



HomeVault Tenant Screening Checklist

The screening process can move quickly - between 24-48 hours. You need to develop criteria for what you look for in a tenant to help screen and pick a tenant fairly, while using the same standards for everyone.

Every tenant screening process starts by collecting applications. You've already posted your property listing. Potential tenants are seeing your property and names are coming in.

Step 1: Set Criteria for Tenants

Whatever criteria you set, you must avoid discrimination and always make sure your criteria apply to all tenants. Include these requirements (and fees—such as all applicants will be required to pay a \$__ application fee which covers ____) in your property listings to weed out poorly-fitting tenants early. Things to decide on:

- Minimum monthly income (usually 3x the monthly rent): ____
- Minimum time at current employer: ____
- History of on-time rent payments of at least ____ months
- Criminal record

Make sure to do your research on Fair Housing Laws before deciding on your tenant requirements to ensure you are not deliberately or unintentionally violating the Fair Housing Act. If you need help, consult your lawyer or write to us on hello@homevault.com.

Step 2: Pre-Screening Phone Call

Ideally, you should pre-screen potential tenants in an interview, over the phone or online. It's an opportunity to start a relationship and get to know the next person who might live in your property, as well as to set up expectations. Make sure to touch on:

- Confirm the property location.
- Describe the property and neighborhood.
- Talk about amenities or any special features.
- Schedule a showing time.
- Let them know about the screening process.
- Ask about move-in dates to confirm they work with your timeline.
- Mention pets and any pet screening or fees.

Step 3: Show the Property

Now it's time to show the property. This is your opportunity to meet them in person and see how they match up with the paperwork and pre-screening applicant that you already know. Keep an eye out for "in-person" red flags. If their in-person persona doesn't match the paperwork, take note. Ask them why they're interested in the property and let them chat about themselves and what they're looking for.

Once the applicant confirms they're interested in the property, it's time for additional screening.

Step 4: Rental Application

Create a rental application to collect the necessary information from the start. Request details including:

Name

Contact Info

Employment

Income

Rental History

References

Other Information (start date, pets, kids, etc.)

Step 5: Run the Screening

Run a screening on an applicant before going any further. Collect the application fee before proceeding. You want to check for:

- ❑ **Check financial history:** bankruptcies or delinquencies & credit score.
- ❑ **Check employment history:** Confirm a consistent history of employment and current employment.
- ❑ **Check criminal history:** Certain crimes including assault, arson, and theft are of concern to landlords. That said, landlords are not allowed to have a blanket policy against renting to tenants with a criminal history. Consult a lawyer or your property manager for more information about Fair Housing Act compliance.
- ❑ **Check rental history:** Beware of frequent address changes or a history of evictions. Contact prior landlords to confirm past residences & ask if there were problems during the tenancy.
- ❑ **Call and verify references:** Look for stories that seem too consistent between references. These could be a sign the applicant coached their references about what to say.

Step 5b: Use Tenant Screening Software

Make sure as much as possible that you are using a software to screen your tenant. Most tenant screening tools have access to nationwide databases, which will considerably shorten the screening process.

BONUS: If you have not done it already, make sure to read our in-depth blog posts about [tenant screening](#) and [best tenant screening tools](#)!

Step 6: Evaluate the Prospective Tenant

You've run the paperwork and spent time with the potential tenant. Are they the right fit for your property?

- ❑ Refer to your criteria.
- ❑ Be careful not to reject anyone based on race, disabilities, or anything that violates the Fair Housing Act (FHA) or Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).
- ❑ Whatever your criteria are, be sure to enforce them in the same manner with every applicant.

Don't rush to fill your property. The only thing worse than an empty property is a property with a bad tenant. If it's not the right tenant, keep looking.

Step 7: Accept or Deny

It's final decision time!

- ❑ If a tenant passes based on your criteria, send an acceptance email and move on to welcoming your new tenant.
- ❑ If the screenings, red flags, and your gut feelings don't support allowing the tenant in your property, send a notice denying their application. Make sure your action aligns with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FRCA) policies for adverse actions.

A less-than-perfect history doesn't mean a tenant isn't right for your property. However, be mindful of too many issues. Let them know what you find and talk it through.

Step 8: Onboard Your New Tenant

- Schedule a time to review your policies and procedures. This can be done in person or over the phone.

Review all policies and procedures, including when rent is due, late fees, how to request maintenance, seasonal inspection policies, what to do in an emergency, and more.

Step 9: Finalize the Lease Agreement

Finalize the Lease Agreement as soon as you've discussed the details. Be sure to review all policies in Step 8 before they sign the lease.