

“WEAR AND TEAR” VS. DAMAGE



“Normal wear and tear” is a subjective assessment based on the total time a tenant occupied the premises, the condition of the unit at move-in, the use of the premises, and whether pets were allowed. The longer a tenant lives in a rental unit, the more likely it is that normal wear and tear will occur.

Even the most conscientious tenant will cause some minor damage over the course of a rental agreement. This minimal damage is typically referred to as “normal wear and tear.” This can include small scratches on walls or paint, worn or slightly stained carpeting, broken hinges, or other insignificant damage. This damage would have happened no matter who the tenant was. For instance, worn carpet would become worn regardless of who is living there but on the other hand, a tear in the carpet would be abnormal.

While you may not appreciate having to conduct repairs at your property after each tenant moves out, normal wear and tear may make this necessary. And a few scuffs on the wall or the odd nail hole does not constitute damage, and you will not be able to charge your tenant for this type of wear and tear if that is the extent of the damage.

Pictures can play an important role in deciding what “normal wear and tear” is; therefore, taking pictures of the condition of the property at the beginning and at the end of the lease term will make it much clearer when determining the wear and tear on a property. If there is a dispute between landlord and tenant about normal wear and tear the issue may end up in court making these pictures very important when deciding what is “normal.”

Wear & Tear	Damage
Worn out keys	Lost Keys
Loose hinges/handles	Damage to the door from forced entry
Carpet seam unglued	Rust/oil stains on carpet
Linoleum worn thin	Linoleum with tears/holes
Stain on ceiling from rain/bad plumbing	Stain on ceiling from over-flowing bathtub
Faded, chipped, cracked paint	Unapproved, bad tenant paint job
Bent drapery rod	Broken drapery rod
Heat blistered blinds	Blinds with bent slats
Sticky window	Broken window
Toilet runs/wobbles	Broken toilet seat/tank top
Closet bi-fold door off track	Damaged/missing bi-fold door

Wear & Tear	Damage
Loose/stubborn locks	Broken/missing locks
Worn/dirty carpeting	Torn, stained, burned carpeting
Scuffed wood floors	Badly scratched/gouged wood floors
Worn countertop	Burns/cuts on countertop
Plaster cracks from settling	Holes in walls (from carelessness)
Loose wallpaper	Ripped or marked up wallpaper
Faded curtains	Torn or missing curtains/drapes
Dirty window or door screens	Torn or missing screens
Loose or inoperable faucet handle	Broken/missing faucet handle
Urine odor around toilet	Urine/pet odor throughout unit
Musty odor in basement	Odors from pets, cooking, Smoke, etc.

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