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LANDLORDS

Continued from Page 1B

respond to complaints in writing. Submitting all requests in writing not only protects the renter, but helps the landlord. Landlords are human, said King, and may forget things if renters just let them know in passing. A letter confirming a conversation or letting landlords know about a problem not only protects renters in extreme cases, such as those that go to court, but also helps insure that the landlord's faulty answering machine or short-term memory won't interfere with a solution.

This rule includes leases and condition reports. Renters who sign leases should make sure to read every word of the lease, said Wood, because a lease is a mutual contract between both the landlord and renter. It should be something agreeable to both parties. Condition reports are filled out by the renter upon moving in and should be a summary of the condition of the residence, noting things that are broken or dilapidated. An accurate condition report helps guarantee that

the renter won't be charged for things they shouldn't be charged for when they move out, and that they'll get whatever portion of their deposit they deserve, rather than being charged for the previous tenants' carpet stains.

When requesting improvements or exceptions, the best way for renters to get what they want is to be reasonable and not ask landlords to do anything they couldn't afford to do for everyone, said Caswell.

Of course, paying rent on time and being a courteous neighbor won't hurt either. "Remember that landlords have bills to pay also," said Caswell.

Being a courteous neighbor includes keeping the stereo at a reasonable level and responding when the landlord approaches with a request. "The biggest problems are noise problems," said King, "When a landlord asks (to turn the music down) it's for a purpose." Usually it's because another neighbor has complained and the landlord is trying to consider the needs of all their tenants, especially in a large apartment complex or duplex, and are trying to guarantee a peaceful existence for all tenants.

Being familiar with the law is also important when dealing with landlords, not only to protect the renter's rights, but to protect the landlord. "Landlords are bound by laws just like tenants are," said Caswell, "Don't ask them to do anything that's against the law."

Renters who are familiar with their basic rights are also more likely to enjoy a more fair housing situation. Woods told a story about when she first started renting and the landlord would come into her apartment every month to pick up the rent check. At the time she felt like it was wrong, but didn't know enough about the law to realize that landlords are required by law to give a 24-hour notice to enter and can't enter the premises without permission.

"Know that you have basic rights," said Wood, "Don't compromise yourself." Free legal counsel is also available to any registered student who is having legal trouble with their landlord.

But just as with any relationship, getting along with a landlord comes down to the Golden Rule. Renters should treat landlords and their neighbors with the same respect they would like to receive.

- Natasha Shepard

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MOVING

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your houses well and ask lots of questions.

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- Angela Nicholson



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