

Do want to...

Enhance profitability?

Lower vacancy rates?

Reduce turnover?

Broaden your pool of prospective tenants?

Promote a sense of tenant safety & security?

Rent to happy & satisfied tenants?

*...then open your doors to
responsible pet guardians!*



The San Francisco SPCA's Open Door Program

Open Door Referral List

A free, convenient, and effective way to increase your pool of well-qualified prospective renters. The list provided to a growing number of tenants who are actively seeking rental housing with their pets, and all San Francisco property owners and managers are invited to list their "pets o.k." rentals.

Landlords Say Yes to Pets!

"The words 'pets okay' sure bring in calls," says San Francisco property owner Eleanor Sampson. "You get a different type of people when you advertise that you take pets."

"I think pet guardians are more stable tenants," Sampson continues. But Sampson is a selective landlord. She screens her potential tenants, human and animal, to assure herself that the pet in question is well cared for. This may mean asking to see the animal in its current environment, to see if it is well cared for and has acclimated well to apartment life.

"I think it takes a responsible person to properly care for a pet, and I think that responsibility extends to their taking care of the property," says landlord Robb Simpson. He feels pet owners might actually make better tenants.

Simpson also finds that he has no problem with tenants who have pets if the ground rules are laid out in advance. "I've had pets here since I bought the building," he says, "and I've never had any problems."

"I've never had problems with people who are pet guardians," says property owner June Becker, "but I've had problems with people who don't have pets!"

Becker always calls a potential tenant's previous landlord to be sure there haven't been any problems in the past. She also looks at how the animal has been groomed because she feels how the animal is cared for physically can be a gauge for the potential tenant's responsibility.

Becker says she doesn't find it necessary to charge a pet deposit, and that there aren't any problems as long as a few basic ground rules, such as "Pick up after your dog," are established from the start.

Myth: “If I let one tenant have a pet, I’ll have to let everyone have one.”

Reality: Many landlords fear that if they allow pets they will be overrun with irresponsible pet guardians and the problems they create. But with a few simple procedures and precautions in place, landlords can successfully screen out these people without penalizing responsible pet guardians who will make excellent tenants.

Myth: “One might be okay, but more than one is just too many.”

Reality: In some cases, a second pet may actually make life easier all around. Most companion animals, including dogs and cats, are social beings and companionship is one of their highest priorities. For a pet that spends a lot of time alone, a playmate will help alleviate boredom. And the playmates need not be of the same species: many dogs and cats, for instance, can become the best of friends when raised together or properly introduced.

Myth: “Dogs need big back yards and someone to be home with them all day.”

Reality: Dogs do need regular exercise and a chance to spend time with their human caretakers. But when these requirements are met, dogs can be happy in the city or in the country. And fortunately it’s easy to keep a dog happy in San Francisco: numerous off-leash dog runs make exercising and socializing dogs fun and convenient.

Myth: “Small dogs are o.k., but big dogs just aren’t suited to apartment life.”

Reality: It’s not a dog’s size which determines how well it will do in rental housing, it’s a dog’s energy level and exercise requirements that are important. Many large dogs tend to be more laid-back and easy-going than their tiny counterparts. More active breeds may require a greater commitment from their guardians to ensure these animals get the exercise they need. Other factors, such as age and temperament, can also be important. Older dogs - even large ones - for instance, are generally less active than puppies.

Successful Pet Policies: A Guideline for Property Owners

The following are some general guidelines for property owners to consider when setting up a pet policy. These are not hard and fast rules, and policies for individual properties should be designed to best meet your specific needs.

- **Start with screening**

Careful screening of prospective tenants is the first step to a successful pet policy. By asking a few simple questions, property owners can screen out irresponsible pet guardians and find the responsible ones who will make good tenants.

- **Put it in writing**

A written agreement protects the interests of both the property owner and tenant, and pet rules and procedures help avoid misunderstanding.

