

Rent Court for Landlords Part 1: How to Start Your Case in Rent Court

Rent Court is a term used to refer to Failure to Pay Rent Cases heard in the Maryland District Court. The process can result in an order authorizing you to have your tenant evicted. This information is intended for residential property only. If your case is about commercial property, talk to a lawyer.

Watch the Video



Step 1: Provide Notice

- Before you file a Failure to Pay Rent case, provide your tenant a written notice giving them 10 days to pay the outstanding rent.
- Use the form titled [Notice of Intent to File a Complaint for Summary Ejectment \(Failure to Pay Rent\) \(DC-CV-115\)](#).
- The notice can be provided by: first class mail, taped to the door of the rental property, or, sent by an electronic message if the tenant has agreed.

Step 2: Complete the Failure to Pay Rent Form

- Complete and file the form [Failure to Pay Rent – Landlord’s Complaint for Repossession of Rented Property \(DC-CV-082\)](#). Copies of the form must be picked up from a District Court. Versions available online are samples for informational purposes only.
- When completing the form include required licenses and registrations listed on lines 2 and 3. If you do not have a required license or registration or you fail to complete these lines properly, the court may dismiss your case.
- Under the Military Service Affidavit section state whether any of your tenants are in the military. A certificate of military status can be obtained from: <https://scra.dmdc.osd.mil/>.
- The right of redemption on line 9 refers to the tenant’s ability to pay the judgment in order to stop an eviction. The court will only remove a tenant’s right of redemption if you list case numbers and dates for three prior judgments entered in the last 12 months. Four prior judgments are required in Baltimore City.
- Get help if you have questions. If you complete the form incorrectly the court may dismiss your case.
 - **Watch a webinar** on demand which walks through the entire form. Find it at: mdcourts.gov/legalhelp/webinars.



Maryland Court Help

Free. Online. In Person. By Phone.

- **The Maryland Court Help Center** can help non-business property owners complete the form. Call 410-260-1392 or visit mdcourts.gov/courthelp for a list of hours and locations.

Step 3: File Your Case

- Bring or mail the completed form to the District Court in the county where the property is located.
- There are two fees. One fee to file the form paid by cash or credit. A second fee for serving the tenant must be paid by check or money order. Current fee information is available by [calling the courthouse](#) where you will file your case or at mdcourts.gov/courts/feeschedules.
- When you file your case, the clerk will tell you when to return to the court for trial. A hearing notice may also be mailed to you. Then two copies of the Complaint you filed will be delivered to the tenant.

Step 4: Trial in Rent Court

Before Trial:

- Bring everything you need to prove your case. This includes your rental ledger, your lease, and any required rental licenses and registrations.
- Arrive early to give yourself time to find your courtroom and check in.
- Consider speaking to your tenant or their lawyer before the trial. If you make payment arrangements or some other agreement, **do not** leave the courthouse. Stay until your case is called and the judge is informed about the agreement.

During Trial:

- When your case is called, the judge may ask you if your tenant made payments in the time since you filed. They may also ask the tenant whether they agree that they owe rent in the amount you claimed.
- If the tenant agrees, then a judgment will be entered against them. If the tenant disagrees, then a trial will occur and the judge will hear evidence and testimony from each side about how much rent is due.
- Tenants who claim there is a health or safety hazard in the property may raise a rent escrow defense. Watch our video, [Rent Escrow](#) for more information.
- At the conclusion of the trial, the judge will announce their decision. If you disagree, you have four days, not counting the day of trial, to file an appeal.
- You may hire someone to represent you. In rent court, a property owner may be represented by a lawyer or by any other person you choose as your agent, such as a property manager.

Next Steps:

- If you won the case, meaning the judge entered judgment in your favor, there are additional steps you must take to request eviction. Watch Part 2 in this series *I Won in Rent Court, Now What?* if you don't know what to do next.