

Guide to Preparing a Home for the Next Tenant



Abstract

Preparing a rental property for the next tenant is a crucial step in ensuring a smooth transition and maintaining a positive landlord-tenant relationship. This guide offers a comprehensive approach to help landlords and outgoing tenants understand what needs to be done before handing over the keys. From essential repairs and decluttering tips to legal obligations and deep cleaning practices, this guide covers all key aspects to get the property ready for new occupancy.

One of the major components of this process is a thorough end-of-tenancy clean, which not only improves the appearance of the home but also meets hygiene standards and lease agreement expectations. The guide also explores the importance of checking appliance functionality, ensuring safety compliance, and creating a welcoming atmosphere for incoming tenants. It discusses ways to depersonalise the space and how small touches can make a big difference in tenant satisfaction.

Whether you are a landlord aiming to protect your investment or a tenant hoping to get your bond back, this guide provides practical insights and easy-to-follow steps. With helpful references and expert advice, it's designed to simplify the preparation process and make property handovers smooth and stress-free.

Getting Started

Before you begin preparing your property for the next tenant, it's important to understand the purpose and benefits of this process. A well-prepared home not only attracts responsible renters but also helps ensure you meet lease obligations, prevent disputes, and protect your investment. Whether you're a landlord or an outgoing tenant, starting with a clear plan can make the entire transition smoother and more efficient.

Start by walking through the property with a checklist in hand. Note any visible damage, maintenance issues, or areas that require attention. This helps you stay organized and prioritize tasks. Ensure you understand your responsibilities—landlords may need to meet safety and legal requirements, while tenants may need to fulfill cleaning or repair conditions to receive their full bond back.

Gather all necessary supplies and, if needed, arrange for professional services such as end-of-lease cleaning or minor repairs. Set realistic timelines and allow yourself enough flexibility to get everything done without stress. Most importantly, keep communication open between all parties involved.

This guide will walk you through every essential step—starting with the basics and leading into more detailed tasks—to help you confidently prepare the home for its next chapter.

1. What basic repairs and fixes should be done before handing over the keys?



Landlords have a responsibility to ensure that the property is fit to live in and meets health and safety laws. Landlords are responsible for:

- providing a property that is fit to live in
- maintaining the rental property in a reasonable state of repair
- providing and maintaining locks or other security devices to ensure the property is reasonably secure.

Landlords who do not comply with these obligations will be in breach of the tenancy agreement. Repairs and maintenance in a rental property

Landlords are responsible for repairing and maintaining the property so that it is in a reasonable state of repair, considering:

- the age of the property
- the amount of rent being paid
- the prospective life of the property.

This does not mean that the property must be in perfect condition.

To learn more about landlord obligations for repairs and maintenance, visit [Getting repairs done on a rental property](#).

Situations where landlords are required to make repairs to a rental property

Landlords should deal with urgent repairs

Urgent repairs are considered to be repairs needed for serious issues that make a property unsafe or insecure or prevent access to essential services. That is, an issue that:

- threatens a property's structural integrity.
- poses a risk to lives.
- makes a property unsafe or insecure.
- prevents access to essential services.

Visit the Urgent repairs in residential rental properties page to see a list of what is considered an urgent repair.

Landlords have certain responsibilities after a natural disaster

If a property has been affected by a natural disaster, such as a flood, bushfire or storm, landlords have certain responsibilities.

Serious storm, fire or flood damage are all considered to be urgent repairs and should be handled quickly.

Repairing and maintaining smoke alarms

Summary of key obligations for landlords

- Landlords should repair a smoke alarm within certain time frames.
- Landlords should conduct checks to ensure the smoke alarm is working.
- Landlords should install or replace removable batteries every year.
- If the rental property is in a strata scheme, the owners corporation may be responsible for repair and replacement of smoke alarms. Even if that is the case, landlords still have some obligations. See 'Smoke alarms in strata schemes' below.

When are smoke alarms considered not working

- The smoke alarm is removed and not replaced with a working smoke alarm.
- The smoke alarm does not work (for example because the battery needs to be replaced).
- The smoke alarm is malfunctioning (for example due to accumulated dust, insects, airborne contaminants or corrosion of electrical circuitry).

