KIT: Tenant Rights - Maintenance & Repair PART 2

Legal Rights Literacy Kits

This is one of nine kits designed for Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs in Ontario. The kits provide ready-made materials for LBS practitioners to help learners improve their literacy skills while learning about legal rights.

The kits were developed by CLEO, adapting content created by the Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton). They relate to three areas: Workplace Rights, Tenant Rights, and Consumer Rights. Each kit includes learning activities and tasks that can be used to facilitate learning, and to demonstrate, track and document learners' progress towards completion of their goal path.

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Legal Rights Literacy Kits for LBS

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Employment Rights

KIT: Workplace Posters

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Consumer Rights

KIT: Payday Loans

KIT: Collection Agencies

Tenant Rights

KIT: Paying Rent

KIT: Maintenance and Repair, Part 1

KIT: Maintenance and Repair, Part 2 — This KIT!

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Introduction to the Kit

This kit includes learning activities and task sets related to making a written request to a landlord for maintenance or repair.

Task Sets

This kit includes two task sets. One involves completing a repair request form; the other involves writing a message to request a repair. This kit uses the following documents to facilitate learning about literacy skills and tenant rights.

- **Maintenance Request forms**: It is common for large rental complexes or municipal housing to have standardized request forms for maintenance/repair. There are three sample forms (two print-based forms and a screenshot of an online form).
- **Repair Request Letters:** Many landlords do not have standardized forms for requesting repairs. Tenants need to write a message to request a repair. Two sample letters are provided.

You may choose to use the task sets for learning purposes, or to demonstrate, track and document learner progress towards completion of their goal path. Success criteria for each task set is indicated on the task set answer sheet.

OALCF Cover Sheet and Task Performance Indicators

These learning materials are aligned to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). If you choose to use a task set in this kit to demonstrate learner progress towards goal completion, then complete the cover sheet and scoring rubric on the final pages of this kit. Include them in the learner file, along with other assessment items, such as Initial Assessment results, Milestones and Culminating Tasks.

The task sets in this kit are offered as examples; feel free to modify the task questions, OALCF cover page and rubric to suit learner needs. Please note that if you adapt the task questions, they may not comply with the level and complexity of the original scoring rubric.

Ongoing Assessment: If you choose to use one task set for ongoing assessment purposes, learners should attempt the task set independently.

Learning Activities

This kit also includes sample learning activities. You can facilitate learning activities prior to having learners attempt a task set, so that learners can improve their literacy skills. This can involve providing background information on related laws and legal problems, and providing practise with filling out forms and writing messages to request a repair. Use the ideas on the following pages.

Background Information on Legal Rights

It is a good idea to introduce learners to the key concepts related to tenant rights with respect to maintenance and repairs, such as:

- Every tenant has the right to a home that is well maintained, in a building that is clean and safe
- The landlord is responsible for the maintenance and repair (things they must do)
- The tenant can take steps to get things fixed (e.g., by asking a landlord to fix it, then writing a message of request)

On the Steps to Justice website (www.stepstojustice.ca), the following questions on tenant rights related to maintenance and repair are addressed, in the Housing Law topic under Landlord and Tenant Responsibilities.

- Who is responsible for repairs and maintenance?
- How much heat does my landlord have to provide?
- What if my place has cockroaches, mice, or other pests?
- Can my landlord cut off my electricity or other utilities?
- What are the rules about air conditioners?
- What if I or my guests damage the place I am renting?
- Can I withhold rent to get my landlord to do something?

Note: The information in the activities are not a substitute for legal advice.

Learners with concerns should get legal help. Tenants can contact a community legal clinic. Find the nearest community legal clinic at www.legalaid.on.ca or call Legal Aid Ontario toll-free at 1-800-668-8258.

Additional Resources

Resources for Tenants

- **CLEO Resource: Maintenance and Repairs**
  This resource explains landlord and tenant responsibilities around maintenance and repairs: https://www.cleo.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/mainreps.pdf

- **CLEO Resource: Repair Request Form for Tenants**
  Tenants can use this illustrated repair request template to communicate with their landlord: https://stepstojustice.ca/sites/default/files/Illustrated%20repair%20request%20form_final.pdf

- **Brochures on the Tribunals Ontario Website** http://tribunalsontario.ca/ltb/resources/
  Brochures include:
  - Information for New Tenants
  - A Guide to the Residential Tenancies Act
  - Rent Increase Guideline
  - Maintenance and Repairs

Literacy Skills

It's a good idea to review and provide practice with writing strategies related to the OALCF Competency Communicate Ideas and Information.

