Know your rights as a Massachusetts tenant!

1. Before You Sign
   - TALK to the landlord, neighbors and other tenants about the unit.
   - ASK the landlord questions – how much is the rent, who pays utilities, etc.
   - LOOK at the apartment.

2. Signing the Lease
   - READ IT CAREFULLY! You’re bound by it.
   - Make sure you understand the terms you sign.
   - Don’t agree to something that’s not in the lease.
   - Make sure the lease says who is paying for each utility. Unless you agree in writing to pay for a utility, the landlord must pay for it.
   - Get all of the landlord’s promises in writing (email conversations are in writing!).
   - Keep a signed copy of your lease – your landlord has 30 days to give you a copy.
   - The most a landlord can charge you when you move in is: 1) First month’s rent 2) Last month’s rent 3) Security deposit up to the amount of the first month’s rent 4) Cost of a new lock
   - You have the right to get a receipt every time you give the landlord money.

3. Moving In
   - If you pay a security deposit, you are entitled to a “statement of condition” that lists any problems with the unit at the time you move in.
   - Even if you don’t pay a security deposit, write down all the things in the unit that need repair – otherwise the landlord may hold you responsible.
   - Take photos to document the apartment’s condition.

4. Living in Your Place
   - You have the right to a safe and habitable unit. The landlord is responsible for keeping your unit in good condition.
   - If you have problems with conditions, you should report them to the landlord, preferably in writing.
   - If the landlord refuses to make repairs, you have the right to get a free inspection by a local health inspector.
   - It’s illegal for the landlord to retaliate against you for asking for repairs or for calling the health inspector.

5. Moving Out
   - You have the right to get your security deposit back, plus interest – the landlord is only entitled to deduct for unpaid rent or damage you caused beyond “reasonable” wear and tear.
   - If the landlord doesn’t return all of your deposit, the landlord must tell you in writing what the money was used for.
   - A landlord can never force a tenant to move out without going to court first.