



Superior Court of the District of Columbia  
Civil Division – Civil Actions Branch  
500 Indiana Ave NW, Room 5000, Washington DC 20001  
(202)-879-1133 | [www.dccourts.gov](http://www.dccourts.gov)

Case Caption: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions for Filing a Housing Code Complaint

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These instructions do not replace an attorney's advice. Landlord and Tenant law can be hard to understand. These instructions cannot address every situation.

**You are strongly encouraged to talk to an attorney to help protect your legal rights.**

Call the **Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network (LTLAN)** at **(202) 780-2575** for legal advice or possible representation by an attorney.

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#### Filing Without the Assistance of an Attorney

You may file a complaint in the Housing Conditions Court on your own behalf without the assistance of an attorney. If you represent yourself, the Clerk's Office staff can answer basic questions about filling out the complaint and summons forms, provide written instructions explaining how to serve the complaint and summons, and provide other basic information. The Clerk's Office staff, however, cannot give you legal advice.

A person who is not an attorney may not file a case on behalf of another person or a business. Only an attorney can represent a corporation or business and must represent the corporation/ business during the entire case from the complaint filing.

#### Filing Fees (Court Costs)

The cost for filing a Housing Code Complaint is \$15.00.

#### Completing a Complaint to Enforce Housing Code Regulations

Housing Conditions Court cases begin with filing the Housing Code Complaint. That complaint allows you (plaintiff-tenant) to request the court to order the defendant-landlord to repair your rental unit. If you (tenant) seek additional relief from your landlord, such as:

- monetary relief for the condition of the property,
- return of your security deposit,
- property damage to your unit, or
- for personal injury,

you must file those claims in the Civil Actions Branch or the Small Claims and Conciliation Branch depending on the monetary amount you are seeking. The Housing Conditions Court is a court of limited jurisdiction.

The Housing Code Complaint must be filled out completely and accurately. Make sure that your writing is clear and easy to read and written in black ink. The following pages include step-by-step instructions for filling out the complaint and summons. If you need additional help filling out the forms, call the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network or seek legal advice from an attorney.

## **Instructions for Completing a Housing Code Complaint Form**

The line-by-line instructions below align with the complaint form's format/sequence.

1. **Civil Action Case Number** - Leave this area blank because the clerk will assign a case number to you.
2. **Caption: Plaintiff/Tenant** - Type or very clearly print the plaintiff's name and complete address, including the zip code. Do NOT list a post office box as the address. Also include the phone number and email address.
3. **Caption: Defendant/Landlord** - Type or very clearly print the defendant's name and complete address, including the apartment or suite number, city quadrant (NE, NW, SE, or SW), and zip code. Also include the phone number and email address if you know the email address.
4. **No. 1** - Print your name, address, and phone number. Check one of the three boxes to explain whether you are (1) the tenant, (2) an attorney authorized to verify the complaint, or (3) a person who is not the tenant of the property but has the right to demand that the defendant-landlord make the repairs. If you are not the tenant but are demanding property repairs, you must explain why you are demanding the repairs.
5. **No. 2** - In this section, you are stating your belief that the defendant-landlord is responsible for making the rental unit repairs. You must list the address where the court will order repairs (likely, the same as the plaintiff's address).
6. **No. 3** - In this section, you are stating that the rental unit at issue currently contains housing code violations which are listed in the Housing Code Violations Addendum (second page of the complaint). You must complete the Housing Code Violation Addendum for your complaint to proceed.
7. **No. 4** - In this section, you must indicate if you believe the landlord is, or should be, aware of the violations listed in the Addendum. Check all the boxes that you believe apply to your situation and fully provide the information requested for every box you check. For example, provide the name of the person you spoke to if you told the landlord or his/her representative about your housing code violations. Be as specific and accurate as possible.
8. **Entry of rental unit or contact plaintiff/tenant** - This section is optional, meaning you are not required to check either box. However, if you allow the landlord to access the property or indicate that the landlord may contact you by phone to arrange a time and date to access the property, the repairs may be completed faster.
9. **Signature of Plaintiff/Tenant or of Attorney for Plaintiff/Tenant** - The plaintiff-tenant or the tenant's attorney (if plaintiff-tenant has counsel) must sign the complaint. The tenant signs the complaint under penalty of perjury that the information provided is true and correct.
10. **Signature**: the person named in the first line of the complaint (tenant or tenant's attorney) must sign the complaint.
11. **Important note**: As stated above, a person who is not an attorney may not represent a tenant or landlord in court except that this person is allowed to request a continuance. Companies/corporations must be represented by an attorney.
12. **Fill in the address, phone number and email address of the plaintiff/tenant or of his/her attorney** - If the plaintiff-tenant is represented by an attorney, the attorney should complete this section, including his or her bar number and email address. If the plaintiff/-tenant is not represented by an attorney, the plaintiff-tenant should complete this section except the bar number space should be left blank.

### **Instructions for Completing the Housing Code Violation Addendum**

1. Civil Action Case Number. Leave this area blank because the Clerk will assign a case number to you.
2. You **must** complete the **Housing Code Violations Addendum** for your complaint to proceed. Check all that apply to your situation. Be as specific as possible when identifying the location (room or common areas) and/or describing the problems with the rental unit.
3. If you have additional housing code violations which are not listed in the top sections of the addendum, list the violations and their location in the space that says “other housing code violations” on page 4 of the addendum.
4. **EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES:**  
If any of the problems listed in the Housing Code Violation Addendum are an emergency and pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants of the rental unit, you must file a motion for temporary restraining order (TRO) along with this complaint for the court to immediately address your emergency conditions. The clerk can assist you with filing a motion for temporary restraining order.

### **How to Complete the Summons to Appear Form**

Fill out the case caption with the plaintiff’s name, address (no P.O. boxes), phone number and email address and the defendant’s name, address, phone number, and email address (if known). Leave the space for the case number blank as the clerk will provide that information.

You are *required* to serve the defendant/landlord with a completed Summons to Appear. The Clerk’s Office staff will give you the Summons. If you do not serve a Summons along with your complaint, the court may dismiss your case.

### **Instructions for Completing the Summons**

(These line-by-line instructions align with the format/sequence of the Summons form.)

Use black ink.

1. **Civil Action Case Number** - Leave this area blank because the clerk will assign a case number to you.
2. **Plaintiff/Tenant** - Type or very clearly print the plaintiff’s name and complete address including the zip code. Do **NOT** list a post office box as the address. Also include the telephone number and email address.
3. **Defendant/Landlord** - Type or very clearly print the defendant’s name and complete address, including the apartment or suite number, city quadrant (NE, NW, SE, or SW), and zip code. If you know it, you are required to include the defendant’s email address.
4. **Signature section:** If you are represented by an attorney, he or she should sign in the signature section and include his/her Bar Number and email address. If you are not represented by an attorney, you should complete this signature section with your information but leave blank the section requesting a bar number. If someone other than the plaintiff completed the summons, the plaintiff or the plaintiff’s attorney must sign the summons in this section.

### **How to Serve the Housing Code Complaint and Summons**

**Please see the Instructions for Serving a Housing Code Complaint and Summons for information on how to complete service of process of your verified complaint.**