Smoke alarms in strata schemes

Landlords with properties in a strata scheme have an obligation to ensure smoke alarms installed in the property are working. If the owners corporation is responsible for the repair and

replacement of smoke alarms, landlords may have some different obligations relating to smoke alarms.

Non-urgent repairs



A landlord or agent is responsible for arranging non-urgent repairs needed to comply with the landlord's obligation to maintain a rental property in a reasonable state of repair.

A tenant must have written permission to carry out repairs to a rental property, including agreement on any reimbursement for costs, from the landlord, except for urgent repairs and some smoke alarm repairs, but tenants need to follow the requirements for those repairs.

Meeting health and safety laws for a rental property

- Landlords have a responsibility to ensure the property meets health and safety laws.
- Meeting health and safety laws is a term of every tenancy agreement, and landlords who do not comply with these obligations will be in breach of the agreement.

Resolving a repair, maintenance or damage dispute with a tenant

It is always best for landlords or an agent to try and seek a resolution with a tenant. If an issue cannot be resolved, a landlord can:

- contact Fair Trading's tenancy complaints and disputes service
- lodge an application directly with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT).

In some situations, Fair Trading may issue a rectification order to landlords to undertake repairs, or to tenants to fix damage.

2. How can you declutter and depersonalize the space effectively?

Whether you're planning a move or looking to streamline your space, figuring out how to declutter your home can feel intimidating. From piles of clothes in the closet to toys scattered around the living room, where should you start?

As a home editor, I'm well versed in all things home and design, but decided to tap professional organizers to get into the nitty-gritty. Below, organizing expert Rachel Rosenthal and Laura Kinsella, founder of Urban OrgaNYze, share their advice for decluttering and helpful tips for every room — from kitchen storage to closet organization.

First, give yourself patience and grace. Organizing your home can feel like a personal and vulnerable process, but the final result is worth the hard work! "Recognizing the areas that burden you is a crucial step toward crafting a plan for decluttering and achieving organization," says Rosenthal, who adds that addressing physical clutter can help alleviate a sensation of heaviness or anxiety in your home environment.

Decluttering Tips for When You Feel Overwhelmed

- Anticipate the negative. "When you feel like you are the only one out there dealing with this type of clutter, it's common to be embarrassed," says Rosenthal. Remember that decluttering is a progress; your room or house will always look worse before it gets better.
- Rely on a buddy. It's easier to accomplish your goal if you have someone to hold you accountable. Whether it be a spouse, partner, family member, friend or professional organizer, have a support system with you.
- Start small: To avoid overwhelm and decision fatigue, start with a small, achievable task that takes no more than 20 minutes — like organizing a small junk drawer or a utensil drawer. "Decluttering is contagious, so as you build momentum, it will make it easier to tackle larger projects throughout your home," says Kinsella.
- Schedule time for it. Like you would for a dentist or doctor, schedule your organizing time! If you don't make an appointment with yourself, you are bound to put something else in its place.
- Take it one room at a time. Choose one room to focus on at a time and touch every item in that room to determine how it should be categorized. If it's not something you love or use on a regular basis, let it go.
- Reward your hard work. "Whether it's indulging in a bottle of wine, treating yourself to a new piece of clothing after purging a substantial portion of your wardrobe, or taking a

refreshing walk outdoors, incentives can provide the motivation you need to make progress," says Rosenthal.

Decluttering and depersonalizing a property is a key step in preparing it for new tenants. The goal is to create a clean, neutral space that feels welcoming and allows the next occupant to easily imagine themselves living there. Start by removing any personal items, such as family photos, unique decorations, or memorabilia. These can make the space feel like someone else's home and may distract potential renters or buyers.



Next, focus on decluttering each room. Clear countertops, shelves, and storage areas of unnecessary items. Keep only essential furnishings and neutral décor to maintain a tidy and spacious appearance. Pay special attention to closets and cabinets—new tenants often check these areas, and a neat, half-full space creates a positive impression.

If you're a landlord, consider using storage bins or donating unused items. If you're a tenant, this is a great opportunity to begin packing and organizing your belongings. Aim for simplicity and cleanliness throughout.

