



MOVE-IN / MOVE-OUT CLEANING

Tenant's Move-Out Cleaning Guide: How to Get Your Deposit Back

Written for tenants — explains what landlords and property managers expect, which cleaning tasks affect deposit recovery, what's worth doing yourself vs. hiring a professional, and how to document cleaning completion.

100%

Deposit Recovery Target

24hr

Before Key Return

Photo

Document Everything

Green

Certified Products

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SECTION 01

Understanding What Landlords Expect



Understanding the landlord's standard before you clean is the key to recovering your full deposit.

Most deposit disputes in Northern Ontario rental properties stem from a mismatch between what tenants think 'clean' means and what landlords actually expect. A tenant who wipes the counters, vacuums the floors, and scrubs the bathroom may genuinely believe the unit is clean — and genuinely be surprised when the landlord disagrees.

The standard a landlord expects is the condition the unit was in when you moved in — not the condition after two years of normal habitation. Review your move-in condition report and photos before you begin cleaning. That is the target you need to reach.

The Landlord's Checklist Mindset

- Landlords conduct move-out inspections with a checklist, not a general impression. They are looking for specific items, not overall appearance.
- The kitchen and bathrooms are the most scrutinized areas. Both need to be cleaned to a professional standard.
- Appliance interiors — particularly the oven and refrigerator — are almost always checked. These are the most common sources of deposit deductions.
- Carpet staining and odour are heavily weighted in deposit decisions. If your landlord has to hire professional carpet cleaning, the cost comes from your deposit.

SECTION 02

Normal Wear and Tear vs. Damage: Know the Difference

Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants from being charged for normal wear and tear – the inevitable degradation that results from ordinary use of a rental unit over time. Understanding this distinction can save you money by knowing what you are and are not responsible for.

Category	Normal Wear and Tear	Damage (Tenant Responsible)
Paint	Minor scuffs, fading after 2+ years	Large holes, marker, extensive crayon
Carpet	General traffic matting over time	Staining, pet odour, burns, tears
Flooring	Light scratching from normal use	Deep gouges, water damage, missing tiles
Appliances	Normal dirt from use	Physical damage, missing parts, burns
Windows	Normal dust and exterior weathering	Broken glass, failed screen from impact
Walls	Nail holes (small) for pictures	Excessive holes, carved or written on

Key Protection

If you believe your landlord is trying to charge you for normal wear and tear, you have the right to dispute this at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Document what you believe constitutes normal wear and tear with photos taken at move-in and move-out.

SECTION 03

Kitchen Move-Out Cleaning



Oven and refrigerator interiors are the most commonly flagged kitchen items at move-out.

The kitchen is where most deposit deductions originate. Oven and refrigerator interiors are the top two items landlords flag — and they are also the most labour-intensive to clean. Allow at least 3–4 hours for a thorough kitchen move-out clean.

Kitchen Move-Out Checklist

- Oven interior — apply oven cleaner, let dwell, scrub thoroughly. Racks cleaned separately.
- Stovetop — remove grates and burner caps, degrease all surfaces
- Range hood — clean or replace filter, wipe exterior and underside
- Refrigerator — empty completely, clean all shelves, drawers, and door seals
- Refrigerator exterior — wipe clean, pull out and clean behind if possible
- Microwave — interior completely clean, no splatter on roof
- All countertops — remove all staining, clean backsplash
- All cabinet interiors — remove all food, wipe all shelves
- All cabinet exteriors and hardware — wipe grease fingerprints
- Sink and faucet — descale, clean drain, polish

 Floor — sweep and mop, including under appliances

SECTION 04

Bathroom Move-Out Cleaning

Bathrooms must be left in new-condition cleanliness — all soap scum removed, all fixtures sanitized, all surfaces clean. A bathroom that looks 'acceptable' from the doorway but has buildup on the tub surround or under the toilet rim will fail a thorough landlord inspection.

Bathroom Move-Out Checklist

- ☐ Toilet — sanitize bowl (under rim and all), seat, lid, tank exterior, and floor around base
- ☐ Tub and/or shower — all soap scum removed, grout cleaned, fixtures polished
- ☐ Shower door or curtain — tracks clean, door streak-free
- ☐ Sink — descaled, polished, drain cleared of hair and soap
- ☐ Vanity interior — cleared and wiped clean
- ☐ Mirror — streak-free
- ☐ All surfaces — no soap residue, no water spots
- ☐ Exhaust fan grille — dust removed
- ☐ Floor — mopped clean, grout clean
- ☐ Baseboards — wiped clean

Mould Tip

If your shower has mould in the caulking that you cannot fully remove with cleaning products, be honest with your landlord and offer to have it addressed. Attempting to hide mould with white paint or caulk over stained caulk will be discovered immediately and reflect badly on you.

SECTION 05

Bedrooms, Living Areas, and Closets

Bedrooms and living areas require methodical cleaning that addresses surfaces and areas tenants often overlook during regular cleaning — but landlords specifically check during inspection.

Don't-Miss Areas

- Closet shelves and rods: Dust on shelving and debris on closet floors is almost always missed in DIY move-out cleans. Wipe all closet surfaces thoroughly.
- Window sills and tracks: Debris accumulation in window tracks is a common flag. Vacuum first, then wipe clean.
- Light switches and outlet plates: Fingerprint buildup around switches is unsightly and quick to clean — but often forgotten.
- Inside all cupboards and drawers: Every drawer and cupboard in the unit must be emptied, vacuumed, and wiped.
- Behind and under furniture positions: Wherever furniture stood, clean the floor — landlords move furniture at inspection to check.
- Walls: Wipe scuffs, remove adhesive residue (Blu-Tack, poster putty), and fill nail holes with spackle.

