



LANDLORD REFERENCE QUESTIONS

Use these questions when you are calling a landlord reference provided by a tenant applicant on their application. Start the conversation by introducing yourself and explaining the purpose for your call.

1. [Applicant's name] has identified you as a landlord reference, when did he/she rent from you? How long did [applicant's name] live in your rental unit?

This question will allow you to verify application details and establish whether this is the current landlord or one previous. If an old reference has been provided, it may indicate a poor relationship with the current landlord. Asking how long the applicant was a tenant is also helpful to indicate whether the applicant moves regularly or is inclined to stay long-term. If the applicant has lived with the current landlord for less than one year, ask for the previous landlord as a reference.

2. Was [applicant's name] rent always paid on time and in full? Did you ever have any problems collecting rent from this tenant?

This question will allow you gauge how reliable your tenant applicant is. If the applicant has a history of late, missed, or incomplete payments, it can be a sign that you will face the same challenges.

3. Did [applicant's name] take good care of the unit? Did you have any problems with property damage? How would you describe the condition of the rental unit when it was occupied compared to when the tenant left?

Responsible tenants should take care of their rental unit and ensure it is left in the same condition as when they moved in. You want to understand if there was any damage caused beyond normal wear and tear or if tenants were neglectful. By asking the previous landlord to describe the condition of the unit during occupancy and at the end, you can learn more detail. It's also important to be mindful of what the previous landlord doesn't say—an overly vague answer may indicate they are an absentee landlord or aren't being entirely truthful.

4. Did the tenant ever display any disruptive behaviour or negatively impact other tenants at the property? Did you ever have to serve any warnings or hearing notices during the tenancy?

This question should be asked specifically and separately from the question about a tenant paying on time. Just because a tenant always pays rent on time and in full, doesn't mean he/she is a good tenant. Again, be mindful of whether the previous landlord is overly vague in their answer or avoids the question.

5. Was your rental unit a non-smoking unit? Did the tenant smoke in the unit or outside?

Asking the question in this format can sometimes reveal tenants who smoke but didn't specify this on the application. If the tenant didn't smoke, or there is no evidence of it, the landlord should say so. If the tenant does smoke, the format of this question may lead the landlord to believe you already know this and are just looking to understand the tenant's smoking habits.

6. Can you tell me about the tenant's pets? Were they well-behaved and did they cause any damage to the property?

Asking the question in this format can sometimes reveal tenants who have pets but didn't specify this on the application. If the tenant doesn't have pets, the landlord should correct you or explain that the tenant didn't have pets during their previous tenancy. If the tenant does have pets, this open-ended question will reveal more than if you just asked, "Do they have pets?"

7. Would you rent to this person again?

If their answer isn't automatically "yes," then wonder why. A landlord should be sorry to see good tenants leave and would wish to have back again.

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about this tenant?

The landlord may not volunteer any more information and that's okay, but this does give you an opportunity to learn more than you would have if you just ended the conversation without an open-ended question.