- **Charge reasonable pet deposits**

What is reasonable may vary, depending on the nature of each rental. While many landlords don't charge any additional pet deposit, one recent survey showed that the most common pet deposit was \$150.00.

- **Establish limits**

Limit permissible animals to common pets like dogs, cats, rodents, fish, and birds. A policy on how many pets each tenant may own can also help keep the building's pet population at manageable levels.

- **Set parameters**

Should certain types of pets be confined to tenant's apartments? Should other pets be permitted in all or only parts of the common areas? Should dogs be leashed when in hallways and other communal areas? Establish pet regulations in advance, before any conflicts arise.

- **Ensure cleanliness**

A responsible pet guardian will agree to immediately pick up and dispose of dog feces, bag kitty litter before placing it in the garbage containers, and take other necessary sanitation measures.

- **Require spaying and neutering**

Spayed and neutered animals are generally healthier, better behaved, and more suited to apartment living than their unaltered counterparts.

- **Determine emergency arrangements**

Property owners may want to keep a file with the names and addresses of each pet's veterinarian and substitute caretakers designated by the tenant.

- **Put disciplinary procedures in writing and enforce them fairly**

These procedures might include a provision for warning(s) before any punitive measures are taken. Whatever the policy, fair and consistent enforcement will reduce disputes and make for better relations between management and tenants.

- **Tell tenants about available services**

Pet owners in San Francisco are lucky to have plenty of pet-related services at their disposal. Dozens of dog walkers and pet sitters are available in the City, and The San Francisco SPCA offers dog training classes, cat behavior videos, low-cost spay neuter clinic, an animal behavior advice hotline, and more.

Responsible Pet Guardians – A Checklist for Landlords

The following is a list of questions for property owners to use when interviewing prospective tenants with pets. These questions are intended as a starting point to help property owners get to know a tenant and his or her commitment to providing responsible pet care. In addition to discussing these questions, we recommend that property owners ask prospective tenants to bring their pets, especially dogs, to the interview: a well-groomed, well-behaved pet is one of the best signs of a responsible pet guardian.

For all pet guardians:

- What type of pet(s) do you have?
- How long have you had them?
- Do you have a letter or other documentation from your veterinarian stating that each pet is in good health and is up-to-date on all his/her vaccinations?
- Have there been any complaints about your pet at your current address? How did you resolve them?
- Did your pet(s) cause any damage at your current address? If so, did you pay your landlord for all the damage done?
- May I contact your current landlord to discuss your pet further?
- May I visit you and your pet(s) at your current address to see how they are getting along?
- Would you object to my checking in on the pet after you move in?
- Who will care for your pet(s) when you go away on vacation or business?
- Are you a member of The San Francisco SPCA or other humane organization?

For cat guardians:

- Has your cat been spayed or neutered?
- Does your cat use the litter box you provide?
- Do you keep your cat inside?
- Does your cat have any medical or behavioral problems? If so, what treatment/training is he or she receiving?
- How does your cat get along with other animals and people?

For dog guardians:

- Has your dog been spayed or neutered?
- Is your dog housebroken?
- Have you and your dog completed a dog obedience class?
- How and how often do you exercise your dog?
- Do you keep your dog on leash when you go for walks?
- Do you make a point of cleaning up after your dog?
- How much time does your dog spend alone each day?
- Does your dog stay inside when it is alone?
- Is your dog inside during the night?
- Does your dog have any medical or behavioral problems? If so, what treatment/training is it receiving?
- How does your dog get along with other animals and people?

Sample Pet Policy

This sample pet policy and the accompanying lease amendment are intended to provide landlords with a starting point to develop pet rules and procedures for their own rental buildings. While we believe the sample policy we have designed will fit the needs of most rental buildings. While we believe the sample policy we have designed will fit the needs of most rental buildings, you should consider this policy in light of your particular situation and consult with your attorney before adopting a final set of rules.

