# Guide Me: Steps you can take when…

## Your home has bad conditions that need to be fixed

### Write to your landlord

Write a letter to your landlord. Tell them about the bad conditions. It is important to write to the landlord. Sometimes a landlord claims they never had notice. If you write to them, put the date on the letter and keep a copy. You will have proof you gave them notice of the bad conditions.

See some sample Demand for Repair letters: [MassLegalHelp.org/housing/bad-conditions/forms](https://masslegalhelp.org/housing/bad-conditions/forms)

### Get an inspection

If your landlord does not respond to your request to make repairs, get an inspection. Every city and town has a Board of Health or Code Enforcement Department. This agency is responsible for making sure that your apartment meets the minimum standards for health and safety described/explained in the state sanitary code.

### Withhold rent - only if you can save it

Withholding rent **can** be a good way to get your landlord to make repairs.

Only try this strategy after you have written to your landlord about the bad conditions and gotten an inspection.

You need to be careful if you decide to withhold your rent. Some landlords will turn it around and try to evict you for non-payment of rent. But they will not be able to evict you if you withheld your rent correctly.**Only** withhold your rent if:

* The landlord knows about the bad conditions in your apartment.
* You were current with your rent when you wrote to the landlord about the bad conditions in your apartment
* No one in your household or your guest caused the bad conditions, and
* You can save the rent you withhold separately from your other money and not spend it.

### Sue your landlord

Massachusetts has strong laws that require landlords to make repairs. Sometimes these laws can result in your right to have you rent abated or reduced – even if you are behind on your rent. If your landlord has not been repairing bad conditions, you may be able to sue your landlord for money. Learn more about how to sue your landlord: [MassLegalHelp.org/taking-landlord-to-court](https://masslegalhelp.org/taking-landlord-to-court)

### Hire a lawyer

In Massachusetts, many of the laws that require landlords to make repairs also require the landlord to pay for your lawyer, if you win your lawsuit. This is called "fee shifting." You may be able to get a lawyer to represent you and not have to pay them. To find a lawyer who specializes in representing tenants, try a Lawyer Referral service, [masslrf.org/en/programs/all/referrals](https://masslrf.org/en/programs/all/referrals)

Learn more about Getting Repairs Made and Your Rights to Safe and Habitable Housing: [MassLegalHelp.org/repairs](https://masslegalhelp.org/repairs)

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