10 Tips for Renting a House by Ashoka Lion

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Renting a house is a daunting task and calls for a lot of planning and investigation. A rented home has various advantages. One of the key advantages is that you are not bound to stay in the same house forever and if you are not pleased with one home, you can move into another. Before renting a house, you should opt for the best available property as well as a good agent.

As a renter you should be aware of your rights in order to protect your interests. While renting a house, you should keep these tips in mind so as to avoid all the hassles related to renting.

1. Do a careful research: Before taking the final decision, it is essential to spend enough time to know about the area where you are planning to move. Ensure that the area has good transportation facility as well as good schools for your children. Alternatively, you can also take the help of a professional rental service.

2. Get a written agreement: While renting a house, you should always ask for a written rental agreement. The rental agreement should be read carefully before you sign it. Ensure that you understand all the terms and conditions mentioned in the agreement properly. You should also clarify all your doubts before signing the document.

3. Be vigilant of tenantâ€™s rights: You should be aware of your rights to protect your interests. In order to assure your safety-

a. Ensure that the home is fire resistant and conform the Fire Safety Regulations. Also check if fire alarms have been installed properly.

b. It is necessary to ensure that the electrical equipments installed in the property are safe and working properly.

c. The landlord should also ensure that the property is in sound condition and safe to reside.

d. If you notice any defects, you should inform your landlord immediately so that the problems can be solved immediately.

4. Never tolerate discrimination: If you notice any act of discrimination, you should immediately file a discrimination complaint against your landlord.

5. Maintain a healthy relation with your landlord: An ideal tenant should maintain a good relation with his/her landlord. In order to maintain a good relation with your landlord, you should treat the rented property like your own home and always pay your rent on time. At the same time, as a good tenant you should ensure that the property is well maintained and you understand that the home is not a hotel or apartment complex with on-site maintenance staff. This means that a tenant may have to take care of minor repairs or face repair charges (repair deductibles) for those services.

6. Identify the restrictive provisions mentioned in the agreement: There might be certain illegal or unwanted terms and conditions mentioned in the lease that might limit the entry of guests, restrict pets and even prohibit you from running a home business. There might be certain phrases in the lease such as â€˜tenant agrees to abide by all the future rules as and when modified by the landlord, or â€˜rent may increaseâ€™ and other conditions. This, before signing a tenant agreement, you should read i carefully to understand the provisions completely. In case you are not in favor of certain conditions,

you can request the landlord to amend them or at least understand what it means.

7. Safeguard yourself with renterâ€™s insurance: Renterâ€™s insurance is an insurance that covers vario losses to your property arising as a result of fire, theft, explosions, sabotage, smoke, etc. Landlords and property management companies are usually not required to replace your items in your refrigerator that are lost due to a power outage or damage to furniture from a broken pipe (depends on local ordinances and whether landlord or management company were aware of problem and did nothing to resolve it). Renterâ€™s insurance policy is affordable and provides you with peace of mind whether you utilize it or not. Renterâ€™s insurance policies do not cover flood damages; hence it should be bought separately.

8. Dealing with an eviction notice: In case your landlord gives you an eviction notice for nonpayment of rent, the decision is up to the tenant to pay your rent or vacate the property. It is important that your landlord and management company follow the notice provisions in the lease (as long as the term meets state requirements) for sufficient notice period. In case you have violated any terms and conditions that necessitate the eviction notice, you should preferably move out of the house and try to reach a settlement with the landlord. You should keep in mind that an eviction lawsuit and judgment can tarnish your credit score significantly and also limit your possibility of getting another rented house if the owner or property management firm does search eviction records as well as credit judgments. For example, Ashoka Lion does run background checks for our Houston and Dallas area prospective tenants that includes eviction record search, credit reports, criminal record searches, call previous landlords, and call current employers.

9. Report all the problems to your landlord or the property agent: If you detect any defects in the property, you should immediately inform your landlord to get it repaired as soon as possible. Preferably the problems should be reported in writing. You should also keep a copy of the letter with you as a written record. This will act as an evidence to prove that the landlord was informed about the problem. Please be aware many owners and leases limit owner responsibility for certain repairs or ask tenants to pay repair deductibles (Texas property code does restrict what a landlord can make you responsible for, but there are many repairs not required to be made). This is what makes renting a single family home then renting an apartment a different process. People who want the freedom and privacy that a home provides must understand that a single family home is not owned by a big corporation with on-site staffing, so the owner expects tenants to take responsibility in the property upkeep. Ashoka Lion provides our tenants whether they live in Sugar Land, Rowlett, Houston, Dallas, or any of the surrounding suburbs in Houston or Dallas that we provide management services a repair matrix to help illustrate examples of repairs and responsibilities that tenants take when renting a single family home. The matrix is not exhaustive, but it does attempt to illustrate examples of the responsibility tenants should assume in the upkeep of homes.

10. Moving In Condition Documentation: Tenants should take notes upon moving in a home for blemishes or damages to avoid it being deducted from the security deposit. In addition to documentation, the use of digital camera and video can provide additional proof of these conditions. The pictures, video, and documentation can be shared with the landlord or property management firm after moving in to help insure that everyone is in agreement of the condition of the property upon move in. Our Houston and Dallas property managers will have pictures from the marketing of the property, video, and we will try to be available for a move in to walk property, and we leave a form provided by the Texas Real Estate Commission called the â€œInventory and Conditionâ€• form that tenants can return to us after 3 days. It is a form that we provide for the tenant to protect themselves, and failure to turn is noted as proof that the property was in good condition (along with our property pictures, videos, and other notes). Tenants can avoid a lot of head ache by taking the time to document these issues quickly and return to the landlord or property manager.

Renting a house is a good option for those who are apprehensive of the housing market, waiting to buy a house, or cannot afford to deal with the financial commitment owning a home entails. We hope this helps prospective tenants of single family homes get a better idea of what it takes to have a successful relationship with your landlord or property manager.

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Jay Raman is the managing director of Ashoka Lion, a Houston and Dallas area property management firm. Ashoka Lion is a full licensed real estate brokerage in the Houston and Dallas Markets, and you can verify Ashoka Lionâ€™s license with the Texas Real Estate Commission.

Jay and his team have been in the a rental property management business for the past 6 years, and manage over a hundred fifty residential (single family home) properties in the Houston area, and they have recently entered the Dallas rental property market in 2011. Additionally, Jay is the President of the Houston Chapter of the National Association of Residential Property Managers (an organization dedicated to the management of residential property). To get more great articles or ideas, you can also visit Ashoka Lionâ€™s Facebook page or Twitter Account. For more information, please visit: a http://rental-property-management.ashokalion.com/

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