**Is Normal Wear and Tear Different Than Damage?**

**When You Can Keep a Tenant's Security Deposit**

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While a landlord is responsible for maintaining the rental property, there is a certain amount of deterioration that is expected to occur as the property ages, known as wear and tear. Neither the landlord nor the tenant is responsible for this normal deterioration. Damage done to the property is a different story, and the person responsible for causing the damage will also be financially responsible for fixing it.

Definition of Normal Wear and Tear:

Normal wear and tear is the expected decline in the condition of a property due to normal everyday use. It is deterioration that occurs during living in a property. It is not caused by abuse or neglect.

***Examples of Normal Wear and Tear:***

* A Couple of Small Stains on a Carpet
* A Couple of Scrapes or Dings in a Wood Floor
* Color of Carpet or Hardwood Fading Due to Exposure to Sunlight
* Dirty Grout
* Loose Door Handles
* Silver Finish on Bathroom Fixtures Beginning to Wear Away

Definition of Damage:

Damage is not naturally occurring. It is harm done that affects the value, usefulness or normal function of property. This damage can be committed on purpose, or through neglect.

***Examples of Damage:***

* A Smashed Bathroom Mirror
* Broken Toilet Seat
* A Hole in the Middle of the Door
* Damaged or Missing Door Handles/Locks
* Carpet Soaked With Pet Urine

Difference Between Normal Wear and Tear and Damage

The main difference between normal wear and tear and damage is that damage is unexpected based on the use or function of the property.

Normal wear and tear is expected.

***For Example:***

It is normal and expected for there to be some scuffs in the paint after a [tenant moves out of a unit.](https://www.thebalancesmb.com/sample-move-out-checklist-for-landlords-and-tenants-2125000) It is not normal and expected for there to be a two foot hole in the bedroom wall after the tenant moves out of the unit. The scuffs in the paint would be considered normal wear and tear.

The hole in the wall would be considered damage.

Why Is Normal Wear and Tear Important?

Wear and tear is a term commonly used when dealing with rental property. Trying to determine the difference between normal wear and tear and damage to a rental usually becomes an issue when a tenant moves out of a rental and is looking for their security deposit to be returned. A landlord cannot make deductions for normal wear and tear, but the landlord can [make deductions for damage](https://www.thebalancesmb.com/keep-a-tenants-security-deposit-2124998)to the property.

**Security Deposit Disputes**

A landlord and tenant do not always agree on the amount of the security deposit that should be returned to the tenant when the tenant's lease is over. A landlord may believe an issue at the property is considered damage, while the tenant may see it as normal wear and tear.

***Tenant's Perspective:***

The tenant believes the security deposit is his or her property and it should be returned to him or her at the end of the lease. The tenant has paid their rent on time and has not broken any terms of the lease, so expects the security deposit to be returned in full.

***Landlord's Perspective:***

The landlord's goal is to make sure the rental property is maintained in good condition. If the landlord believes the tenant has abused the condition of the rental property in any way, the landlord will take deductions from the tenant's security deposit to fix this damage.