25 -\$50 per room
Replace stove drip pans	\$30
Clean a full bathroom	\$150 and up
Wash windows	\$50 per hour
Replace stained or broken toilet seat	\$40

Replace miniblinds	\$50-\$100
Patch fist-sized hole in drywall	\$50-\$75
Paint a single wall	\$75 and up
Dispose of abandoned furniture	\$75-\$100 per truck load
Mow lawn, weed	\$65 per hour
Damaged exterior door	\$200 and up
Damaged interior door	\$75 and up
Pet damaged carpet	\$3 + per square foot
Lost or broken garage door remote	\$40
Lost or broken window screen	\$50 and up
Change locks, door knobs	\$40 per door
Replace light fixture	\$75 and up
Repair burns in laminate countertop	\$125 and up

What is ordinary wear-and-tear?

A standard definition of ordinary wear-and-tear is “Deterioration which occurs based upon the use of which the rental unit is intended and without negligence, carelessness, accident, or misuse, or abuse of the premises or contents by the Tenant or members of his household, guests or invitees.” In other words, ordinary wear-and-tear is the natural and gradual deterioration of a rental overtime, which results from a Tenant’s normal use. For example, it is normal for carpeting or paint to wear out in the normal course of living. Carpets become threadbare, and paint peels and cracks. Even the most responsible Tenant can’t prevent the aging process. Also, a court won’t hold a Tenant responsible for damage arising from using the rental in a normal way. For instance, an Illinois owner held back part of a security deposit to pay for repair of nail holes left behind by a Tenant who had hung some pictures. The Tenant sued to get back his full security deposit. The Illinois court said the nail holes were the result of ordinary wear-and-tear. After all, hanging pictures is a normal part of living.

What is not ordinary wear-and-tear?

A Landlord can make a Tenant pay for damages if the Tenant accelerated the aging process or didn’t use the rental in a normal way. A Carpet worn from people walking on it is something you have to expect. But a Tenant who cuts a hole in the carpet, spills paint, or leaves heavy traffic patterns from dirty work boots may be held responsible for the damage.

Wear-and-tear	Damages
Peeling or cracked paint	Drawing on the walls (e.g., murals)

Worn enamel in old bathtub	Chipped and broken enamel in bathtub
Worn or cracked linoleum in place where appliances had been	Holes in linoleum from Tenant's dragging furniture or other items across the floor.
Carpet worn thin by people walking on it	Holes in carpet, carpet damaged by rust and mildew stains from Tenant's plant containers
Cracked window pane due to faulty foundation and settling of building / dirty or faded window	Broken window caused by resident slamming window shut
Small piece of wall plaster chipped	Large chunk of plaster ripped out of wall
Faded tile / Paint faded on kitchen walls	Painted over kitchen or bathroom tile
Corner or piece of wallpaper coming lose because the glue has aged	Wallpaper missing where Tenant tore it off the wall
Door sticks in humidity / sliding closet doors stick	Sliding closet doors off track because track is bent
Faded lampshade	Torn window shade
Fire damage due to faulty wiring	Walls burned in kitchen from burner turned too high when pot is on the stove
Sink drainage slow because of old pipe system	Toilet backed up because Tenant flushed inappropriate debris down it
Floors need a new coat of varnish	Floors gouged when moving furniture
Shower rod somewhat rusted	Shower rod missing
Grouting in bathroom tile loose	Intentional removal of grout or tile in bathroom / kitchen

Three types of Tenant damages

There are three basic types of damages Tenants are responsible for. They are:

- **Negligence.** This is when a Tenant does something carelessly, knowing it may cause damage. For example, a Tenant allows his young daughter to play with nail polish on the living room carpet and she spills it, causing a permanent stain. Another example would be a Tenant failing to report a broken window. Even if the window break was not the Tenant's fault, their failure to report it to the Property Manager could result in weather entering the home and damaging the window sill, walls, or flooring.
- **Abuse/misuse.** If the Tenant knowingly or deliberately mistreats the property, or uses it for the wrong purposes, the damage caused is abuse or misuse, not ordinary wear-and-tear. For example, did the tenant slide furniture over the unprotected floor, causing gouges? Did the Tenant discolor the bathtub by using to dye fabrics? Was the Tenant an artist who failed to cover the floor while painting, leaving permanent stains on the carpet/floor? Did the tenant paint the walls of the apartment black?

- **Accident.** Damage is sometimes caused by pure mistake. The Tenant drops a heavy planter and cracks the tile floor. The Tenant is cleaning a light fixture and it falls and breaks. The Tenant accidentally leaves the bathtub faucet on, flooding part of the apartment and staining wood floors and carpeting. Even though the Tenant didn't purposely damage your property, they are still responsible for it and the Property Manager is legally authorized to withhold the cost of repair from the security deposit.

Other factors to consider

In evaluating whether apartment damage exceeds ordinary wear-and-tear, there are some other factors to keep in mind. They include:

- **Extent of damage.** The exact type of damage may be as important as the extent of the damage when evaluation whether it's ordinary wear-and-tear or not. For example, two or three nail holes in a wall may be considered ordinary wear-and-tear. But dozens of nail holes may be considered abuse. A few scratches on a wood floor are unavoidable. But a missing wood plank is negligence or abuse.
- **Length of residence.** Certain things wear out over time. But over how long? The ordinary wear-and-tear on an apartment from a Tenant who's lived there only a short time should be considerably less than that of a Tenant who's lived there for a long time. Say you installed new carpet before renting an apartment. It may be reasonable to expect there if a Tenant lives there 10 years before moving out, everyday usage would leave it somewhat damaged. But if a Tenant moves out after only three months and the carpet is ripped and stained, that's unreasonable, and then management can probably charge the Tenant for the damage.
- **Character and construction of building.** An older building may be expected to undergo greater and more rapid deterioration than a newer building. For example, wooden windowsills in an older building may dry out, rot, or crack over time through no fault of the Tenant. But if the building is new, it is unlikely the windowsills would crack without some carelessness on the Tenant's part (e.g., standing on the windowsill to put up drapes).