By decluttering and depersonalizing, you present a home that feels fresh, open, and ready for a new beginning—making a big difference in how the property is perceived and valued.

3. What are the legal responsibilities for landlords or tenants when preparing the home?

A landlord is someone who owns and rents real estate. Landlords can be individuals, businesses, or other entities. Landlords typically provide the necessary maintenance or repairs during the rental period. Specific duties and obligations are normally outlined in a lease agreement.

What Landlords Do

As noted above, a landlord is anyone who owns property and rents it out to someone else. This party is called the tenant. Landlords invest in real estate as a source of profit. By owning property and leasing it out, a landlord can earn a steady stream of income along with the potential for appreciation of their properties.

Landlords may be individuals, businesses, or other entities, such as government agencies. Similarly, the types of properties they own can also vary. That means that the types of properties they own aren't limited to just homes. In addition to single-family residences, their real estate portfolios may include:

- Multi-family residential dwellings, such as multi-family homes, apartment buildings, and condominiums
- Land and empty lots
- Vacation properties, such as cottages and villas
- Commercial properties, such as standalone business properties, shopping malls, office buildings, or mixed-use buildings

Landlords typically use leases when they rent out their assets. A lease is a legally binding contract that outlines the terms under which one party agrees to rent property from another. It guarantees the lessee (the tenant) the use of an asset and guarantees that the lessor (the property owner or landlord) is entitled to regular payments for a specified period in exchange.

Landlord Rights and Responsibilities

Landlords have specific rights and responsibilities that vary from state to state. There are also general laws that are common to all states.

Landlords have the right to collect rent as well as any prearranged late fees. They also have the right to raise the rent as defined in the tenant-landlord lease agreement. When tenants do not pay rent, landlords have the right to evict them. The process of eviction varies from state to state. Most states provide landlords with the ability to collect back rent as well as legal costs.

Landlords are responsible for maintaining their rental properties and keeping them in habitable condition. They must ensure that properties are clean and empty when new tenants move in. In addition, landlords must follow all local building codes, perform prompt repairs, and keep all vital services, including plumbing, electricity, and heat, in working order.

Landlords are also responsible for managing security deposits. While landlords have the right to charge tenants a security deposit to cover property damage and unpaid rent, the deposit doesn't belong to the landlord. The laws governing security deposits vary from state to state.

Types of Landlords



Landlords may be individuals, corporations, or other entities, such as government agencies. Individuals may own one or more properties and rent them out to supplement their incomes or as a way to diversify their investment portfolios. For instance, a middle-aged couple may decide to purchase a second home and rent it out as a way to increase their monthly income. Keeping the property rented out during retirement can help these individuals supplement any money they receive from Social Security benefits or their investments.

Other landlords, such as corporations, may be in the business of purchasing properties for the express purpose of renting them out. For example, a real estate corporation may purchase office buildings and rent them out to different businesses for monthly rent.

Municipal governments, especially those in large cities, often own housing corporations. These agencies own, rent out, manage, and maintain affordable or subsidized housing rentals to those in need. Rental payments are commonly determined based on a tenant's income for these dwellings.

Limits on a Landlord's Rights

There are four main things landlords aren't allowed to do:

- **Discriminate:** The Fair Housing Act strictly forbids landlords from denying a lease to someone based on their race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, or gender.
- **Enter without proper notice:** Unless it's for an emergency situation, landlords must give proper notice before entering a property. Laws vary by state, but many statutes require at least 24 hours' notice.
- **Evict tenants improperly:** A landlord may evict a tenant, but they must always go through the proper legal channels. Failure to follow proper protocol may put the landlord in a precarious legal position.
- Landlords must give ample notice before increasing a tenant's rent (typically a minimum of 30 days). And depending on the state, rent control laws might prevent landlords from raising rents above a certain limit, even when the lease is up for renewal.

The Bottom Line

Landlords have specific duties, responsibilities, and rights. Some of them vary by state, but some are common to all states. They all should be outlined in the lease agreement. This legal contract states the rent the tenant must pay and for how long. It also stipulates the duties and responsibilities of both landlords and tenants and the consequences of a breach.

