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Rights of Maine Renters: Paying Rent [1]

About Paying Rent

Should my landlord give me a receipt when I pay my rent?

If you pay any of your rent in cash, the landlord must give you a receipt at the same time. The receipt must include:

- the date
- the amount paid
- your name
- what the payment was for
- the landlord's signature

If you live in a building with 5 apartments or less and your landlord lives there, they do not have to give rent receipts. If your landlord won't give a receipt, try to pay with a check or money order and keep your own records.

Always keep your own records to show that you paid your rent. Whether you pay by check, money order, cash, or other arrangements.

Can my landlord charge interest on a late rent payment?

Yes. If you do not pay your rent within 15 days after it is due, your landlord can charge a late fee. The fee cannot be more than 4% of one month's rent. For example, if your rent is \$800 per month, the late charge cannot be more than \$32. **To charge a late fee, your landlord must tell you about it in writing when you agree to rent from them.** If you have a lease, read it carefully to see if your landlord has included late fees.

General Assistance and Rent

Does my landlord have to accept general assistance (GA) rent vouchers?

Yes. Your landlord cannot refuse your rent just because the town is paying some or all of it.

What if my landlord won't take GA vouchers?

First, find out why your landlord will not take GA vouchers. Maybe the problem is that the town only pays by the week but your landlord charges by the month. Ask the town to pay by the month or to agree with your landlord on a payment schedule. If the town will not help, call the General Assistance Unit at the Department of Health and Human Services in Augusta. Their toll free number is **1-800-442-6003**. If that does not help, call your [local Pine Tree Legal office](#) [2].

Your landlord cannot refuse to take GA just because they don't like vouchers. You can file a discrimination complaint with the [Maine Human Rights Commission](#) [3] in Augusta: **624-6290**. [Pine Tree Legal](#) [2] can help you to file a complaint.

Rent Increases

Can my landlord increase my rent?

If you are a tenant at will (no lease)

Yes. Your landlord must give you a **45 day written notice** of any rent increase. If your landlord does not do this, you have two choices

1. You can refuse to pay the increase, **or**
2. You can pay under protest and later sue your landlord for the amount you were overcharged. You can ask the court to order the landlord to pay for your court costs and lawyer's fees. Or you can sue in [Small Claims Court](#) [4] without a lawyer.

If you choose not to pay the increase, your landlord may try to evict you. [More on evictions.](#) [5]

If you have a lease

The landlord probably cannot increase the rent during the lease term. Read your lease to find out if it says something different.

If you live in subsidized housing

Your rent is based on your income. So your rent can be raised or lowered if your income changes. Also, there are special "earnings disregard" rules if you start working. Read your lease. [Then contact Pine Tree Legal](#) [2] if you think you are paying too much.

Can my landlord increase my rent if there are serious problems with my apartment?

No. If there are serious problems which are unsafe or could make you sick, the landlord must fix the problems before they can charge more rent. For example, your landlord cannot increase your rent if there is no heat in the winter. If you or your guests have caused the problems, then your landlord can still raise your rent. For more information about heating your apartment, see ["How Much Heat and Other Utilities Does my Landlord Have to Provide?"](#) [6]

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[3] <http://www.state.me.us/mhrc/index.shtml>

[4] http://www.courts.state.me.us/maine_courts/small_claims/smallclaimsguide/index.html

[5] <http://ptla.org/rights-tenants-evictions>

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