SECTION 06

Floors, Carpets, and Windows

Floors and windows are among the most visible elements of a move-out clean. Achieving a professional standard on both significantly improves the landlord's overall impression of the unit's condition.

Carpet

- Vacuum thoroughly, including edges and under any removable furniture.
- Treat all visible stains before vacuuming — see the spot treatment guide in this document.
- If there is pet odour or significant staining, hire professional hot water extraction. A landlord who hires it themselves will charge you at their cost, not the market rate you could get by booking it yourself.
- Professional carpet cleaning for a 2-bedroom unit typically costs \$150–250. A landlord's deduction for the same service is typically \$300–450.

Windows

- Clean interior glass streak-free — a spray bottle of diluted white vinegar and a microfibre cloth works as well as commercial glass cleaner.
- Wipe window sills and frames clean.
- Vacuum and wipe window tracks.
- Clean or dust blinds — horizontal blinds clean most effectively when removed and washed in a tub.

SECTION 07

DIY vs. Professional Move-Out Cleaning

The decision to clean your unit yourself versus hiring a professional is primarily an economic one. Both options can produce acceptable results — but the risk profile is very different.

Factor	DIY Clean	Professional Clean (Binx)
Time required	12–20 hours for a 2-bedroom	4–6 hours (team of 2–3)
Equipment quality	Consumer vacuum, standard products	HEPA vacuum, professional extractors, green products
Oven/appliances	Challenging; results vary	Professional degreasers; consistent results
Carpet cleaning	Limited without extractor	Truck-mounted extraction included or added
Risk of missing items	High — non-professional eye	Low — professional checklist standard
Deposit protection	No guarantee	Binx offers deposit-back guarantee on move-out cleans
Cost	\$50–100 in supplies	\$200–400 for 2-bedroom unit

The Math

If a professional move-out clean costs \$300 and saves you a \$400 deposit deduction, the net benefit is \$100 — plus the hours you saved and the certainty of meeting the landlord's standard. For most Northern Ontario tenants, professional move-out cleaning pays for itself.

SECTION 08

Documenting Your Clean for Deposit Protection

Whatever cleaning standard you achieve, document it before you return the keys. Photographs taken immediately after your clean — before the landlord's inspection — protect you against claims of damage that occur after your departure.

Move-Out Documentation Protocol

- 1 Photograph every room**
Take photos from the doorway, showing the full room. Include ceiling, walls, and floor in each photo.
- 2 Close-up shots of key areas**
Oven interior, refrigerator interior, shower/tub, toilet, all countertops, carpets.
- 3 Timestamp your photos**
Ensure your phone or camera automatically timestamps photos. This establishes that the clean was completed before key return.
- 4 Email to yourself**
Send all photos to your personal email immediately. This creates an off-device, timestamped backup that cannot be altered.
- 5 Request a joint walkthrough**
Ask your landlord to conduct the final inspection with you present. Any issues identified can be addressed immediately before key handover.

SECTION 09

Move-Out Timeline and Final Checklist

Use this timeline to plan your move-out clean. Starting the process early reduces stress and gives you time to address any areas that need additional attention.

When	Action
30 days before	Confirm move-out date in writing. Locate your move-in condition report and photos.
14 days before	Book professional cleaning if using Binx — this secures your date.
7 days before	Begin packing room by room. Clean as rooms are emptied.
2 days before	Deep clean kitchen and bathrooms. Address any touch-up painting.
1 day before	Full clean of remaining areas. Professional clean scheduled for today or tomorrow.
Move-out day	Final photograph documentation. Return keys. Request written receipt.

Final Walk-Through Checklist

- All rooms emptied and cleaned
- All appliances cleaned inside and out
- All light switches and outlets working
- Smoke and CO detectors working
- All keys, fobs, and parking passes ready to return
- Forwarding address provided to landlord
- Final photos taken and backed up

ABOUT BINX

Why Clients Trust Binx Professional Cleaning

<p>\$</p> <p>\$5M</p> <p>Liability Insurance</p>	<p>W</p> <p>WSIB</p> <p>Full Coverage</p>	<p>Q</p> <p>Quality</p> <p>Audit Verified</p>	<p>G</p> <p>100%</p> <p>Green Certified</p>
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Binx Professional Cleaning is a locally owned and operated cleaning company serving North Bay, Sudbury, and surrounding communities in Northern Ontario. With 70+ trained cleaning professionals, we deliver consistent, verified, and insured cleaning services to over 200 commercial and residential clients every week.

We are proud partners of Cleaning for a Reason, providing free cleaning services to cancer patients in our community. We use 100% green-certified Green Cleaning Chemical products across every account. Every cleaning visit is verified through our Quality Audit inspection platform – so you never have to wonder whether the work was done.



Guaranteed Move-Out Clean — Get Your Full Deposit Back

Binx provides move-out cleaning for tenants across North Bay and Sudbury. We clean to landlord standard — deposit guaranteed.

Book at binx.ca.

Get a Free Quote — binx.ca/contact

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