



# Consumer Tips

From  
**Attorney General Roy Cooper**



## **Renting Property: Understanding Your Lease**

In general, the relationship between a landlord and a tenant is governed by the terms of a lease agreement. A lease is a contract between the tenant and the property owner. Before you sign a lease to rent property, read the following tips:

- Read the entire lease carefully and make sure you understand all the terms, especially those about giving notice before you terminate, or end, your lease.
- Make sure you see the actual apartment or home you will be renting before you sign a lease. Observe the people who'll be your neighbors and check out the reputation of the neighborhood.
- If you enter into a written lease, don't rely on oral promises made by the leasing agent or landlord that are not in the written lease.
- Make sure you understand what period of time your lease will cover. Some leases are for a definite term, such as one year. But many leases, especially oral agreements, are only month-to-month leases. This means that each month there is a new or renewed lease.
- Once you've signed the lease, you can get out of it only if the lease itself allows you to do so and you follow the procedures laid out in the lease. For example, the lease may permit you to move out by notifying your landlord thirty days in advance.
- Keep in mind that even if you give proper notice before moving out, you will likely still have to pay rent until the landlord rents your apartment to another tenant or until your lease expires.
- State and federal law impose certain conditions that the landlord and tenant cannot change, even if the lease claims to do so. Make sure you understand your rights and responsibilities as a renter and those of your landlord.

### ***For More Information:***

*See also our Landlord-Tenant booklet, and tips on Renters' Rights, Renters' Responsibilities, Landlord-Tenant Disputes, Security Deposits, and Eviction.*