

Massachusetts Squatters Rights: Adverse Possession and Removing Occupants

Summary for landlords and property managers. Last reviewed October 29, 2026. Full guide: <https://www.generationadvisory.com/laws/massachusetts-squatters-rights>

Massachusetts requires 20 years of open, continuous and exclusive possession for adverse possession. Owners generally use summary process or a trespass complaint to remove someone who is not entitled to stay.

Key points

- Adverse possession requires 20 years of open, notorious, exclusive, adverse and continuous use.
- An owner generally uses a summary process case, and police may remove a person who was never a tenant under the trespass law.

Massachusetts at a glance

Rule	Massachusetts	Law
Adverse possession period	Adverse possession requires 20 years of open, notorious, exclusive, adverse and continuous use.	G.L. c.260, section 21
How owners remove occupants	An owner generally uses a summary process case, and police may remove a person who was never a tenant under the trespass law.	G.L. c.239 and G.L. c.266 (trespass)

Mistakes to avoid

- Waiting months to act after someone moves in.
- Changing locks or removing belongings yourself.
- Accepting rent or utility payments from the occupant.
- Leaving a vacant property unchecked for long stretches.

Verify current law

Laws named in this summary:

- G.L. c.260, section 21
- G.L. c.239 and G.L. c.266 (trespass)
- G.L. c.239 and G.L. c.185C
- G.L. c.186, section 14 and G.L. c.184, section 18

Official sources:

- General Laws of Massachusetts (Massachusetts Legislature):
<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws>
- Mass.gov: The Attorney General's Guide to Landlord and Tenant Rights:
<https://www.mass.gov/guides/the-attorney-generals-guide-to-landlord-and-tenant-rights>
- Mass.gov: Frequently asked questions about residential rental broker's fees:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/frequently-asked-questions-about-residential-rental-brokers-fees>
- Massachusetts Trial Court: Housing Court: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/housing-court>

General information, not legal advice. Check current law and talk to a Massachusetts attorney before you act.
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