

Washington Security Deposit Laws: Limits, Deductions and Deadlines

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

Washington does not cap deposits, but it requires a written move in condition checklist before any deposit is taken. Landlords have 30 days after move out to return the deposit with a full statement of deductions.

Key points

- The landlord has 30 days after the tenancy ends and the tenant moves out to return the deposit or send a full and specific statement of the reasons for keeping any part.
- A landlord who misses the deadline owes the full deposit, and a court may award up to twice the deposit for an intentional refusal to return it, plus costs and attorney fees.
- State law generally does not set a dollar or months limit on security deposits.
- The statement must explain each deduction, and landlords generally include supporting documents such as invoices or estimates.

Washington at a glance

Rule	Washington	Law
Deposit limit	State law generally does not set a dollar or months limit on security deposits.	Residential Landlord Tenant Act (RCW 59.18)
Deadline to return the deposit	The landlord has 30 days after the tenancy ends and the tenant moves out to return the deposit or send a full and specific statement of the reasons for keeping any part.	RCW 59.18.280
Itemized deductions	The statement must explain each deduction, and landlords generally include supporting documents such as invoices or estimates.	RCW 59.18.280
Penalty for wrongful withholding	A landlord who misses the deadline owes the full deposit, and a court may award up to twice the deposit for an intentional refusal to return it, plus costs and attorney fees.	RCW 59.18.280

Mistakes to avoid

- Skipping a dated move-in condition report with photos, then having nothing to compare against at move out.
- Charging for normal wear and tear.
- Missing the return deadline, even by a few days.
- Not asking for a forwarding address before the tenant leaves.
- Losing track of deposit money by mixing it with operating funds without a ledger.

Verify current law

Laws named in this summary:

- Residential Landlord Tenant Act (RCW 59.18)
- RCW 59.18.280
- RCW 59.18.260

Official sources:

- Revised Code of Washington (Washington State Legislature): <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/>
- Washington State Department of Commerce: HB 1217 landlord resource center: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/housing-policy/hb1217-landlord-resource-center/>
- Washington Courts: <https://www.courts.wa.gov/>

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