

# Talking to a Landlord

*In this lesson, you will learn useful words and expressions to use when talking to a landlord. It is helpful to practise asking and answering questions politely before you make a complaint or share a concern in real life. Let's start by having a discussion in small groups.*

## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What jobs do landlords do?
2. What reasons could tenants have for contacting landlords?
3. Why is it important to have a good relationship with a landlord?



### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left to the correct meanings on the right.

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. landlord                  | a) heat, electricity, and water                               |
| _____ 2. tenant                    | b) an appliance that heats a space                            |
| _____ 3. furnace                   | c) a person who rents an apartment                            |
| _____ 4. keep meaning to           | d) acceptable, fair   |
| _____ 5. clogged                   | e) blocked  |
| _____ 6. plumber                   | f) a person who fixes and installs pipes and drainage         |
| _____ 7. rent                      | g) the fee for borrowing (e.g., borrowing a space to live in) |
| _____ 8. reasonable                | h) an apartment manager or owner                              |
| _____ 9. utilities                 | i) to make someone aware, to provide new information          |
| _____ 10. bring to one's attention | j) to continue to forget or postpone taking an action         |

## Dialogue Reading

Read the dialogue with your partner a few times. Take turns being each character. Practise your intonation and pronunciation. Circle any new words or phrases that you need to practise.

Landlord: Hello?

Tenant: Hi. I'm a **tenant in Unit #22.**

Landlord: Which building are you in?

Tenant: **Uh, 33 John Street.**

Landlord: Yep. Okay. **Is there a problem?**

Tenant: **Yes. The furnace is not working.**

Landlord: Hmm. That's not good. I'll **send a technician over** there this afternoon.

Tenant: Great! Also, I keep meaning to call about the **bathroom toilet. It keeps getting clogged.**

Landlord: Oh, really? **How long has this been a problem?**

Tenant: For about a month. We tried a few things, but **nothing is helping.**

Landlord: **I can have a plumber** in on Friday. **Does that work for you?**

Tenant: Friday. Uh, **do I have to be home?**

Landlord: No. I can let him in if you're not there.

Will the rent increase next year?

Tenant: Thanks. Also, while I have you on the phone, I keep meaning **to ask you about the rent. Will there be an increase in the new year?**

Landlord: Yes. **The rent increase this year is 2%. The utilities will stay the same.** You'll get an official notice in your mail slot soon.

Tenant: Okay. That's **reasonable. Thanks for looking after** these problems.

to take care of something/ to solve

Landlord: **Thanks for bringing them to my attention.**

## Practice

Work with your partner. Role-play the dialogue on page 2, substituting the different expressions below. Then switch roles.

1. **Hi. I'm a tenant in Unit #22.**
  - I'm a renter in Unit #5.
  - I rent an apartment here. Unit #3.
2. **Is there a problem?**
  - Is there something I can do for you?
  - How can I help you?
  - Is something wrong?
3. **The furnace is not working.**
  - Our dishwasher is broken.
  - My window won't close.
  - There's a mouse in here.
  - We found some bugs in the bedroom.
  - The toilet won't flush.
  - I have a leaky faucet.
  - I locked myself out.
  - Our neighbours are really loud.
4. **How long has this been a problem?**
  - How long have you been experiencing this?
  - Has it been like this for long?
  - When did this start?
5. We tried a few things, but **nothing is helping.**
  - nothing works
  - we can't fix it
  - we don't know what else to do
6. I can have **a plumber** in on Friday.
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an electrician</li> <li>• pest control</li> <li>• a mechanic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a painter</li> <li>• a locksmith</li> <li>• a repairman</li> </ul>
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7. **Does that work for you?**
  - Will that be okay?
  - Can you wait until then?
  - Is that too late?
  - Is that convenient?
8. **Do I have to be home?**
  - Is it okay if I'm at work?
  - Do I need to be here?
  - Can I leave you a key?
9. I keep meaning to ask you about **the rent.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the electricity bill</li> <li>• our water bill</li> <li>• the cable service</li> <li>• the Internet</li> <li>• the parking rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the flooring</li> <li>• the security</li> <li>• the recreation centre</li> </ul>
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10. That's **reasonable.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acceptable</li> <li>• okay</li> <li>• fair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fine</li> <li>• too much</li> <li>• ridiculous</li> </ul>
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11. **Thanks for looking after these problems.**
  - Thanks for taking care of this.
  - Thanks for sending someone.
  - Thanks for taking this call.
  - Thanks for doing this.
  - I appreciate your help.
12. **Thanks for bringing them to my attention.**
  - Thanks for letting me know.
  - Thanks for telling me about this.
  - Thanks for calling.

