Rent Increases Guide

A friendly, practical guide to why rent changes, how notice usually works, local rules that may apply, budgeting for renewals, and talking with the owner kindly and clearly.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We wrote this guide for residents and owners alike, because few letters cause more worry than a rent increase notice. Understanding why rent changes, what rules may apply and how to talk about it turns a stressful moment into a clear conversation. If anything here is unclear, we would genuinely love to help.

This guide shares general information to help you, and is not legal or financial advice. Bunklow does not set rents or decide rent disputes.

Over the years, we have sent and talked through a great many renewal notices, and we have learned that the hardest part is usually the surprise. When residents know what to expect and owners explain their reasons, even a difficult number becomes something everyone can plan around together.

The good news is that rent increases follow a fairly simple path. This guide walks through why rent changes, how much notice is usually required, local rules like rent stabilization, planning ahead in your budget, how to talk with the owner about an increase, and what your options are. We hope it brings calm and clarity.

FOUR SIMPLE RULES

1 **Read the notice carefully**
Look for the new amount, the effective date and any changes to the lease.

2 **Know the rules**
Notice periods and limits on increases differ from place to place.

3 **Plan ahead**
Set aside a little each month so renewals don't catch you off guard.

4 **Talk early and kindly**
Questions, concerns and requests go best when raised early and in writing.

FOR RESIDENTS

WHEN A NOTICE ARRIVES

- Read the notice carefully, and note the new rent, the start date and any lease changes.
- Check the lease for terms about renewals and increases.
- Look up any local rules about notice and limits on increases.
- Compare the new rent with similar homes nearby, so you understand the market.
- Update your budget and decide whether to renew, ask questions or plan a move.
- Reply in writing by the date requested.

COMPARING RENTS

When comparing, look at homes with similar size, location, condition and features. Utilities and parking make a difference too.

A FEW THINGS TO AVOID

- Please don't ignore the notice or let the reply date pass.
- Please don't pay less than the new rent without a written agreement.
- Please don't assume you have no options. Questions and conversations are welcome.
- Please don't panic. Take a day, then make a plan.

BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

Set aside a small amount each month in a renewal fund. When the renewal arrives, an increase feels like a plan instead of a surprise.

IF THE NEW RENT FEELS OUT OF REACH

1. Take a breath. You have time to think and plan.
2. Review your budget to see what is truly possible.
3. Reach out to the owner kindly, in writing, and ask about options, like a longer lease or a phased increase.
4. Look into rental assistance by calling 211, and check whether local rules apply.
5. If moving is the best choice, give notice as the lease requires and start your search early.
6. Keep copies of every notice and message. You did exactly the right thing.

BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

Great residents have real value. A kind note highlighting your on-time rent and care for the home can open a conversation about the amount.

FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS

PLANNING A FAIR INCREASE

- Review costs, like taxes, insurance, repairs and utilities, and compare similar homes nearby.
- Learn the notice periods, limits and any rent stabilization rules where the home is.
- Apply increases fairly and consistently, never based on a protected characteristic or as retaliation.
- Give written notice early, ideally well before the required minimum.
- Consider the value of a great long-term resident when setting the amount.

Read the rent notice carefully, including dates.

WHEN A RESIDENT HAS QUESTIONS

- Listen with kindness, and explain the main reasons for the increase.
- Answer questions clearly and in writing.
- Consider reasonable options, like a longer lease, a phased increase or timing changes.
- Follow the rules where the home is for notices and limits.
- Thank the resident for their tenancy, whatever they decide.

WHY RENT OFTEN CHANGES

Property taxes and insurance often rise, and repairs, utilities and services cost more over time.

Rents for similar homes nearby may have changed, and improvements to the home may add value.

BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

Giving notice early, with a short, friendly explanation, keeps more great residents than any other renewal habit.

COMMON MYTHS, GENTLY CORRECTED

"Owners can raise rent any time."

During a fixed-term lease, rent usually can't change unless the lease allows it. Rules vary.

"There are never limits on increases."

Some places limit how much rent can rise or require longer notice.

"Asking questions will make it worse."

Kind, clear questions often lead to helpful answers and options.

"If I can't afford it, I have no choices."

Assistance programs, negotiation and planning a move are all options.

LONGER LEASES

Some owners offer a smaller increase for a longer lease. It can bring stability for both sides.

Check the lease for renewal terms.

STRESS, SUPPORT AND THE LAW

A rent increase can bring real worry about money and home. Please be gentle with yourself, and lean on people you trust. A nonprofit credit counselor can help you plan, and if stress feels overwhelming, talking with a doctor or counselor can help too.

Rules about rent increases, including notice periods, limits, rent stabilization and protections against retaliation or discrimination, differ from place to place. We would gently encourage a quick look at the rules where your home is, and if you are ever unsure, a local landlord or tenant association, a legal aid office or an attorney in your area will be glad to help.

YOUR RECORD SUPPORTS THE CONVERSATION

A careful move-in report, and a record of caring for the home, help any renewal conversation. When every single item has a comment, in any condition, with photos, everyone sees the full picture. Bunklow Walk and our free move-in condition report were made for exactly this.

A FEW MORE HELPFUL HABITS

MONTH-TO-MONTH

On month-to-month agreements, increases usually need written notice. The exact period depends on local rules.

MOVING COSTS

Before deciding to move, add up moving costs, deposits and time off work. Sometimes renewing costs less overall.

Look up local rules on notice and limits.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- USA.gov: Tenant Rights
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: Find Help With Rent and Utilities

We hope this guide helps every renewal feel clear, fair and calm. Thank you so much for taking the time to read it. If there is anything we can do to help, we would truly love to hear from you.

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