Strategies for Filling out Forms

- Checking for instructions: Before filling out a form, guide learners in locating instructions for the form, such as: *print only, fill out form entirely, do not complete the FOR OFFICE section.*
- Using layout: encourage learner to notice how the form is organized and to use this knowledge to determine where to make entries in simple forms/documents.
- Determining what is needed: Guide learners in skimming over the form to determine the information they need to have ready in order to complete the form.
- Making inferences: Direct learners in looking at sections of the form that require a written response (e.g., a description of a problem). Guide them in making inferences about why the information is required, what they need to convey, and how to best present the facts for an optimal outcome.
- Vocabulary: Encourage learners to identify unfamiliar words or short forms on a form (applicant, DOB, full name, initial). Guide them in predicting what they mean.
- Printing legibly
- Printing the date in standard form: using numbers for months
- Checking for completeness

Writing Strategies (for letters and longer responses on a form)

- **Writing process:** Familiarize learners with steps in the writing process: generate ideas, organize and develop ideas, and edit. Encourage them to follow this process when writing.
- **Paragraph Organization:** Familiarize learners with the basic paragraph structure. Guide them in organizing their thoughts to convey a main idea using introductory & concluding sentences, simple support and common linking words.
- **Style – Voice and Vocabulary:** Through discussions, guide learners to consider the audience and to use words and tone appropriate to the task and audience.
- **Using Models:** Guide learners in locating good examples/models of written messages to a landlord requesting a repair. Have them notice features of the messages (e.g., formatting, how the purpose of the message is stated, including necessary details, making a request, closing the letter). Help them to draw from model messages to draft their own letters.

Learning Activities: Practitioner Notes

Pre-writing Discussion

Letters of complaint

As a class, engage learners in a discussion of different kinds of letters of complaint (e.g., because of a faulty product, bad service, or repair in a rental unit). Discuss how letters of complaint can be an effective way to communicate a concern and request a resolution when talking to a manager or landlord has failed.

Encourage learners to share their experience or the experience of someone they know. They can ask the questions below about each other's experiences.

- What was the problem?
- Did you write a letter and mail it, or send an email?
- Why did you feel you needed to send a message?
- Did anyone contact you?
- Did writing a message solve the problem?

Using the examples elicited in the discussion, discuss features of complaint letters, for example:

- Your contact information (e.g., address, phone number, email address)
- Address of the person you are writing to
- Clear description of the problem
- Date the problem began
- What you want done
- Copies of receipts, or photos if it's a repair request
- A more formal tone than a friendly letter
- A polite tone: inform learners that they should not convey anger or threats. The person reading the letter is likely not responsible for the problem, but can be helpful in resolving it.

Letters related to maintenance and repair

Direct the discussion to letters related to maintenance or repair issues in a rented place. This will activate learners' background knowledge about the topic, and help you determine their need for information related to tenant issues. Inform learners that tenants may have two options for requesting a repair in writing:

- **Completing a form:** Online or paper-based repair request forms are commonly used for large tenant complexes, or for subsidized housing supplied by a municipality.
- **Writing a message:** Landlords of smaller rental buildings or of privately-owned properties may not use standard forms. In these cases, tenants often request a repair by speaking to the landlord or writing a message. Sending a message digitally is preferred, since it provides a record and date of the communication.

Explore learner experience with repair requests. Learners can share their experience in a class or small group discussion, using the following guiding questions.

- Are you a tenant or homeowner?
- Have you made a request to a landlord for a repair?
- Did you write a letter or complete a form?
- If you completed a form, was it easy or difficult to complete?
- Did you get an answer from the landlord? How long did it take to receive an answer?
- Did the repairs happen?
- Were you satisfied with the experience?

Comparing Repair Request Forms (p. 6-8)

In this activity, learners compare two repair request forms. This can help them understand the organization of a form, which will help them determine where to make entries. It also helps them determine what information they will need to complete the form.

Prior to the activity, you can have a class discussion about forms learners encounter in their everyday life (paper-based and online forms). Using the examples brought up, elicit differences learners notice between online and paper-based forms, advantages and disadvantages of each, and whether learners have concerns with submitting a form online.

A Sample Letter (p. 9-10)

In this activity, learners read a letter to a landlord, and identify its elements. Inform learners that looking at model letters is a strategy many people use when they need to write. CLEO also has an illustrated repair request template that learners can use: Repair Request Form for Tenants.

Learning Activity: Comparing Repair Request Forms

Most repair forms require you to enter similar information. However, there can be differences. Look at the two forms. One is paper-based and the other is an online form. Complete the questions.

