

Tenant's Rights: Rent Abatement Do's & Don'ts

Rent abatement means paying less rent when serious problems make your home unsafe or hard to live in.

You have rights—but only if you follow the rules. Refer to the “[Rent Abatement Toolkit](#)” for more information and helpful templates.



DO THESE THINGS

✓ **Collect Proof**

Always document the problems:

- Take photos
- Take videos
- Save texts, emails, and notes of calls with your landlord

This protects you if the landlord tries to evict you.

✓ **Write your Landlord**

Send a written notice (via email or text) that:

- Lists what is wrong
- Asks for a repair timeline
- Keep a copy

Your landlord must follow the timeline they give you. (ATCP 134.07)

✓ **Call the City Building Inspector**

Ask for an inspection.

- They can issue code violations
- This creates neutral proof
- Skipping this step is very risky

City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS): (414) 286-2543

✓ **Use a Rent Abatement Calculator or Schedule**

Use a calculator with legal help

Refer to the “[Milwaukee Rent Abatement Resources](#)” form for referral information.

It helps decide:

- How much rent to reduce
- How much to still pay

✓ **Send a Second Written Notice**

After inspections and calculations:

- Say how much rent you are reducing
- Say how much you will still pay
- Keep a copy

✓ **Pay Normal Rent when Repairs are Done**

Once problems are fixed, your rent goes back to normal.



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DON'T DO THESE THINGS

✗ DON'T Stop Paying Rent Completely

Never withhold 100% of your rent. More money withheld = higher risk of eviction.

✗ DON'T Withhold Rent Without Giving Notice

You must:

- Write the landlord
- Call DNS
- Send a second written notice

✗ DON'T Skip the Inspection

Without DNS violations, it is much harder to prove your case.

✗ DON'T Move Out Unless It's Unsafe

If there are big safety or health problems, you can:

- Move out
- Return the keys
- Then stop paying rent

But if you stay, you must keep paying at least part of the rent.

✗ DON'T Be Afraid to Assert Your Rights

Your landlord cannot:

- Raise your rent for complaining
- Shut off utilities
- Evict you for reporting problems

(Wis. Stat. § 704.45)

REMEMBER

Rent abatement is a legal tool, not a free-rent trick.
Use it carefully, document everything, and follow the steps.