Statement of Values

The management of _____ wants to encourage tenants to value and enjoy their apartments as they would their own homes. We believe that tenants should be given every opportunity to pursue their interests, consistent with the rights of their fellow tenants and the property owner(s). By fostering an attitude of mutual respect and cooperation, our common interest in a safe, pleasant, and well-maintained building is best achieved.

In keeping with this philosophy and after carefully considering all the interests involved, we have decided to adopt a limited pet policy that will allow tenants committed to responsible pet guardianship to have a pet. In reaching this decision, we have taken into account the important contributions that pets can make to the lives of people who value and appreciate animals. We have also considered the fact that there are people who wish to avoid contact with pets and other animals. The pet policy is designed to protect both the pet guardians and non-pet-guardians, and to ensure that the animals themselves receive responsible care. The policy applies to all pets kept in the building and will be strictly enforced. All tenants will receive a copy of the policy.

Pet Policy

1. Permission to keep a pet is granted at management's sole discretion and is subject to tenant's strict adherence to all aspects of this pet policy. Any tenant who wishes to keep a pet will first obtain management's approval and sign a pet agreement.
2. Only common household pets will be allowed. These include dogs, cats, fish, birds, rabbits, and rodents, such as guinea pigs and hamsters, kept as companion animals. No tenants will be allowed to keep more than ____ cats and/or dogs. Requests to keep more than one pet of any other species will be approved at management's discretion.
3. In making a decision on whether to approve a tenant's request to keep a dog, management will take into account the dog's temperament and the arrangements the tenant has made for training and exercising the dog.
4. Pets are to be kept inside the tenant's apartment. Dogs in and out of the building must be on leash and under the tenant's control. If an off-leash area has been designated by management on the building grounds, dogs may be taken off-leash in that area, provided the tenant remains with the dog at all times.
5. Tenants are responsible for keeping all areas where pets are housed clean, safe, and free of parasites, including fleas. Dog owners must immediately pick up and dispose of, in a sanitary manner, all waste

(Sample Pet Policy Cont'd)

deposited on the street or grounds. Cat guardians must place soiled cat litter in tied, plastic bags and dispose of the bags and dispose of the bags in garbage pails designated by management.

6. All adult dogs and cats must be spayed or neutered, unless a veterinarian certifies that health problems prevent the dog or cat from being spayed or neutered. All pets must receive proper veterinary care, including all appropriate inoculations; must be well-groomed; and must be given a healthy diet and exercised according to their needs. All pets must also be maintained in accordance with applicable state and local laws. Dogs and cats must wear identification tags at all times.

7. No pet is to be left alone in a tenant's apartment for a period longer than that which is appropriate in light of the needs of the individual pet. While this period may vary depending on the pet in question, Landlord and tenant understand that, in general, dogs should not be left alone for more than 9 hours, and other pets for more than 24 hours, on a regular basis. When management has reasonable cause to believe a pet is alone in an apartment and either that pet is creating a disturbance or any other emergency situation appears to exist with respect to that pet, management will attempt to contact the tenant to remedy the situation. If management is unable to contact the tenant within a reasonable period, management may enter tenant's apartment and make any necessary arrangements for the pet's care, including removing the pet and placing it in a temporary home, such as a boarding kennel. Any costs incurred will be deducted from tenant's pet deposit. (See 9., below.)

8. Tenants are responsible for ensuring that their pets do not disturb or annoy other tenants or neighbors. Tenants whose pet(s) are determined by management to be disturbing others must remedy the situation immediately. A tenant who fails to remedy the situation after _____ warning(s) will receive a 30-day notice to remove the pet from the premises. If the tenant fails to remove the pet, the tenant will be considered in breach of tenant's lease or other rental agreement and may be required to vacate the premises.

