Start My Claim

MINI-GUIDE 1 OF 3

RENTERS' RIGHTS

The 3 Checks Before You Start

Renters' rights — five minutes before you file anything

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Renters' rights — five minutes before you file anything

A renters' rights dispute isn't one road — there are several, and the paperwork is easy to build for the wrong one. Three checks, before you spend an evening on the wrong form.

CHECK 1 OF 3

Which situation are you actually in?

The right next step depends entirely on this. Building a Rent Repayment Order case when you actually need to defend a possession notice wastes the one resource you can't get back — time against a deadline.

NOTICE A Section 8 possession notice arrived. You need to check its validity and, if you want to stay, defend it — a county court matter.

RENT UP A Section 13 notice (Form 4A) proposes a higher rent. You can refer the amount to the tribunal, but only before the effective date.

RULES BROKEN Unlicensed letting, illegal eviction, harassment, a banning-order or improvement-notice breach. Possible Rent Repayment Order — a tribunal matter.

DEPOSIT Never protected, or no prescribed information given. A county court claim under the Housing Act 2004 — not this guide's tribunal route.

EVICTED NOW Locks changed, belongings removed, threats made. Stop reading this and call the police — see the main guide, page 14.

The free Landlord Check, Licence Checker and Notice Doctor at startmyclaim.ai/renters-rights will confirm which box you're in within a few minutes.

CHECK 2 OF 3

Were you a tenant when it happened?

This matters most for a Rent Repayment Order, where standing is a real legal requirement, not a formality.

You must have been the tenant during the offence.
The offence — unlicensed letting, illegal eviction, harassment, and so on — has to have happened while you held the tenancy. Something you heard about after you left, at a property you never lived in, doesn't qualify.

Former tenants can still apply.
You don't have to still be living there. The application window is 12 months from the landlord's last offence, whether or not you've since moved out.

Joint tenants can apply together or alone.
Each named tenant on the agreement has standing. You don't need your former housemates to join in, though a joint application can strengthen the evidence.

Universal Credit doesn't change your standing.
If your rent was paid through Universal Credit's housing element rather than straight from your account, you're still eligible — you just need a different kind of payment evidence (a UC statement rather than a bank statement).

> *If you're not sure*
>
> A tenancy that was never formally written down still usually counts — what matters is whether you occupied the property and paid rent, not whether there's a signed document. See Check 3.

CHECK 3 OF 3

Do you have your tenancy paperwork?

Almost every route in this guide depends on being able to prove the basics: that you were the tenant, what the rent was, and when things happened.

1. **Your tenancy agreement**
   The strongest single document you can produce. If you never got a written copy, ask your landlord or letting agent for one in writing — their reply (or silence) becomes evidence either way.

2. **Proof of what you paid**
   Bank statements or a Universal Credit housing-element statement covering the whole period in question, not just a recent snapshot.

3. **Your deposit protection certificate, if you have one**
   Confirms which scheme (or whether none) protected your deposit, and when.

4. **Dated correspondence**
   Any emails, texts or letters between you and your landlord about the situation — the more contemporaneous, the more weight it carries.

> *No written agreement at all?*
>
> A periodic tenancy without a written contract is still a real tenancy in law. Rebuild the picture from bank statements, messages agreeing the rent, and anything showing you lived there — council tax correspondence, a utility bill in your name.

PASSED ALL THREE?

You’re ready to build your case

Once you know your situation, your standing, and your paperwork, the next step is specific to your route.

Where to go next

Each route has its own guide — find yours.

Landlord broke the rules? Read Mini-guide 2, “Building Your Rent Repayment Order,” or jump to page 11 of the full Survival Guide.

Notice, rent increase, deposit or eviction? The full Renters’ Rights Survival Guide covers each route start to finish — free at startmyclaim.ai/renters-rights.

This mini-guide is general information about the renters’ rights process in England, not legal advice about your individual circumstances. Start My Claim is self-service software from Vindivo Limited — not a law firm, not solicitors, not a claims management company.