

## Leases, Landlords, And The Law

*Before signing the lease to an apartment, here are some tips from the Consumer Information Center:*

- Read the lease carefully. A lease is a binding contract.

- Ask to add or delete clauses from the lease if necessary. Certain clauses limit your rights, and you should ask to have them removed. For example, waiving your right to privacy allows the landlord to enter the property without telling you in advance. Others may limit your right to be notified of rent increases or even eviction.



- Make sure the lease covers specific responsibilities, such as maintenance, utility payments and cancellation or renewal terms.

- Any revision to the lease should be made in writing and initialed by you and the landlord.

- Make sure the security deposit is just that - a deposit. There is no such thing as a non-refundable security deposit. Many landlords require the security deposit to offset the cost of possible property damage or lost keys. To avoid paying for another tenant's damage, inspect the property with the landlord before you move in and after you move out. Record any damage in writing or with photographs. Plus, ask to have "normal wear and tear" defined in your lease. As long as you fulfill your part of the lease, you're entitled to a full refund after you move.

- The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to refuse anyone housing on the basis of race, color, sex, religion or national origin. A free publication, "Fair Housing: It's Your Right," is available from the Consumer Information Center, Dept. 5672, Pueblo, CO 81009.