

Rent Court for Tenants

Rent court is held in the District Court of Maryland, where Failure to Pay Rent cases move very quickly.

Frequently-used Terms

- **Landlord:** The person or business that owns and leases housing to other people.
- **Tenant:** The person or group of people who rent and live in a property.
- **Eviction:** The removal of a tenant from rental property by the landlord as the result of a legal judgment.
- **Rent ledger:** A written record your landlord is required to maintain that keeps track of rent paid.
- **Service** or **service of process:** How tenants are notified that a case has been filed with the court. If your landlord has filed a case for Failure to Pay Rent, the court or Sheriff will mail copies of the court notice. The Sheriff's Department will also post a copy of the notice on the door to your home.
- **Right of redemption.** The right to redeem the property and cancel an eviction by paying all rent due, plus costs, before the Sheriff executes the eviction. This is sometimes called "pay and stay."
- **Warrant of restitution.** This court document indicates that the court authorizes an eviction. If rent is not paid and the judge signs the warrant, the warrant is forwarded to the Sheriff's Department to schedule an eviction.
- **Licensing.** Many areas in Maryland require a landlord to get a [housing registration license](#) before renting residential property to a tenant. Some landlords may be required to file a [lead certificate](#). Maryland law requires owners of rental properties built before 1978 to register their units with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). If required, the landlord may have to prove that he or she is properly licensed before proceeding in court.

Before Court: Unpaid Rent

- Read your lease. Understand your responsibilities.
- Think about options: Are you working? Expecting a bonus check or tax refund? Can you borrow money? Talk to your landlord about a payment plan.
- Consider rent assistance programs at www.rentassistance.us/st/maryland
- Request mediation at the courthouse. Or, call 410-260-1676.
- If you believe your landlord has not made repairs, use it as a defense. See the video Rent Escrow.

Preparing to Go to Court

- You will get a hearing notice in the mail. The Sheriff will also post a notice on your door.



My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland

mdcourts.gov

PROMOTING EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

- Bring receipts, canceled checks, or any proof of payment to court.
- If you pay all rent, call the court to confirm that the case was dismissed. If it has not been dismissed, go to court with proof that you paid rent.
- Consider visiting court before your hearing to watch other hearings.

In Court

- Arrive early and check the docket board. The landlord may go by a different name. The clerk can help you find your case.
- Talk to your landlord before the hearing to resolve the issue. If you pay, get a receipt.
- Do not leave court, even if there is an agreement. Make sure the judge knows you paid rent.
- Tell the judge if you did not pay rent because of repairs that need to be made. Tell the judge if you made full or partial payments.
- The judge may postpone the trial if you need time to get receipts or other evidence.
- If a tenant does not appear in court, the landlord will probably win.

After Court

- If either landlord or tenant disagree with the judge's decision, either may file an appeal. File within four (4) days.
- Use Form DC-CV-037. Find the form online or at the clerk's office.
- There may be a fee to file an appeal. You may have to post a bond to stop an eviction from going forward.
- Talk to a lawyer or call the District Court Self-Help Resource Center at 410-260-1392.
- On the fifth (5) day after the hearing, if you have not paid rent or filed an appeal, the landlord will ask for a Warrant of Restitution. That document, if signed by a judge, is forwarded to the Sheriff to schedule an eviction.
- You may be able to pay in full to prevent eviction up to three (3) times in a 12-month period. In Baltimore City, the limit is four (4) times.
- If you have exceeded the limit, the landlord may ask the court to "foreclose your right of redemption." Even if you pay the full amount, you may still be evicted.