9. Tenants are responsible for and must immediately pay for all damages or injuries caused by their pets. In addition, each tenant who wishes to keep a pet must pay \$ _____ pet deposit upon signing the pet agreement. If the cost of repairing any damages caused by the pet exceeds the pet deposit, management may use funds from the tenant's regular security deposit to cover the excess. If management uses all or any portion of the pet deposit or security deposit to cover any pet-related damages or expenses incurred by management during the tenant's tenancy, the tenant must immediately restore the deposits to their full, original amounts.

10. The pet deposit is fully refundable if management determines that there are no damages or other expenses caused by the pet(s) upon tenant's vacating the apartment or permanently relocating the pet(s).

I have read and understand the above pet policy.

Tenant

Date

Sample Cat Policy

This sample pet policy and the accompanying lease amendment are intended to provide landlords with a starting point to develop pet rules and procedures for their own rental buildings. While we believe the sample policy we have designed will fit the needs of most rental buildings. While we believe this sample policy will fit the needs of most rental buildings, you should consider the policy in light of your particular situation and consult with your attorney before adopting a final set of rules.

Statement of Values

The management of _____ wants to encourage tenants to value and enjoy their apartments as they would their own homes. We believe that tenants should be given every opportunity to pursue their interests, consistent with the rights of their fellow tenants and the property owner(s). By fostering an attitude of mutual respect and cooperation, our common interest in a safe, pleasant, and well-maintained building is best achieved.

In keeping with this philosophy and after carefully considering all the interests involved, we have decided to adopt a limited pet policy that will allow tenants committed to responsible pet guardianship to keep a cat. In reaching this decision, we have taken into account the important contributions that pets can make to the lives of people who value and appreciate animals. We have also considered the fact that there are people who wish to avoid contact with pets and other animals. The pet policy is designed to protect both cat guardians and non-cat-guardians, and to ensure that the animals themselves receive responsible care. The policy applies to all cats kept in the building and will be strictly enforced. All tenants will receive a copy of the policy.

Pet Policy

1. Permission to keep a cat is granted at management's sole discretion and is subject to tenant's strict adherence to all aspects of this pet policy. Any tenant who wishes to keep a cat will first obtain management's approval and sign a pet agreement.
2. Only cats kept for companion purposes are permitted. No dogs are allowed, and no tenant will be permitted to keep more than ____ cat(s).
3. Cats are to be kept inside the tenant's apartment and are not permitted in the hallways, common areas, or on the grounds of the building except when traveling to and from the veterinarian, groomer, etc. In these cases, the cat must be confined in a safe, secure carrying case.
4. Cat guardians are responsible for keeping all areas where their cats are housed clean, safe, and free of parasites, including fleas. Cat guardians must place soiled cat litter in tied, plastic bags and dispose of the bags in garbage pails designated by management.
5. All cats must be spayed or neutered, unless a veterinarian certifies that health problems prevent the cat from being spayed or neutered. All cats must receive proper veterinary care, including all appropriate inoculations; must be well groomed; and must be given a healthy diet. All cats must also be maintained in accordance with applicable state and local laws.

6. No cat is to be left alone in a tenant's apartment for a period longer than that which is appropriate in light of the needs of the individual cat. While this period may vary depending on the cat in question, landlord and tenant understand that, in general, cats should not be left alone for more than 24 hours on a regular basis. When management has reasonable cause to believe a pet is alone in an apartment and either that pet is creating a disturbance or any other emergency situation appears to exist with respect to the cat, management will attempt to contact the tenant to remedy the situation. If management is unable to contact the tenant within a reasonable period, management may enter tenant's apartment and make any necessary arrangements for the cat's care, including removing the cat and placing it in a temporary home, such as a boarding kennel. Any costs incurred will be deducted from tenant's pet deposit. (See 9., below.)

7. Tenants are responsible for ensuring that their pets do not disturb or annoy other tenants or neighbors. Tenants whose pet(s) are determined by management to be disturbing others must remedy the situation immediately. A tenant who fails to remedy the situation after _____ warning(s) will receive a 30-day notice to remove the pet from the premises. If the tenant fails to remove the pet, the tenant will be considered in breach of tenant's lease or other rental agreement and may be required to vacate the premises.

