

Tips on Writing a Letter to a Property Owner or Management

Putting your concerns in writing may help show that you are serious. Use a friendly and helpful tone to express your concerns about tobacco or marijuana smoke coming into your unit. It may help to include a letter from a physician, facts about secondhand smoke, why no-smoking policies are legal, and other information. Send a copy to the state health department and [your local health department](#). Visit GASP's web site www.mysmokefreehousing.org for other resources and information.

Steps to consider before starting	Some writing examples
<p>Start on a positive note. The manager or owner of your building probably gets a lot of different complaints, so start by explaining why you like your unit, the building, and any special services.</p>	<p>Dear _____, I enjoy living here because the building is located very near my job, is affordable, has lots of storage space, and is well designed. Parking is convenient, the area is quiet, and the clubhouse helps me get some regular exercise.</p>
<p>What is the problem? Explain the problem, but do not go into detail yet. If others are affected, be sure to mention it. Let them know you need their help. Keep the letter as factual as possible and avoid emotional statements.</p>	<p>As much as I like this place, I and other residents are experiencing serious health problems due to tobacco smoke seeping into our apartments from adjoining apartments. The situation has become intolerable, and your assistance is needed to resolve the problem.</p>
<p>What's in it for them? List the benefits of a smoke-free policy. For talking points and facts to use, see GASP's Guide to Establishing Smoke-Free Policies in Multiunit Buildings.</p>	<p>This building and the health of all residents would benefit from instituting a smoke-free policy because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A smoke-free building saves money by reducing the costs of cleaning and repairing carpets, fixtures, and window treatments; priming and painting walls; and general maintenance. Lower insurance premiums are a possibility as well. The cost for cleaning a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment with damage caused by smoking can run anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000. 2) At mysmokefreehousing.com there are thousands of multifamily buildings in Colorado that have already established no-smoking policies for their entire building or property. Colorado's Clean Indoor Air Act allows property owners or managers to make any part of their property non-smoking. It requires that all indoor common areas be smoke-free. 3) You will likely attract and retain residents. In Colorado 84.8% of adults do not smoke, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

	<p>4) There is a market for smoke-free living. Surveys conducted in Colorado indicate that there is strong support for smoke-free policies. In addition, 89.5% of Colorado households reported having smoke-free home rules, and eighty percent of adult smokers in Colorado want to quit smoking, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.</p> <p>5) Enforcement is not usually a problem. "Few owners experience backlash from residents after implementing and enforcing a no-smoking policy," according to the National Apartment Association.</p>
<p>Explain your health symptoms. Let the management know how secondhand smoke affects you, when you first noticed it, and what your doctor has told you. Attach a letter from your physician if possible.</p>	<p>The fumes from tobacco smoke give me headaches, cause nausea and dizziness, aggravate my breathing, and affect my heart. I began noticing the fumes shortly after a new resident moved into the unit directly below me in October. My doctor has prescribed some medications to reduce the pain and has told me to avoid exposure to tobacco smoke because it impacts my health. A letter from my doctor is attached.</p>
<p>Are other residents affected? If you have contacted other residents, mention how it affects them. Some may not want their names mentioned, so check with them first.</p>	<p>Other residents are experiencing health problems as well due to tobacco smoke coming into their units. For instance, one resident has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, and allergic reactions to tobacco smoke. Another resident is nearly blind from macular degeneration — and tobacco smoke makes it worse.</p>
<p>Propose a solution that can benefit everyone.</p>	<p>I understand your desire to be sensitive to the wishes and concerns of all residents who live here. Therefore, I and several other residents ask that you consider conducting a survey to determine resident attitudes toward smoking, how many people smoke in their units, and the level of support for a smoke-free policy. You might also consider convening a meeting to discuss this issue.</p>
<p>Ask for a response and offer your assistance.</p>	<p>How can I be of assistance? What solutions can you suggest resolving this issue? I found this helpful website mysmokefreehousing.org that provides some great resources for Colorado housing providers on how to implement smoke-free policies.</p>
<p>End on a positive note. Ask them to get back to you within a certain time frame.</p>	<p>Working together, we can make this building a better place for us all! I look forward to hearing from you within the next two weeks.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>Consider having others review the letter before you send it.</p>	
<p>Send copies to your local health department and fair housing agencies. Your letter may be taken more seriously.</p>	<p>Indicate at the end of your letter where copies of your letter are being sent.</p>

<p>Make sure the letter is delivered. Obtain proof that your letter was received by using certified mail with a return receipt through the US Postal Service.</p>	
<p>Respond with thanks or a follow up letter.</p>	<p>If the response you get is positive, be sure to thank the management either by phone or by mail. If there is no response from management within 30 days or if it is negative, then a second letter may be appropriate.</p>

These tips are provided as a public service and is not intended as legal advice nor should it be considered a guarantee whether these tips will help you or create an unhealthy housing situation for you. Please consult an attorney or a fair housing agency if you need further help.

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Information about GASP and secondhand smoke | gaspforair.org
Smoke-free housing listings and resources | mysmokefreehousing.org
Information on secondhand marijuana smoke | smokeissmoke.com