

October 13, 2009

VPM: 8,134,339



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Tips for renters: how to negotiate, or renegotiate, your lease



This has not been a good year for property owners with space to rent. Not surprisingly, more than 70% of them across the country have experienced higher vacancy rates over the past 12 months.

However, this may help put renters in an advantageous position as it means owners are being more flexible, according to new research by Rent.com. The survey reports that 69% of property owners are lowering rents, 65% are providing one, or more, month rent-free and 35%

are reducing the amount of required deposits.

Other incentives include offering upgrades to the rental unit, allowing tenants leniency for breaking leases early, offering storage or parking at reduced rates and relaxing pet policies.

Rent.com has taken the opportunity of this new *entente cordiale* between landlords and tenants to offer some advice to renters wanting to negotiate or renegotiate a lease. Here is their 5-point guide:

- o Any negotiation has to be "a win" for both parties, so keep this in mind when building a case.
- o Before considering any type of lease renewal negotiation or new lease negotiation, assess honestly if you are a good tenant. Do you have a history of paying your rent on time; are you a thoughtful tenant and a good neighbor? If you aren't a good tenant to begin with, you won't have a strong case to start as the landlord may not want to make concessions to get you or keep you in the rental unit.
- o Know the availability and price of rentals in your neighborhood. If rentals are scarce in your particular area and prices are comparable to your current monthly rent, you may not have much of a case for re-negotiating your lease. If, however, there is high vacancy in your neighborhood, similar units are being offered at much lower prices, you are experiencing economic hardship and you have been a reliable tenant during your current lease term, you may have a good case for lease renewal or new lease concessions.
- o If you have a good case, open a conversation with the landlord to see what options there may be for lease/renewal negotiation. If you are flexible on the lease term, offering to renew your lease for a longer duration, such as 15-18 months versus 12 months is a good tactic to negotiate with as this helps the landlord secure tenancy, reduce the costs associated with turning the apartment if you move out and filling your vacancy. A longer lease gives landlords some security and peace of mind so consider offering this if it will get you a lower monthly rental price.
- o Never bluff or strong arm your landlord as this could backfire and create tension between you and your landlord. You want to have a good relationship with the person who controls your home. Times are tough so be aware of the fact that both you and your landlord may be struggling economically.