

Unlawful Detainer [SF.gov](https://sf.gov)

<https://sf.gov/information/unlawful-detainer-actions-court>

A landlord seeking to evict a tenant from a rental unit covered by the Rent Ordinance must have a “just cause” for the eviction and must give a written notice to terminate the tenancy. If the tenant does not voluntarily move out at the end of the notice period, the landlord must file a lawsuit known as an unlawful detainer action in order to remove the tenant from the rental unit. A copy of the Unlawful Detainer Summons and Complaint must be served on the tenant, and the tenant has five days to file a written response in court. The court will set the case for a trial where the tenant can present his or her defense. If a response is not filed on time, the landlord may obtain a default judgment, which may result in a quicker eviction. If the tenant loses at trial, the court orders the tenant to vacate the rental unit. The Sheriff may then post a Notice to Vacate and evict the tenant.

The landlord may not physically remove or lock out a tenant, cut off utilities such as water or power, or take the tenant's belongings in order to force a tenant to move. The landlord must use the court process to evict a tenant. The eviction process can take from one month to many months, depending on whether the landlord proceeds correctly and whether the tenant exercises his or her rights in a timely fashion. For more information on the eviction process, you can view and/or download the [Unlawful Detainer \(Eviction\) Procedures and Time Chart](#) in the Forms Center on our website.

It is strongly recommended that tenants and landlords seek legal assistance in any eviction action. The Rent Board does not provide legal advice or representation in an eviction action. Any action taken by the Rent Board in response to a [Report of Alleged Wrongful Eviction](#) filed with the Board does not delay or prevent the unlawful detainer action. While we cannot provide legal advice or refer you to individual attorneys, staff will be glad to direct you to appropriate resources for advice and assistance. A list of these resources is available through the [Referral Listing](#) on our website. Fact Sheet 4, the referral list, and the Unlawful Detainer Procedures and Time Chart are also available at our office.

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[Evictions](#) Learn more about when a landlord has grounds for eviction and what notice they must give to tenants.

[Unlawful Detainer \(Eviction\) Procedures and Time Chart](#)

[https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/591 Unlawful Detainer Procedures EN 9.1.19.pdfs](https://sf.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/591_Unlawful_Detainer_Procedures_EN_9.1.19.pdf)