

## Renting a Home: What to do . . . <sup>1</sup>

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### If you cannot pay your rent

If there is an unexpected emergency that makes it impossible to pay, contact your landlord and tell him/her about the problem. Pay as much as you can by the due date and work out a plan to pay the remaining amount. After the meeting you may want to write a letter to the landlord restating your agreement and hand deliver it. But to be covered legally you should send it certified mail with a return signature requested. (To certify a letter you must go to the post office and fill out a form. It will cost about \$1.50). **Keep a copy of your letter.** Do not expect your landlord to be happy that you are paying late (landlords also have bills to pay) and expect to pay a late fee.

### If there is a problem with the structure of the house

If there is a problem with the structure of the house, such as a roof leak, door off the hinges, or broken steps:

- Call the landlord and report the problem. To avoid misunderstandings and to protect your legal rights, follow up with a letter documenting the date and time of the call, who

you spoke with and ask for the problem to be repaired. Hand deliver the letter or mail it certified mail, signature requested and keep a copy of the letter.

- If you do not receive a reply within two weeks, send another letter. If the problem persists, then notify the landlord as specified by the Florida Residential Landlord and Resident Act that the rent will be reduced until repairs are made. (Rent can be reduced when the need for repairs causes the residence to not meet local housing codes or affects the safety of the residents.)

### If you have a problem that results from your or your guests action or neglect?

Accidents happen!

- Children playing ball can break a window or damage a window screen.
- Hanging a picture can damage the wall.
- Accidents and thoughtless actions can result in unintended damages.

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**As the resident, you are responsible for repairing or paying for the repair of these damages.**

### **Communicating with your landlord**

Any letter you write should clearly state the facts only (no accusations). Tell what the situation is, the cause (if known) and what you expect to be done to resolve the problem.

If the landlord is responsible for the repairs (say for a leak in the roof or the plumbing), write a courteous letter to your landlord. Any letter you write should clearly state the facts only (no accusations). Tell what the situation is, the cause (if known), and what you expect to be done to resolve the problem.

#### **Sample Letter**

Dear (Landlord),

This letter is to confirm that on Monday, June 15, and Wednesday June 17 I called your office to report a leak in the bedroom ceiling. The problem appears to be caused by a roof leak since water dripped through the ceiling during the Monday morning rainstorm. I talked to Julia Jones, your receptionist.

Ms. Jones told me that she would have someone check the problem on Tuesday, June 16. No one came. On Wednesday, June 17 we had another rainstorm. The leak reappeared. I called your office again. Ms. Jones said they had been busy and that someone would come on Thursday to check the problem and damage. Today is Monday and no one has called or come by.

This leak is damaging the ceiling. Also I must use a pan to catch the drips. I am requesting the leak to be repaired no later than Thursday, June 25.

I will appreciate your prompt attention to this problem.

Sincerely,