## Listening Practice

Listen to two students read the dialogue from page 2. Fill in the missing words as you listen. Listen again. Now look back at page 2 and check your work. Did you fill in the correct words? Did you spell everything correctly?

Landlord: Hello?

Tenant: Hi. I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ in Unit #22.

Landlord: Which building are you in?

Tenant: Uh, 33 John Street.

Landlord: Yep. Okay. Is there a problem?

Tenant: Yes. The \_\_\_\_\_ is not working.

Landlord: Hmm. That's not good. I'll send a technician over there this afternoon.

Tenant: Great! Also, I keep meaning to call about the bathroom toilet. It keeps getting clogged.

Landlord: Oh really? How long has this been a \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Tenant: For about a month. We tried a few things, but nothing is helping.

Landlord: I can have a \_\_\_\_\_ in on Friday. Does that work for you?

Tenant: Friday. Uh, do I have to be home?

Landlord: No. I can let him in if you're not there.

Tenant: Thanks. Also, \_\_\_\_\_ on the phone, I keep meaning to ask you about the \_\_\_\_\_. Will there be an increase in the new year?

Landlord: Yes. The rent increase this year is 2%. The \_\_\_\_\_ will stay the same. You'll get an official notice in your mail slot soon.

Tenant: Okay. That's reasonable. Thanks for looking after these problems.

Landlord: Thanks for bringing them to my attention.



# Review

## Task 1

### LISTEN & ANSWER

Listen to two classmates read the conversation. Then answer the questions.  
Your teacher will tell you if you have to write or say the answers.

1. What is the main reason for the tenant's phone call?

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2. What does the landlord offer to do?

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3. What additional problem does the tenant mention?

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4. What will happen if the tenant is not in the apartment on Friday?

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5. What change will occur in the new year?

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6. How would you describe the landlord's tone?

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## Review cont.

### Task 2

#### QUESTION FORMATION

##### A. Problems & Concerns

Write five problems a tenant might have to talk to a landlord about.

Ex. *My fridge isn't working.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

##### B. Questions

Write five possible questions a landlord might ask a tenant over the phone.

Ex. *Which unit are you in?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 3

#### ROLE-PLAY

Find a partner. Imagine that one of you is the landlord and one of you is a tenant. Use your concerns and questions to do a role-play for your teacher about a few problems the tenant is experiencing.

## Answer Key

### LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students learn and practise using vocabulary and expressions related to rental issues. They have a group discussion and practise writing their own dialogues.

**LEVEL:** Low Int – Int / CLB 3–5

**TIME:** 1–2 hours

**TAGS:** apartment, housing, rentals, landlord, rent, problems, complaints, concerns, renting, CLB, LINC, PBLA

### Pre-Reading

#### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Discuss as a class or in small groups. Answers will vary.

#### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. h | 3. b | 5. e | 7. g | 9. a  |
| 2. c | 4. j | 6. f | 8. d | 10. i |

### Dialogue Reading

Give your students time to read the dialogue in pairs.

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Reading:** IV. Comprehending Information

**Speaking:** III. Getting Things Done

### Practice

Have your students read the dialogue again and practise subbing in some of the different expressions.

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Reading:** IV. Comprehending Information

**Speaking:** III. Getting Things Done

### Listening Practice

Have students complete the dialogue by listening to two students read the completed dialogue from page 2.

