

How to Serve a Landlord-Tenant Notice

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In 2025, the Washington Legislature changed how formal landlord-tenant notices are served for the first time in over 100 years. Rent increase notices and all notices that can lead to the end of a tenancy—including notices of lease violation, notices to terminate a tenancy, and notices offering a new lease—must be served as described below. A landlord, property owner, or property manager may serve all these notices; using a lawyer or process server is optional, but the process must be strictly followed for the notice to be valid.

How do I properly serve the notice on my tenant?

In this order, first, go to the property and attempt to hand-deliver one copy to each adult occupant. Second, if you cannot do so, hand them to whoever answers the door or appears to be in charge at the property (e.g. a babysitter or office manager). Third, if there is no such person there, or everyone there makes himself or herself unavailable (e.g. does not answer the door), tape the copies to the front door of the property, face out. Last, always mail copies by to each adult occupant at the property. If you have other addresses for the occupants, mail copies there too.

Serve one copy of the notice each way per known or suspected occupant of the property plus one extra for any unknown occupant.



How do I mail the notice?

You are required to mail to each occupant via certified US mail. You should record the certified mail tacking numbers to prove you sent those copies. Regular mail copies are not required after July 27, 2025, but are recommended.

When do I serve a notice?

Most notices have a minimum number of days before compliance is required. Remember that these are always minimums. If you mailed the notice, you must allow five additional days for the notice to go through the mail.

Do I ever do anything else?

Local law, federal law, your rental agreement itself, or the terms of a subsidy program may require you to send the notice to additional people, additional addresses, in additional ways, or allow more time for compliance. If more time is required, then be sure to state the correct number of days in the notice. Always check for any specific rules that apply before serving the notice.

Note, some aspects of service described here are simplified to make the instructions easy to follow and to resolve the most common errors that lead to improper service.

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