1. Which form (form 1 or 2) is an online form? How can you tell?

_____

2. All the forms ask for contact information of the tenant. List what contact information is needed for each form.

Form 1	Form 2
• name	

3. A landlord or a repair person needs to give 24 hours' notice to enter your rental unit. Copy the sentence from Form 1 that shows you are aware of this.

Form 1 _____

_____

_____

4. For Form 2, how do you show you are aware that the landlord or repair person can enter your unit?

Form 2 _____

_____

_____

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Form 1

Epinol Region ***HOUSING EPINOL***

Maintenance
Request Form

TENANT NAME:	DATE:
ADDRESS:	UNIT NUMBER:
DAY PHONE NUMBER:	
Description of maintenance or repair needed:	
Tenant signature: _____ In accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act, Housing Epinol will provide 24-hours notice before entering the unit.	
**********OFFICE USE ONLY **********	
RECEIVED BY:	DATE:
WORK DETAILS:	
Date Work Started:	Date completed:
Work completed by:	
Unit Entry: ☐ Tenant at home ☐ Tenant not at home ☐ Emergency White copy: Main office Yellow copy: Superintendent Pink copy: Tenant	

Form 2

This form is for tenants of Halton Community Housing Corporation (HCHC) to submit facility-related requests including repairs, maintenance or service.

Requests are monitored Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., excluding holidays. Halton Community Housing Corporation will review your request by the end of the next business day. .

If this matter requires immediate attention, please call 311 to connect with HCHC Maintenance Department.

First Name (required)

Last Name (required)

Phone Number (required)

___-___-____

Email (required)

Address (required)

Please type the first three letters of your street name and select your address from the list.

Description of needed work (required)

☐ **Authorization to Enter**: By request for action, I hereby give authorization to the LANDLORD, Halton Community Housing Corporation and its service agents to enter the above noted premises to effect repair.

Submit

SOURCE: Accessed May 28, 2020, from Halton Region, www.halton.ca.

Learning Activity: Sample Letter of Request

Look at the sample letter. Complete the questions.

1. What is the name of the landlord? Where in the letter do you find the landlord's contact information?

   _____

2. What is the tenant's name?

   _____

3. The tenant describes two problems. What are they?

   1st problem: _____

   2nd problem: _____

4. Why is the tenant worried about these problems?

   1st problem: _____

   2nd problem: _____

5. What is the tenant's email address?

   _____

6. What will happen if the tenant does not hear from the landlord by July 5?

   _____

7. Discuss in a group:
   - Is this the first time the tenant told the landlord about the problem? How do you know?
   - What do you think of the tone of the letter?
   - Would you write a letter like this? Why or why not?

Paul Whitehorse
80 Phillips St
Scarborough, Ontario
M2L 1X3

Dear Paul:

I am writing this letter to request that some repairs be done to my apartment. The railing between the main and upper floor is very loose and needs to be fixed. It's dangerous and I am concerned that my mother could fall and be injured. I have told you about the railing several times over the last couple of months. Also, my oven stopped working yesterday. I need the oven to cook most of my meals.

Could you please send someone out to look at the railing and my stove so they can be repaired or replaced? I would appreciate you contacting me as soon as possible to inform me of when the repairs will be done.

You can contact me by phone at 555-456-7896 and by email at plant.susan@kmail.com. If I do not hear from you by July 5th, I will contact the city to request an inspector visit to my apartment.

Thank you,

Susan Plant

Susan Plant,
79- 123 Queen St. East
Toronto, Ontario
M4C 2T4

Task Set 1

TITLE: Complete a Repair Request Form

Read the situation. Then complete the repair request form for Suad. Use her information.

Your friend, Suad Ali, recently moved into a new apartment. Overall, she is happy with her apartment, but there are a few problems. The biggest problem is that there are cockroaches. When she moved in six months ago, she knew about the cockroaches, but the superintendent told her that the problem would be dealt with.

She spoke to the superintendent, and he told her to complete a request form. Suad has asked you to help her to complete the form. She lives at 22 Terraview St., North York, apartment 2203. Her phone number is 555-982-0910.

Maintenance Request Form

Tenant name _____ Telephone number _____

Building address and unit number _____

We, the above tenant/s, request the following repairs:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I/we, acknowledge that the landlord can enter my unit for repair purposes, provided the landlord provides 24 hours' notice.