8. Tenants are responsible for and must immediately pay for all damages or injuries caused by their cat(s). In addition, each tenant who wishes to keep a pet must pay a \$ _____ pet deposit upon signing the pet agreement. If the cost of repairing any damages caused by the pet exceeds the pet deposit, management may use funds from the tenant's regular security deposit to cover the excess. If management uses all or any portion of the pet deposit or security deposit to cover any pet-related damages or expenses incurred by management during the tenant's tenancy, the tenant must immediately restore the deposits to their full, original amounts.

9. The pet deposit is fully refundable if management determines that there are no damages or other expenses caused by the cat(s) upon tenant's vacating the apartment or permanently relocating the cat(s).

I have read and understand the above pet policy.

Tenant

Date

Sample Pet Agreement

This pet agreement is an amendment to the lease dated _____

between _____ and _____
(Tenant) (Landlord)

1. Tenant has read and signed the pet policy attached to this agreement.
2. Tenant agrees to abide by the pet policy and landlord agrees to permit tenant to keep the pet(s) described in this agreement in accordance with the pet policy.

Type of Pet	Name	Age	Description
_____	_____	_____	_____

3. Tenant shall be liable for any damage or injury whatsoever caused by the pet(s) and shall pay landlord or landlord's agents or employees immediately, upon demand, for any and all costs incurred by landlord as a result of damage or injury caused by the pet(s).

4. Tenant agrees to indemnify, hold harmless, and defend landlord and all of landlord's agents and employees against all liability, judgments, expense (including costs and attorney's fees), or claims by third parties for any injury to a person or damage to property of any kind whatsoever caused by tenant's pet(s).

5. Tenant shall provide the following information and promptly notify landlord in writing of any changes:

Emergency caretaker for pet(s):

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Veterinarian:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

(Sample Pet Agreement Cont'd)

6. Tenant agrees that landlord and landlord's agents and employees have the right to enter tenant's apartment without prior notice, if there is reasonable cause to believe that a pet has been left alone in tenant's apartment and either that pet is creating a disturbance or any other emergency situation appears to exist with respect to the pet. Landlord or landlord's agents or employees may make any appropriate arrangements with respect to the pet's care, including removing the pet and placing it in a temporary home. Landlord or landlord's agents or employees shall attempt to contact tenant before entering the apartment and shall enter only if they are unable to contact tenant within a reasonable amount of time. Upon entering, landlord or landlord's agents or employees may make any appropriate arrangements with respect to the pet's care, including removing the pet and placing it in a temporary home. Landlord or landlord's agents or employees may deduct any costs incurred from tenant's pet deposit.

By signing this agreement, tenant has agreed to the above and has paid a pet deposit of \$ _____. This deposit is fully refundable if the landlord or landlord's agents or employees determine there are no damages caused by the pet(s) upon tenant's vacating the premises or permanently relocating the pet(s).

_____	_____
Tenant	Landlord
_____	_____
Date	Date

Pet Reference

General Information

1. Name of Tenant/Applicant _____
2. Current Address _____
3. Telephone _____

Pet Information

1. List pet(s) you currently have:

Name	Type	Age	Veterinarian
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Are pets permitted where you now live? _____

3. Can we call your current landlord for a pet reference? _____

Landlord _____ Telephone _____

How long did your pet(s) live there? From: Date _____ Year _____ to

Date _____ Year _____

4. Can we call any former landlords for pet references? _____

Landlord _____ Telephone _____

How long did your pet(s) live there? _____

5. Responsible pet guardianship references: Please list below references who know you and your pet and who would be willing to discuss your pet with us. You may choose to list people such as your neighbors, your veterinarian, or your dog trainer, as appropriate.

Name _____

Position _____

Name _____

Position _____