At Sunlight Property Management, we are dedicated to giving you all the tools necessary to make your move as smooth and easy as possible. We hope the information above is helpful and that you are able to return the home in great condition and receive a full refund of the deposit.

We also understand moving can be extremely stressful. It is often difficult to find the time to deal with moving from one home to the next, cleaning, and everything else involved. If you need assistance, contact Sunlight Property Management and we will help you find a professional cleaner. It is typically cheaper, and less stress on all involved, to hire a professional rather than have us go in behind you and clean up.

Montana Code Annotated 2023

TITLE 70. PROPERTY

CHAPTER 24. RESIDENTIAL LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT OF 1977

Part 4. Remedies

Disposition Of Personal Property Abandoned By Tenant After Termination

70-24-430. Disposition of personal property abandoned by tenant after termination. (1) (a) If a tenancy terminates by court order, the personal property is considered abandoned and the landlord may immediately dispose of the personal property as allowed by law.

(b) If a tenancy terminates in any manner other than by court order and the landlord has clear and convincing evidence that the tenant has abandoned all personal property that the tenant has left on the premises and a period of time of at least 48 hours has elapsed since the landlord obtained that evidence, the landlord may immediately remove the abandoned property from the premises and immediately dispose of any trash or personal property that is hazardous, perishable, or valueless.

(c) An item that is clearly labeled "rent to own" or "leased" or likewise identified may be discarded only with confirmation from the lessor that the item does not have a lien, provided that the lessor can be easily identified from the label and the landlord makes a reasonable effort to contact the lessor.

(d) For the purposes of this subsection (1), the following definitions apply:

(i) "Hazardous" means an item that is potentially or actually flammable or a biohazard or an item otherwise capable of inflicting personal harm or injury.

(ii) "Perishable" means any item requiring refrigeration or any food item with a marked expiration date.

(iii) "Valueless" means any item that has an insubstantial resale value but does not include personal photos, jewelry, or other small items that are irreplaceable.

(2) The landlord shall inventory and store all abandoned personal property of the tenant that the landlord reasonably believes is valuable in a place of safekeeping and shall exercise reasonable care for the property. The landlord may charge a reasonable storage and labor charge if the property is stored by the landlord, plus the cost of removal of the property to the place of storage. The landlord may store the property in a commercial storage company, in which case the storage cost includes the actual storage charge plus the cost of removal of the property to the place of storage.

(3) After complying with subsection (2), the landlord shall make a reasonable attempt to notify the tenant in writing that the property must be removed from the place of safekeeping by sending a notice with a certificate of mailing or by certified mail to the last-known address of the tenant, stating that at a specified time, not less than 10 days after mailing the notice, the property will be disposed of if not removed.

(4) The landlord may dispose of the property after complying with subsection (3) by:

(a) selling all or part of the property at a public or private sale; or

(b) destroying or otherwise disposing of all or part of the property if the landlord reasonably believes that the value of the property is so low that the cost of storage or sale exceeds the reasonable value of the property.

(5) If the tenant, upon receipt of the notice provided in subsection (3), responds in writing to the landlord on or before the day specified in the notice that the tenant intends to remove the property and does not do so within 7 days after delivery of the tenant's response, the tenant's property whether of value or not is conclusively presumed to be abandoned. If the tenant removes the property, the landlord is entitled to storage costs for the period that the property remains in safekeeping, plus the cost of removal of the property to the place of storage. Reasonable storage costs are allowed a landlord who stores the property, and actual storage costs are allowed a landlord who stores the property in a commercial storage company. A landlord is entitled to payment of the storage costs allowed under this subsection before the tenant may remove the property.

(6) The landlord is not responsible for any loss to the tenant resulting from storage unless the loss is caused by the landlord's purposeful or negligent act. On the event of purposeful violation, the landlord is liable for actual damages.

(7) A public or private sale authorized by this section must be conducted under the provisions of **30-9A-610** or the sheriff's sale provisions of Title 25, chapter 13, part 7.

(8) The landlord may deduct from the proceeds of the sale the reasonable costs of notice, storage, labor, and sale and any delinquent rent or damages owing on the premises and shall remit to the tenant the remaining proceeds, if any, together with an itemized accounting. If the tenant cannot after due diligence be found, the remaining proceeds must be deposited with the county treasurer of the county in which the sale occurred and, if not claimed within 3 years, must revert to the general fund of the county available for general purposes.

(9) The landlord shall ensure that the terms of this section are included in plain and understandable language as a notification upon termination of the lease or rental agreement.

History: En. 42-437 by Sec. 37, Ch. 313, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 42-437; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 483, L. 1985; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 401, L. 1997; amd. Sec. 152, Ch. 305, L. 1999; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 93, L. 2013; amd. Sec. 24, Ch. 123, L. 2013; amd. Sec. 8, Ch. 536, L. 2021.

Link to MCA:

https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0700/chapter_0240/part_0040/section_0300/0700-0240-0040-0300.html