

Example Tenant & Reference Questions

Tenant Qualification Questions

1. **Why are you moving?** The prospective tenant's answer can be revealing. It's not a good sign if they start complaining about their landlord. A more appropriate answer would be a change in job or an addition to the family.
2. **Do you have references from your current Employer and former Landlord?** Employment references verify that the tenant is working and has a viable income. It is challenging to verify a landlord reference, as you could end up speaking to their best friend instead. Also, a landlord who wants to get rid of their tenant could potentially sing their praise to get them out! So, beware.
3. **Will you agree to provide a credit check?** If your prospective tenant is freaked out by the thought of a credit check, then ask them to move on. It doesn't necessarily mean the applicant has something to hide, but without getting their permission, and then actually performing the background or credit check, you have no way of knowing. You can ask them to provide the credit check to avoid fees and it won't negatively affect their credit score.
4. **What's your monthly income?** A tenant who pays the rent on time should be at the top of your wish list. According to industry standards, a tenant should have a monthly income that's approximately two-and-a-half to three times the cost of the rent.
5. **Who will live with you?** You are looking for full disclosure, and a reasonable fit. It is the municipality that will determine if the house is being overcrowded. Also keep in mind general wear and tear your utilities budget, if utilities are included in the rent.
6. **Have you ever been evicted?** If the answer to this question is yes, proceed with caution. There may be extenuating circumstances that absolve the tenant, but you can often chalk up a prior eviction to the "red flag" zone. Be casual with your response, see what they will fess up.
7. **Do you have any pets?** If you have a no-pets policy, make it clear from the start and make sure this is enforceable by checking provincial regulations. If you do allow pets, make sure to get the details in writing, including the number of pets you'll allow. But remember, you can't exclude service dogs - they're not considered pets, they are working animals.
8. **When are you moving?** Make sure that your move-in dates are in-line with your tenants.
9. **Do you ever plan to sublet?** Keep in mind, they can sublet but you can insist on approval first. You will need to have a good reason to refuse the candidate.
10. **Can you pay the first & last month's rent up front?** Make sure your tenant can pay the entire amount prior to moving in. If there's a problem, this is a sign for more "problems" when rent time rolls around every month. Do not accept excuses or stories. This is a yes or no question. If you are accepting a cheque, give yourself enough time to ensure it clears before turning over the keys. Cash is ideal and you can write them a receipt, or an e-transfer is convenient for both.

Employer Reference Questions

1. When did the employee start?
2. What is their position?
3. Are they full time, part time, or contract?
4. What is their current wage? (Check against the application and pay stubs)
5. If you could describe their personality in three words, which would you use?
6. If you could describe their work ethic in three words, which would you use?
7. Do you have any other information you would like to share with me today?

Previous Landlord Reference Questions

1. When did he/she rent from you?
2. How long did this person live in the rental?
3. What type of rental unit did they rent from you?
4. Did he/she pay the rent on time?
5. Do they have any pets?
6. Were there any complaints from other tenants?
7. Was there any damage besides normal wear and tear?
8. Was the tenant respectful to you and the property?
9. Did the Tenant give you proper notice to end the tenancy?
10. Would you rent to this tenant again?
11. Do you have any other information you would like to share with me today?

Personal Reference Questions

1. Would you rent to them, why or why not?
2. Would you live with them, why or why not?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10 how neat are they?
4. If you were to describe their living space style in 3 words which would you use?
5. Asking trick questions about pets, smoking, living arrangements. If the person really knows them, they will correct you.
6. Do you have any other information you would like to share with me today?