



# Rent Court for Tenants Part 1: Notice and Trial

Rent Court is a term used to refer to Failure to Pay Rent Cases heard in the Maryland District Court. These cases are filed by landlords against tenants. If the landlord wins the case, they may be able to evict the tenant. Tenants who are not represented by a lawyer may speak with a lawyer for free at a Maryland Court Help Center. Call 410-260-1392 or visit [mdcourts.gov/helpcenter](https://mdcourts.gov/helpcenter).

## Landlord Gives Notice

- Before going to court, your Landlord must give you a written notice of their intention to file a case for Failure to Pay Rent. The notice is titled "[Notice of Intent to File a Complaint for Summary Ejectment \(Failure to Pay Rent\) \(DC-CV-115\)](#)".
- The notice must give you 10 days to pay the past due rent. It may arrive by mail or be taped to your door. If you agreed to receive electronic messages from your landlord, it may arrive by email, text message, or a tenant web portal.

## Landlord Files a Case

- Once your landlord files a case with the court, copies of the paperwork will be sent to you by mail and posted at your home.
- Look for the form called "[Failure to Pay Rent / Landlord's Complaint for Repossession of Rented Property \(DC-CV-082\)](#)." Check the upper right-hand corner of this form for your trial date.
- You are not required to appear at the trial; however, attending is strongly encouraged. If you fail to appear the court may automatically give your landlord a judgment for the rent your landlord claimed was due.

## Trial in Rent Court

- Plan to arrive early for your trial.
- Consider speaking with your landlord or their agent before the trial begins.
- If you make a payment plan or some other agreement, **do not** leave the courthouse. Stay until your case is called and the judge is informed about the agreement.
- When your case is called, the judge may first ask if you agree that you owe the rent. You may agree and consent to the entry of a judgment or you may ask for a trial.
- In a trial, the landlord must prove how much rent is due under your lease. They may be required to show a rental ledger. This is a record of rent you have paid up until now.



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- You will have an opportunity to present defenses. Some common defenses include:
  - **Challenging how much rent is due** - Be prepared to show the judge receipts or other proof of payment.
  - **Unlicensed landlord** – Check before trial if your landlord holds rental licenses required by the county or city where the property is located. If the landlord is required to be licensed, but does not have one, the court may dismiss the case.
  - **Rent escrow** – Ask the judge for Rent Escrow if you did not pay your rent because the property is unsafe or a danger to your health. See our video series on [Rent Escrow](#) for more information about how this works.
- At the conclusion of the trial, the judge will announce their decision.
- If you disagree with the decision, you have four business days, not counting the day of trial, to file an appeal. You may be required to pay a bond in order to remain in the property while the appeal is pending.

### **Right of Redemption**

- When judgment is entered against you, eviction will not take place right away. You can stop the eviction by paying the judgment in full plus court costs.
- The landlord may ask the judge to take away your right of redemption if three judgments for rent were entered against you in the last 12 months. In Baltimore City, the number of required judgments is four.
- Watch *Rent Court for Tenants Part 2: Right of Redemption and Eviction* for more information.