

# Rooming House

## Tenants' Rights in Massachusetts

---

If you live in a rooming house, you have the right to a safe, habitable place to live and protections against eviction.

### What is a rooming house?

A rooming house is a business that rents out individual rooms in the same building. The most important features are:

- You rent a single room, and
- There are 4 or more renters living there who are not related to the person running the rooming house.

The person running the rooming house could be a landlord, a property manager, or a primary tenant who sublets rooms to 4 or more unrelated people. It is illegal to run a rooming house without a license.

### What are my landlord's responsibilities?

A rooming house landlord must:

- Provide you with a room and common areas that are safe and sanitary.
- Provide 1 bathroom with a toilet, sink, and shower or bathtub for every 8 rooming house renters.
- Clean the bathroom every 24 hours if you share a bathroom with other renters.

- Provide automatic smoke or heat detectors.
- Provide sprinklers, if there are 6 or more renters.
- Provide you a room that is at least 100 square feet, if it has 1 room for living and sleeping and you live by yourself. If the room is only for sleeping and you live by yourself, it must be at least 70 square feet.
- Fix unhealthy conditions like mice, rats, bedbugs, or cockroaches.
- Make needed repairs without charging you, unless you caused the damage.
- Give you privacy.

### Cooking Spaces

Your landlord does not have to provide a space where you can cook. But if they do, certain rules apply:

- If your landlord provides a shared kitchen, the kitchen must have a sink, stove, oven, and storage space. The landlord must also provide a refrigerator unless the lease says that the tenant is responsible for providing the refrigerator.
- Your landlord may provide a microwave in your room or in a shared space.
- Where there are between 6-19 renters, the landlord may provide a kitchenette in

your room. But only if your room is 150 square feet or larger. Individual kitchenettes must have a hot plate, refrigerator, and sink with hot and cold running water.

- If your room connects to another renter's room, and the landlord provides a kitchenette, the kitchenette must have a stove instead of a hot plate and must also have a storage area for food.

## Can my landlord raise my rent?

Yes. Your landlord can raise your rent but only if you agree to it.

## What is my landlord NOT allowed to do?

Your landlord cannot:

**Enter your room.** Your landlord cannot enter your room unless you give them permission, there's an emergency, or they have a court order.

**Lock you out of your room.** The only way a landlord can lock you out of your room is by getting a court order.

**Evict you without a court order.**

**Keep your belongings.** Even if you get evicted, your landlord has to follow the eviction storage law.

**Refuse to make repairs.** If you ask the landlord to fix a problem and they refuse, see [Chapter 8: Getting Repairs Made](#).

**Evict you for asking to make repairs.** If they try to do that, it is retaliation and illegal.

## Can I be evicted?

Yes. Depending on how long you've lived in the rooming house, your landlord must give you notice that they are ending your tenancy before they file an eviction case in court.

If you have lived in the rooming house:

- **30 days or less:** Your landlord can file for eviction without any notice.
- **More than 30 days:** Your landlord can file a 7-day eviction notice.
- **More than 3 months:** The type of notice depends on the reason for eviction:
  - 7-day Notice for damaging property or causing a nuisance.
  - 14-day Notice if you owe rent.
  - 30-day Notice for any other reason or no reason.

If a judge makes an order to evict you:

- Ask the court for a reasonable accommodation to stay if you have a disability that relates to the eviction.
- Ask the court for more time so you can find another place to live.
- Appeal the court's decision.

**If you are in a Department of Mental Health program,** you have extra legal protections. You have the right to a hearing in court or at the DMH. The DMH must make sure you have another place to live before you are evicted.



For more, scan the QR code to see [Legal Tactics, Chapter 15: Rooming Houses](#).  
[MassLegalHelp.org/LT-rooming-houses](https://MassLegalHelp.org/LT-rooming-houses)