Why is a thorough end-of-tenancy clean important and what does it include?

Moving out of a rental property can be stressful, especially when you have to ensure that the vacated house is meeting the cleaning requirements set up by the landlord. Making sure that the property is returned to its original state (similar to when it was first received) is crucial for reclaiming the bond deposit. Failing to do this will result in penalties on your bond or even legal disputes with the landlord. To avoid all this, some tenants opt for hiring expert cleaning services while others prefer to exert a significant amount of effort to meet the cleaning standards themselves.

This article will outline what is expected of an end of tenancy cleaning and cover all the key areas that require attention before handing over the property. From general cleaning tasks to deep cleaning requirements in areas like the bathrooms and kitchens, it will explore everything that the landlords and property agents typically look at during the final inspection.

Whether you're hiring End of Lease Cleaning Sydney experts or attempting to tackle the job yourself, understanding the standards expected will help you in getting the desired results. Let's start.

1. General Cleaning Expectations



End of tenancy cleaning is more than routine housekeeping, is a more thorough task that requires ridding the property of all stains, dust, dirt and grime. Everything from walls and floors to skirting boards and ceilings require a good cleaning. All marks and cobwebs need to be removed; the light switches, door handles and other frequently touched surfaces need to be sanitised; all windows need to be cleaned (inside and out); and all shelves and countertops need to be wiped down. If the floors happen to be carpeted, professional steam cleaning may be required or even expected if it is specifically mentioned in the lease agreement.

2. Kitchen Cleaning Requirements

The kitchen is one of the most important areas during end of tenancy cleaning. Landlords want tenants to leave the appliances, cabinets and countertops in spotless condition, while the oven, stovetop and range hood are expected to be degreased and scrubbed thoroughly. The fridge and freezer should be emptied out, defrosted and cleaned both inside & out. For cupboards and drawers, remove any crumbs or stains; for sinks and taps, descale them and clean the grout in between all the tiles. Finally, the floors need to be mopped and swept while any remaining grease or food residues need to be eliminated from the home. Hiring the pros for this detailed end of lease cleaning in Sydney will give a lot of relief.

3. Bathroom and Laundry Deep Clean

Bathrooms require a very detailed deep clean to remove all the soap scum, mould and limescale it tends to accumulate. Here, tenants will need to ensure that the sinks, showers, bathtubs and toilets are all scrubbed and disinfected; shower screens and mirrors – polished and streak-free; any mould and mildew in the grout, eliminated. If the laundry area falls within the lease agreement terms, the washing machine, dryer and sink need to be cleared of lint and other dirt, and the floors must be mopped. In case of any built-in storage, wipe it all down.

4. Carpet and Floor Cleaning

Floors play a big role in the overall aesthetic of a home. But rentals differ in the type of flooring used. If the floors are carpeted, professional steam cleaning may be required; in case of wood, tile or laminate, they must be swept, mopped and any scuff marks or stains need to be removed. Sometimes, vacuuming alone is not sufficient for getting the deep-seated dirt and stains out. Hence, for quality end of lease cleaning in Sydney, many tenants choose to let the professionals handle the issues of the carpet, as it assures that they are meeting the compliance requirements of the lease agreement.

5. Walls, Doors and Windows

Some of the common concerns during an end of tenancy cleaning include things like scuff marks, fingerprints and smudges or stains on walls. While the minor ones can be wiped off, others may need to be repainted depending on the lease conditions. Any nails or hooks that were not there before your tenancy need to be removed and the holes need to be patched up. Doors with their handles and frames need to be dusted down, windows must be washed on both sides (wherever possible) without streaking, curtains and blinds too need to be cleaned depending (the cleaning method depending on the type of material it's made out of).

6. Outdoor Areas and Final Touches

If your rental also consists of outdoor spaces like gardens, patios or balconies – these areas, too, need a thorough cleaning. Any rubbish needs to be removed, the decking and tiles need to be swept and cleaned and the gardens need to be maintained either by mowing the lawn or trimming the hedges (if outlined in the lease agreement). For the final touches, make sure that the property is free from any lingering odours, the air vents are dust-free, and all light bulbs are in good working condition. Before the final inspection takes place, it's always a good idea to do a final walkthrough of the property to check for any missed spots since this will help prevent any disputes from occurring later on.

