Rental Application Template (Free Printable PDF)

A rental application is the legal basis for your screening decision — and an improperly designed one exposes you to fair housing liability, creates evidentiary gaps in court, and lets unqualified tenants slip through. This printable template collects everything you need to make a defensible, documented leasing decision.

8 min read · Updated 2026-04-21

Roughly 1 in 6 evictions traces back to a tenant who was approved without adequate verification — an income figure taken at face value, a reference who turned out to be a friend, or a credit check skipped to fill the unit faster. A well-designed rental application doesn't just collect data; it creates the paper trail that justifies your decision, protects you in fair housing disputes, and gives you the baseline to hold a tenant accountable if things go wrong.

What Is a Rental Application?

A rental application is a written form completed by prospective tenants that collects the personal, financial, employment, and rental history information a landlord needs to evaluate whether to offer a lease. Along with authorization to run a background and credit check, it is the foundation of the tenant screening process.

Rental applications must comply with the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits screening criteria that have a discriminatory disparate impact based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or disability. Many states and localities add protected classes (California adds source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity; New York City adds lawful source of income, age, immigration status). Design your application to ask only what is relevant to ability to pay and history of tenancy.

When to Use This Template

- **Any time you are considering a prospective tenant** — Do not rely on a verbal conversation; every applicant for the same unit should complete the same written application
  - **Before running a credit or background check** — The application includes the authorization language required to legally pull reports under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)
    - **For co-applicants and guarantors** — Each adult occupant and any guarantor should complete a separate application
      - **After a showing but before offering a lease** — Collect applications from all interested parties before making a decision so you can document the basis for your selection

Rental Application Template

RENTAL APPLICATION *PropertyManagementBiz.com — Free Printable Form*

Property Address: [PROPERTY ADDRESS] **Unit:** [UNIT #] **Desired Move-In Date:**

[DATE] **Monthly Rent:** $[RENT AMOUNT] **Application Date:** [DATE] **Application Fee:** $[AMOUNT] (nonrefundable)

SECTION 1 — APPLICANT INFORMATION

Full Legal Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Social Security / ITIN: _____ Government-issued ID Type: _____ ID Number: _____ State: ___ Phone (Cell): _____ Phone (Other): _____ Email Address: _____

Number of occupants (including applicant): ____ Names and ages of minors: _____

Do you have pets? [ ] Yes [ ] No If yes: Species: _____ Breed: _____ Weight: ____ lbs Age: ___ Vaccinated: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Do you smoke? [ ] Yes [ ] No

SECTION 2 — CURRENT RESIDENCE

Current Address: _____ City / State / ZIP: _____ Current Landlord Name: _____ Phone: _____ Monthly Rent: $_____ Length of Tenancy: _____ Reason for Leaving: _____

May we contact your current landlord? [ ] Yes [ ] No

SECTION 3 — PREVIOUS RESIDENCE (last 2 years)

Address: _____ City / State / ZIP: _____ Landlord Name: _____ Phone: _____ Dates: [FROM] _____ to [TO] _____ Monthly Rent: $_____ Reason for Leaving: _____

SECTION 4 — EMPLOYMENT & INCOME

Employer Name: _____ Employer Address: _____ Supervisor Name: _____ Phone: _____

Position / Title: _____ Start Date: _____ Employment Type: [ ] Full-time [ ] Part-time [ ] Self-employed [ ] Contract Monthly Gross Income: $_____

Additional Income Sources (specify type and amount): Source 1: _____ Monthly Amount: $_____ Source 2: _____ Monthly Amount: $_____

Total Monthly Gross Income: $_____

SECTION 5 — BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

Have you ever been evicted or asked to vacate? [ ] Yes [ ] No If yes, please explain: _____

Have you ever broken a lease? [ ] Yes [ ] No If yes, please explain: _____

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? [ ] Yes [ ] No *(Note: Landlords must follow local fair chance/ban-the-box ordinances. Consult your local rules before using this question.)*

Do you have any outstanding balances owed to a previous landlord? [ ] Yes [ ] No

---

SECTION 6 — REFERENCES

Reference 1 (non-family): Name: _____ Phone: _____ Relationship: _____ Reference 2 (non-family): Name: _____ Phone: _____ Relationship: _____

SECTION 7 — AUTHORIZATION AND SIGNATURE

By signing below, I authorize [LANDLORD/MANAGEMENT COMPANY NAME] to:

- Verify all information provided in this application
  - Obtain a consumer credit report and background check through a consumer reporting agency
    - Contact current and previous landlords, employers, and references listed above
      - Use this information solely to evaluate my rental application

I certify that all information provided is true and accurate. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission is grounds for denial of this application or, if discovered after move-in, grounds for lease termination.

I acknowledge receipt of a copy of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and applicable state law.

Applicant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name: _____

Want a VA to Screen Tenants for You?

Our vetted property management VAs run applications, verify references, and deliver a screening report — so you lease to the right tenant, faster.

```jsx
<form action="/api/lead" method="POST" className="cta-form">
  <input type="hidden" name="source_page" value="/resources/templates/rental-application-template" />
  <input type="text" name="name" placeholder="First name" required />
  <input type="email" name="email" placeholder="Email address" required />
  <input type="url" name="site" placeholder="Property website or portfolio URL" />
  <button type="submit">Get My Free VA Consultation</button>
</form>
```

How to Customize This Template

Application fee limits: Many states cap application fees at the actual cost of the credit/background check. California caps them at roughly $62 (adjusted for CPI annually, Civil Code §1950.6). Oregon caps at $50. New York City bans application fees from landlords with more than 4 units. Charging more than the legal limit exposes you to fines and complaints.

Criminal history questions: Several cities and states restrict when and how landlords can ask about criminal history. Seattle, Portland, and Newark ban criminal history questions on initial applications; New York City requires an individualized assessment before denying based on criminal history. Know your local ordinances before including Section 5's criminal conviction question.

Income-to-rent ratio: A common screening standard is 2.5–3x monthly rent in gross income. If you use a numeric threshold, apply it consistently to every applicant for the same unit. Inconsistent application of stated criteria is a fair housing red flag.

FCRA compliance: If you deny an application based on a credit or background report, the FCRA requires you to send an adverse action notice identifying the reporting agency used, the information that led to the denial, and the applicant's right to dispute. Failure to send this notice carries FCRA statutory damages of $100–$1,000 per violation.

Common Mistakes

Not requiring every adult occupant to apply — If you screen only the "primary" applicant and the other adult has a problematic background or no income, you've underwritten the tenancy on incomplete information. Every adult who will occupy the unit must submit a separate application.

Accepting verbal income claims without verification — An applicant who states $8,000/month gross income needs to prove it: two recent pay stubs, a

W-2 or 1099, bank statements for self-employed applicants. Verbal claims with no documentation are unverifiable and lead to qualified tenants who can't actually pay.

Discarding applications from rejected applicants — Keep every completed application (accepted and rejected) for at least 3 years. Fair housing complaints can arrive 12–24 months after a denial. Without the application, you cannot demonstrate that your decision was based on stated criteria consistently applied.

Related Resources

- Tenant Screening Checklist (/resources/checklists/tenant-screening-checklist) — 12-step process for evaluating applicants
  - Move-In Checklist for Tenants (/resources/checklists/move-in-checklist-for-tenants) — What happens after you approve the application
    - Tenant Welcome Letter Template (/resources/templates/tenant-welcome-letter-template) — First communication after lease signing
      - All Resources (/resources/) — Complete library of templates, checklists, and guides