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Listening:** I. Interacting with Others,  
IV. Comprehending Information

### Write Your Own Dialogue

Encourage your students to use vocabulary from the model.

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Writing:** II. Reproducing Information

*(continued on the next page...)*



## Answer Key cont.

### Review (Assessment Tasks)

The following tasks can be used for assessment purposes and/or review practice. You can save all of the tasks until the end or assess your students throughout the lesson.

Personalize your own Listening, Writing, and Speaking Task Assessment forms for your students' portfolios by using Assessment Tools in the Resources section:  
<https://esllibrary.com/resources>

#### TASK 1

Have two students read the dialogue from this lesson. Then assign the questions. You can decide if you want your students to say or write the answers.

1. The tenant calls to say that the furnace is not working.
2. The landlord offers to send a technician over this afternoon.
3. The tenant also mentions that the toilet is always getting clogged.
4. If the tenant is not home, the landlord will let the plumber in.
5. The rent will go up 2% (but the utilities will stay the same).
6. The landlord seems kind, helpful, and reasonable. (Answers will vary.)

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Listening:** IV. Comprehending Information

#### TASK 2

Answers will vary. Assess your students' understanding of how to talk to a landlord by having them write common concerns and questions that they learned in this lesson.

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Writing:** II. Reproducing Information

#### TASK 3

Assess two students at a time as they role-play the scenario.

#### CLB Skill Competencies

**Speaking:** I. Interacting with Others,  
 III. Getting Things Done

*(continued on the next page...)*

# Answer Key cont.

## Canadian Language Benchmarks Summary

### OVERVIEW

Stage: 1-2

CLB Range: 3-5\*

Primary Skill Competency: Speaking – III. Getting Things Done

PAGE	TASK	SKILL COMPETENCIES
2	Dialogue Reading	<b>Reading:</b> IV. Comprehending Information <b>Speaking:</b> III. Getting Things Done
3	Practice	<b>Reading:</b> IV. Comprehending Information <b>Speaking:</b> III. Getting Things Done
4	Listening Practice	<b>Listening:</b> I. Interacting with Others, IV. Comprehending Information
5	Write Your Own Dialogue	<b>Writing:</b> II. Reproducing Information
6	Review Task 1 (PBLA)**	<b>Listening:</b> IV. Comprehending Information
7	Review Task 2 (PBLA)	<b>Writing:</b> II. Reproducing Information
7	Review Task 3 (PBLA)	<b>Speaking:</b> I. Interacting with Others, III. Getting Things Done

**\*Note:**

This CLB range is suggested by ESL Library based on the descriptors in the Canadian Language Benchmarks guide: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/language-benchmarks.pdf>

**\*\*Note:**

PBLA refers to portfolio-based learning assessment in the LINC program (though any teacher can use these tasks for review or assessment). Visit our Resources section for Assessment Tools that you can print and personalize for PBLA: <https://esllibrary.com/resources>

(continued on the next page...)

# Answer Key cont.

## Canadian Language Benchmarks Summary cont.

### PROFILES OF ABILITY

The following descriptors from the Canadian Language Benchmarks apply to this lesson and are used with permission. For more detailed information see: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/language-benchmarks.pdf> and visit: <https://www.language.ca/>

BENCHMARK	THE LEARNER CAN:
<b>Speaking</b> (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate basic information using simple sentences about immediate needs and personal experiences. (3)</li> <li>Communicate information about common everyday activities, experiences, wants, and needs. (4)</li> <li>Participate in very short phone calls. (5)</li> </ul>
<b>Listening</b> (3-5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand key words, formulaic phrases, and most short sentences on topics of immediate personal relevance. (3)</li> <li>Understand, with considerable effort, simple formal and informal communication on topics of personal relevance. (4)</li> <li>Identify basic signals in speech for collaboration, turn-taking, and interrupting. (5)</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b> (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write short, simple texts about personal experience and familiar topics or situations related to daily life and experience.</li> </ul>
<b>Reading</b> (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the purpose, main idea, key information, and some details in simple, short texts related to everyday familiar and personally relevant situations and topics.</li> </ul>

