

How to Give a Landlord-Tenant Notice

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A landlord-tenant notice formally notifies a resident of something about his or her tenancy; this could be an increase in rent, an offer of a new rental agreement, or notice to cure a rules violation or vacate the premises. Because the purpose of these notices is to solve a problem without the risk and expense of going to court, housing providers are allowed to serve these notices without an attorney or process server. Proper service is crucial, however, because the court will not enforce a notice that is not properly and timely served.

What notices must be served this way?

Changes to the law from 2021 require virtually all notices be served in the same manner as a notice to pay rent or vacate. This requirement applies to offers of a new lease (to maintain for-cause termination requirements or local requirements in Seattle and Federal Way), rent increases, and notices to correct lease violations.

When do I serve a notice?

Most notices have a minimum number of days before compliance is required. Remember that these are always minimums. Local law, your rental agreement itself, or the terms of a subsidy program may require you to give more time. Whenever you are required to provide additional time, you should state the correct number of days on the notice.

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

How do I properly serve the notice on my tenant?

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. Finally, always mail copies by regular U.S. mail to each adult occupant at the property. If you have other addresses for the occupants, mail copies to those addresses also.



Local law, your rental agreement itself, or the terms of a subsidy program may require you to send the notice to additional people, additional addresses, or in additional ways. Seattle requires you to document the time that at least one copy is delivered by taking a photo of it on the door or using USPS Tracking, for example.

Do I send certified mail?

You are required to use regular U.S. mail. You may use additional types of mail, such as certified, return receipt, or proof of mailing.

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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