Wrapping Up

Understanding what is expected from an end of tenancy cleaning is essential for getting your full bond money back. If you plan the process effectively and hire the pros for the job, you can rest assured that you will meet all the checkboxes of the final inspection. So, good luck and happy cleaning!

5. How do you create a welcoming environment for the next occupant?



Curating a home that feels welcoming – one that beckons you to linger and wander – will make for a thoroughly enjoyable, memorable and inviting space for both you, your family and friends. These exquisite ways to make a home feel welcoming – and more attractive – are a great starting point to help you choose the right home decor ideas for each room – what you choose should reflect what you love, too.

How to make a home feel welcoming

'A home evolves over time – some argue it never gets to a stage of full maturity – and yet I am often asked how you can quickly and cheaply inject new life. I believe there are a number of ways to instantly get an amazing look,' says interior designer Martin Brudnizki. 'Every object and every space should make a contribution to the home – even a single piece of art can make a big and immediate difference.' Here are some of my easy wins to help make your house feel more like a home.

1. Create instant curb appeal

The term 'curb appeal' refers to the attractiveness of a home's external appearance, particularly the way it looks when viewed from the street – that all-important first impression that moulds the

opinion of every visitor and passer-by. Designing a home with universally aesthetic appeal is a tall order, but worth it when curating a home that feels welcoming and inviting.

If you want to add instant curb appeal, think about introducing symmetrical elements to add the most curb appeal. Symmetry in interior design is a technique used by designers to create a space that looks incredibly cohesive and tailored – and therefore welcoming and inviting. A simple solution is to introduce a symmetrical pair of topiary planters to your front décor ideas, as demonstrated in this space by Margaret Ash Design. Clipped evergreens are perfect for creating a punctuation point in your planting scheme, for introducing low shapes to front yard walkways, and are the optimum choice for making your front yard look nice.

2. Create a welcoming spot for visitors

Creating an entryway that's impactful but functional, aesthetically-pleasing but entirely practical is a fine balance. However, it's a vital area of home design to get right, despite the fact the only time spent there is when we're passing through. So, while browsing the most beautiful entryway ideas, what do you need to consider? Priorities include making an entryway inviting while minimizing clutter – the two go hand-in-hand.

'To make a home feel welcoming, think about the impact the entryway will have when you first walk in,' says luxury home accessories maker, Birdie Fortescue. Take inspiration from this space by designing a cozy corner to sit, layered with piles of cushions for warmth and beauty. 'If you have space, a rug with a practical texture is a great addition, particularly underneath a well-proportioned entryway table,' says Birdie.

It is certainly worth designing an entryway with other areas of the home in mind. 'Many rooms lead off the entryway, so the design not only sets your home's tone but also creates an inviting place for guests,' says Tom Cox, co-founder, Hám Interiors.

3. Build a collection

If you want to make a home feel welcoming, it is important to make a house really feel like a home. Your home is an expression of your life: its contents should reflect your journeys, experiences, loves and stories. It is not just a place to rest your head and cook dinners. 'I am a strong believer in owning and building collections – from restaurant ashtrays to Murano glass fruit and vegetables,' says interior design Martin Brudnizki.

'First, find your niche interest and start building the collection. Perhaps it's Italian engravings, Meissen ceramics or 19th-century landscape paintings,' he says. 'Don't be afraid to really get under the skin of collecting. I think it's healthy to develop interests and expertise in a small field. Reading alongside my shopping expeditions has allowed me to further my eye.'

'Once the collection is established turn your attention to displaying it. I believe the key to any room is to create a mix so it looks like you're a great collector with a diverse set of art, antiques and objets. However, within that mix you have groupings.'

4. Arrange your seating for conversation

Perhaps more than any other piece of furniture, the sofa is the linchpin of comfort and relaxation in the home. Because of this you want to get your living room seating just right.



'When you have people over for gatherings, you really notice when you've got the seating arrangements right,' says interior designer Nina Campbell. 'Seating plans are very important – and not just at a dinner table. I like to think of seating plans for the living room or family room when I have guests over, and for that you need what I call “conversational seating”'.

