# Guide Me: Steps you can take when…

## Your landlord wants to raise the rent and you are a "tenant at will" or you never had a written agreement

If you are a "tenant at will" or you never had a written agreement with your landlord, they can propose a rent increase

### Can my landlord just raise the rent?

No. You must agree to the rent increase before a landlord can start charging you more.

**Watch Out**

As soon as you start paying higher rent – even if you never sign anything – legally, you have accept the rent increase and you must keep paying it.

You only have to pay the higher rent if you agree to it.

### Is my landlord required to give me written notice?

While you can agree to a rent increase any time – even orally, a landlord may send a written notice to quit that terminates your existing tenancy that includes an offer to enter into a new tenancy at a higher rent. While this notice is not required, many landlords will ask for a rent increase this way because if you do not agree to the rent increase, the landlord can then proceed to evict you. Learn more about what happens if you do not accept a rent increase below.

### Is there any limit on how much a landlord can raise the rent?

No. Landlords can set rent at any amount they think tenants will pay. They do not have to limit rent to what you can afford.

But a landlord cannot raise the rent as a way to **retaliate** against you. It can count as **retaliation** if your landlord tells you they are going to raise your rent within 6 months of the date:

* You write to them about the bad conditions in your home, or
* You report code violations.

If you think your landlord is retaliating against you, See Taking Your Landlord to Court   
[MassLegalHelp.org/taking-landlord-to-court](https://www.MassLegalHelp.org/taking-landlord-to-court)

### I do not want to pay more rent. What should I do?

1. Do not sign anything that says you agree to the rent increase.
2. Write your landlord a letter that says, "I do not accept the rent increase."
3. Continue to pay the rent you have been paying.
4. Do not pay the rent increase. As soon as you start to pay more rent – even if you never sign anything – legally, you accept the rent increase and you must keep paying it.
5. Negotiate a smaller rent increase. If you are willing to pay a smaller rent increase, ask your landlord if he will accept a lesser increase. Some landlords may agree.

### What will happen if I do not accept the rent increase?

When you do not accept a rent increase, it means you no longer have an agreement with your landlord to rent your home. Your tenancy ends and your landlord can ask you to leave.

If you do not leave voluntarily, your landlord can begin an eviction case against you. But the landlord must send you a notice to quit first.

As long as you keep paying the rent you were paying, your landlord cannot evict you for non payment of rent.

When landlords evict tenants because tenants refuse to pay a rent increase, the court usually gives tenants more time to move.

Learn more about rent increases. See [MassLegalHelp.org/Rent](https://www.masslegalhelp.org/housing/lt1-chapter-5-rent)

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