Tenant signature _____ Date _____

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Task Set 1: **Answer Sheet**

TASK TITLE:	Complete a Repair Request Form

Scoring Notes:

Tenant name (1 point):	Learner must include the first and last name
Telephone number (1 point):	Learner must include the area code and phone number
Building address (2 points):	Learner must include the full address, and copy it accurately
Repair request (2 points):	Learner must have a legible request that the reader can understand
Tenant signature (1 point):	Learner must include a signature
Date (1 point):	Learner must include a date

Success: at least 6 out of 8 points

Task 2

TITLE: Write a formal letter to the landlord or superintendent to request a repair.

Look at the picture. Imagine this is a problem you have been dealing with for four months in your apartment. You have spoken to the landlord several times, but nothing has been done to solve the problem. Write a message to your landlord and request a repair.

Make sure you include the following:

- Your landlord's name and address or email
- The date
- The reason why you are writing to the landlord or superintendent
- A clear description of your problem and how long it has been going on
- A request that the landlord repair the problem
- Your full name
- Your full address and phone number

You can draw from a sample letter, such as the one on the next page.

Sample Letter to Landlord/Superintendent

_____

_____

_____

Name and address or email of landlord

_____

Date

Dear _____

Name of landlord

RE: Repair and Maintenance Issues

I/We are writing to inform you of the following repair/maintenance problem in *my/our* rental unit. The repairs which need to be addressed are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I/we would very much appreciate it if you would promptly look into the problem(s). Please call me/us so I/we will know when to expect you or a repair person. You can reach me/us at:

Work: _____

Home: _____

Email: _____

Sincerely,

_____

Name(s) of Tenant(s)

_____

Full address

Task 2: **Answer Sheet**

TITLE: Write a formal letter to a landlord to request a repair.

Scoring Notes:

- Landlord name (1 point)

  Learner must include a first and last name

- Landlord contact information (1 point)

  Learner must include full address or email address of the landlord

- Date (1 point)

  Learner must include a date

- Problem description (4 points)

  Learners must include a clear description of the problem, with sufficient detail and possible consequences of the problem, such as:

  The pipe underneath the kitchen sink is leaking. It could damage the floor and leak into the apartment below.

- Repair request (2 points)

  Learner must have a clear request that the reader can understand

- Tenant Contact Information (1 point)

  Learner must include a phone number or email address

- Closing (2 points)

  Learner must include a closing salutation (sincerely, from…), a first and last name and full address

Success = at least 9 out of 12 points

OALCF Task Cover Sheet

Select a task set:

TITLE: ☐ Task Set 1: Complete a Repair Request Form.

☐ Task Set 2: Write a formal letter to a landlord to request a repair.

Learner Name: _____

Date started: _____ Date completed: _____

Successful Completion: ☐ YES ☐ NO

Goal Path: ☐ Employment ☐ Apprenticeship ☐ Secondary School ☐ Post Secondary ☐ Independence

Competency	Task Group	Level Indicator
A: Find and Use Information	A2: Interpret documents	A2.2 Interpret simple documents to locate and connect information
B: Communicate Ideas & Information	B3: Complete and create documents	B3.2 Use layout to determine where to make entries in simple documents
	B2: Write continuous text	B2.2: Write texts to explain and describe information and ideas

For **Performance Descriptors** for each Level Indicator, see Task Performance form, on next page

Materials Required:

☐ Pen and task sheets

☐ Repair Request Form

For Task Set 2:

☐ Sample formal letter to the landlord/superintendent template

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Task Performance Form

Select a Task Set:

TITLE: ☐ Task Set 1: Complete a Repair Request Form.

☐ Task Set 2: Write a formal letter to a landlord to request a repair.

	Performance indicators:	Needs Work ↓	Completes task with support from practitioner ↓	Completes task independ-ently ↓
	Task Set 1: Complete a repair request form.			
A2.2	• Uses layout to locate information	☐	☐	☐
	• Begins to identify sources and evaluate information	☐	☐	☐
B3.2	• Uses layout to determine where to make entries	☐	☐	☐
	• Begins to make some inferences to decide what information is needed, where and how to enter the information	☐	☐	☐
	Task Set 2: Write a formal letter to a landlord to request a repair.			
B2.2	• Writes texts to explain or describe	☐	☐	☐
	• Uses a limited range of vocabulary and punctuation appropriate to the task	☐	☐	☐
	• Begins to select words and tone appropriate to the task	☐	☐	☐
	• Connects ideas using paragraph structure	☐	☐	☐

This task: ☐ was successfully completed ☐ needs to be tried again

Learner Comments:

Instructor (print) _____ Learner signature _____

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