



NYC LANDLORDS ON WHAT MAKES A PERFECT TENANT (AKA HOW TO MAKE YOUR LANDLORD LOVE YOU)

by Leah Hochbaum Rosner | 8/18/14 - 8:59 AM



Jeffrey Feldman

We're in [peak rental season](#) as summer gives way to fall, with apartments churning and lease renewals in the offing, so it can't hurt to be on your landlord's good side, right? After all, it could mean the difference between getting your shower drain unclogged ASAP and standing in inches of water while you wash every morning. Still, "just because you're nice and friendly doesn't mean you'll necessarily get a discount come lease renewal time," says Arik Lifshitz, president of [DSA Management](#), which owns 40 apartment buildings in New York. "But you're certainly better off for not being a difficult tenant."

So what exactly does it take to become a model tenant (assuming, of course, that your landlord is a decent sort who's not asking you to put up with substandard living arrangements)? Paying the rent on time is a good start, as is following the law (i.e. no brothels, no gambling dens, no illegal Airbnb sublets). But sometimes being respectful and keeping a cool head—no matter how angry you are about that drain issue—is more important.

“Understand that the landlord is running a business,” says Trevor Matwey, a former property manager and a research analyst for [LandlordsNY](#), a free peer-to-peer resource network for professional New York landlords. “He’s not trying to be mean when he says something can’t be done right then. He often has a lot of red tape that he needs to get through.”

The advice doesn't end there. We spoke with landlords and property managers to get their biggest tenant-related gripes—so you know what to avoid.

1. Don't blindside me. “Landlords hate surprises. Let them know in advance if you will be late on rent, making a change of any kind in your residence or anything else you may think might matter to them. A phone call or e-mail: ‘Hey, I lost my job but I’m working on some new things, I may need a couple of weeks leeway this month’ will go a long way.” — *Jhoch, a member of LandlordsNY*

2. Handle repairs like an adult. “Report repairs immediately. Even if you think it isn’t something major, it’s better to be safe than sorry.” — *Trevor Matwey, LandlordsNY*

“Don’t start out a repair request with a volatile tone. Something’s going to happen in every apartment—whether it’s brand new or 30 years old. Be polite about it.” — *Arik Lifshitz, president of building owner DSA Management*

3. Control your dogs and your kids. “Curb your dog and your children. We don’t want to hear about off-leash dogs in elevators and lobbies or ones that go wee-wee right outside the front doors. We also don’t want to see children on roller skates and skateboards disturbing their fellow residents.” — *Marina Higgins, vice president of property management firm Argo Real Estate*

4. Don't blame me if it's not my fault. “Tenants often hold landlords accountable for things that are outside their control. For example, if there’s construction next door. We don’t have control over what happens around the building—just in the building itself. If they have the proper permits and are operating lawfully, there’s nothing we can do about the noise level.” — *Dylan Pichulik, CEO of property manager XL Real Property Management*

5. Know when to call ... “In an emergency, such as a leak, don’t email. Always call. I’m not always at my desk to respond to an email, but I want to take care of it as soon as possible.” — *Trevor Matwey*

6. ...And when not. “Use common sense—don’t call the management office at 6 p.m. on a Friday afternoon. No one will be around. We always give out a list with important phone numbers and procedures. Consult that to find out who you need to call when. ... Know when it’s actually a police matter and not something building management should handle. If your neighbor’s party is still going strong at 2:30 in the morning, call the cops and have them shut it down. Sure, you can call me the next day to lodge a complaint, but I can’t do anything about it at 2:30 in the morning.” —*Arik Lifshitz*

7. Go green. “We really want our residents to recycle and to recycle correctly. That means not mixing your paper with your glass, rinsing out your milk cartons thoroughly, and not mixing your recycling with your garbage. When the rules are not observed, landlords are faced with sanitation violations.” —*Marina Higgins*

8. Be a good neighbor. “Be respectful toward your neighbors. People are paying a lot of money for these apartments. Just because you’re in a position to stay up late listening to loud music or smoke weed on the roof doesn’t mean others are. Some of your neighbors have full-time jobs or small children.” —*Dylan Pichulik*

9. Patience is a virtue. “Don’t hit the redial button constantly. Don’t leave multiple messages or send multiple emails about the same issue. Our protocol is to respond by the end of the day even just to tell the tenant that their concern is being reviewed. When you keep leaving messages you tie up the property manager’s ability to deal with the situation.” —*Marina Higgins*

10. Open your doors when necessary. “Always provide access to maintenance workers when they need it, like if they’re trying to investigate a leak. Not allowing them in can put the safety of the building in jeopardy.” —*Dylan Pichulik*