

Tennessee 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/tennessee-squatters-rights>

Tennessee allows an adverse possession claim after 7 years for someone holding under a recorded deed or similar document. Owners can also use a detainer warrant to remove an occupant, and a 2024 law added a sheriff process for unauthorized occupants.

Key points

- Someone who holds land for 7 years under a recorded deed or similar document can gain title; claims without such a document take longer.
- The shorter 7 year period requires possession under an assurance of title such as a recorded deed.
- An owner can file a detainer warrant, and a 2024 law lets a property owner ask the sheriff to remove an unauthorized occupant of a residence after a sworn complaint when the person was never a tenant.

Tennessee at a glance

Rule	Tennessee	Law
Adverse possession period	Someone who holds land for 7 years under a recorded deed or similar document can gain title; claims without such a document take longer.	Tenn. Code Ann. 28-2-101
Claim under a document (color of title)	The shorter 7 year period requires possession under an assurance of title such as a recorded deed.	Tenn. Code Ann. 28-2-101
How owners remove occupants	An owner can file a detainer warrant, and a 2024 law lets a property owner ask the sheriff to remove an unauthorized occupant of a residence after a sworn complaint when the person was never a tenant.	Tennessee forcible entry and detainer law and 2024 unauthorized occupant law

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:

- Tenn. Code Ann. 28-2-101
- Tennessee forcible entry and detainer law and 2024 unauthorized occupant law
- Tenn. Code Ann. title 29, chapter 18 (forcible entry and detainer)
- Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-504 and 66-28-511

Official sources:

- Tennessee General Assembly: <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/>
- Tennessee Code (official publisher, public access): <https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/>
- Tennessee State Courts: <https://www.tncourts.gov/>

General information, not legal advice. Check current law and talk to a Tennessee attorney before you act. Last reviewed October 29, 2026.