'The number of chairs you set out is an important consideration. Odd numbers are good for seating plans in general because it allows for some rotation of guests. The interior designer Elsie de Wolf wrote in 1913 that you must never place a chair on its own in a room; she was very shy herself and noted that it is always the shy person who arrives first, sit on the lone chair and then are often rooted there for the whole party. But two next to each other does not always work, either. I find that two people sitting side by side do not always speak to each other, so having an occasional chair pulled in at a diagonal can create conversational triangles.'

The sofas and bigger pieces of furniture should be covered in a tough, strong and relatively plain fabric, so you don't tire of it; they are expensive to recover. You can jazz them up with cushions and throws.

5. Soften sharp corners with curves

Move over slim profiles and hard angles – voluptuous curves are where the most desirable and welcoming homes are heading.

Modest materials can play a harmonizing role that tones down ornately carved motifs. ‘Curves are my addiction – they add instant dynamism and yet make people feel uplifted and relaxed,’ says interior designer Colette van den Thillart.

‘I strive to use them in more unexpected ways, like the urn silhouette here, which has a lovely simplicity and humbleness as it’s fabricated in the most unassuming of materials: fibreboard. The arch lends a hint of grandeur and gives some architecture to the simple space, but again because the materials and painted finish are modest, its overall effect is so pleasing and friendly!’

6. Introduce delightful decorative moments

Use open shelving to introduce decorative moments that make a home feel welcoming and inviting.

Be they decorated with ceramics, vintage glassware, plants or recipe books, shelves can be used to add individual style to a kitchen, as Mike Fetherston, design director of Hetherington Newman, explains. ‘As kitchens are increasingly central to the home and where families come together for meals and to socialize, areas for display are important to personalize the space and add interest, giving a more relaxed and welcoming feel.’ Choose from floating shelves (without visible supports) to those with stylish brackets, from plate racks to cubby holes built into furniture.

Simple LED strips or miniature spotlights can be used to illuminate shelf displays, enhancing their impact and adding subtle evening glamor, especially useful when you want to create a softer mood for dining.

7. Master the art of curated color

Choosing the right shade for an inviting space can present endless choices and subtle nuances to understand and overcome, but get it right and you can create a home that feels welcoming. Color theory and the color wheel in its entirety can be complicated but there are a few basic principles to help steer you in the right direction, explains Patrick O'Donnell, brand ambassador for Farrow & Ball.

‘Paint ideas and paint tricks are the perfect way to transform a space easily, adding personality and character,’ says Ruth Mottershead, creative director of Little Greene. ‘Bold, vivid tones work well in rooms made for entertaining, or see a lot of activity, such as kitchens and living rooms. A pop of color is a great way to add impact and an element of surprise to a scheme. Bold colors are also great for spaces with lots of light and can be used in bigger proportions without being “too much”’

Colorful art is another way to go bold. A favorite painting can be a good inspiration and art is always the starting point for any scheme by Sophie Ashby of Studio Ashby who is known for her

dynamic designs. 'Ideally, we would work from a client's own collection. From that, we can then build a color palette and design references,' says Sophie. '

Bottom Line

Preparing a home for the next tenant is more than just a routine task—it's a reflection of responsibility, care, and respect for both the property and the incoming occupant. Whether you're a landlord getting ready to lease or a tenant moving out, ensuring the space is clean, functional, and inviting sets the tone for a smooth transition. From handling basic repairs and checking appliance safety to performing a deep end-of-tenancy clean and decluttering personal items, every step helps in presenting the property in its best light.

Doing this not only meets legal and ethical obligations but also fosters a sense of trust and professionalism. A well-prepared home leads to quicker turnovers, happier tenants, and fewer disputes. It can also help secure positive references and maintain the long-term value of the property. Ultimately, the effort you invest in preparing the space is returned in the form of satisfaction, peace of mind, and smoother rental experiences. Whether you're handing over the keys or receiving them, a properly prepared home benefits everyone involved. Make it a priority, not an afterthought—because a great next chapter begins with a respectful and ready home.

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