Don't Let Your Landlord Get Away With a Self-Help Eviction

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Landlords who want to evict a tenant are often anxious to do so. After all, if a tenant stops paying rent or causes problems at the property, it makes sense that the landlord would want to replace the tenant as soon as

States and municipalities have laws that spell out the procedures, and landlords who ignore these laws are engaging in a "self-help eviction," which is illegal.

Hopefully, your landlord will never want you evicted from your apartment. But if your landlord wants you to move out and takes shortcuts through the legal system, don't stand for it.

Here's how to tell if your landlord's trying to get away with a self-help eviction, and what you can do to stand your ground:

Recognize the Signs of a Self-Help Eviction

A self-help eviction can involve direct or indirect tactics to get you off the property. Here are some common signs that your landlord is engaging in a self-help eviction:

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- Your landlord locked you out of your apartment
- Your landlord moved your

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Your landlord shut off your utilities (for example, heat, water, gas, electricity, or phone service)

- Your landlord has ordered you or threatened you to leave
- Your landlord slandered or libeled you (by spreading false rumors about you to other tenants)
- Your landlord has ignored your recent repair requests
- Your landlord has been interfering with your use of the property's amenities (for example, by blocking access to your reserved parking space)

Stand Your Ground When Your Landlord Is out of Line

Even if your landlord has a valid reason for evicting you, your landlord can't act outside the law. If you believe you've become the victim of a self-help eviction, don't tolerate it. Instead, consider these steps:

- your situation at the next meeting. You may learn that the landlord is treating other tenants the same way or has done so in the past.



- **Ask your landlord to stop.** Send a formal letter to your landlord identifying the objectionable behavior and demanding that it stop. If your letter doesn't get the landlord to stop, it will help you make your case if you go to court.
- **Hire a lawyer.** If there's just no stopping your landlord from making your life miserable and wanting you off the property, then talk to a lawyer. In addition to getting you the right to stay in your apartment, a lawyer may also convince a judge to make the landlord pay the penalty for any harassment.
- **Document everything.** Keep a log that identifies the illegal ways your landlord has been trying to get you off the property. Include notes about any action you took to protect your rights, such as sending your landlord a letter. Update the log as more incidents occur, so you won't have to rely on your memory. Your log can help you in court.

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