

6 Popular ‘Renter-Friendly’ DIYs That Could Ding Your Security Deposit

by BRITTANY ANAS



Credit: [Melanie Rieders](#)

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If you're renting, you want your place to feel like home—even if your lease is only for a year or less. So, **you start decorating**. You hang artwork. You add shelving. You pick up a paintbrush and, voila, that boring white slab near the living room is now a bona fide statement wall.

But, these easy-peasy **renter-friendly DIY tricks**—while great at infusing personality into your apartment or bringing your rental into the modern era—can actually cause damage to the unit and ding your security deposit. That’s a bummer come move out when you’re expecting a windfall (albeit, it’s your own money), but instead find out hundreds of dollars has been withheld from your security deposit to cover the damage.

Here, real estate experts share some of the DIY tricks renters often rely on to spruce up a space, but that end up eating away at their deposits.

Backsplash

A subway or mosaic tile backsplash may be an easy way to pop a pattern into a kitchen and make it look less sterile, more modern. But, those **peel-and-stick backsplash tiles** can spell trouble, says Colby Hager, the owner of **Capstone Homebuyers** and a property manager in San Antonio.

He’s seen DIY peel-and-stick tiles in apartments that he owns, and cautions that these tiles can be super-sticky, damaging the sheetrock behind them once they’re peeled away.

Command strips

Command strips are a must-have for many renters. They can hang everything from art to kitchen utensils, and can add organizational bliss to a small space. But if you hang something too heavy on them, they can rip off the wall and leave behind holes and damage the walls, cautions Samantha Scalzo, Director and Broker with **S&S Global**, a real estate brokerage in Miami, Florida.

To avoid this from happening, follow the instructions on the Command strips’ packaging and be extra mindful of the weight restrictions. The **large strips** can handle a 24-inch to 36-inch object that weighs up to 16 pounds. The **smaller hanging strips** can only handle up to 4 pounds. Also, be sure that you’re only using Command Hooks on smooth surfaces, and not on popcorn-textured walls, brick, concrete, or wood.



Credit: Cathy Pyle

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Painting in dark colors

Before you paint your rental any color at all, it's a good idea to check with your landlord to determine if it's even allowed. But, you'll definitely want to steer clear of **painting a room in a dark or moody color**, says **David Rosenberger**, a licensed associate real estate broker with Douglas Elliman in NYC.

"Dark colors often require multiple coats of white paint to return a wall to pristine white," he says. If you do paint, ask your landlord what brand and paint color was used originally so that you can return the walls to the way they were once you move out.

Installing dimmer switches

Maybe you want brighter task lighting when you're getting things done around the house, but more relaxed lighting in the evening.

Dimmer switches allow you to lower the brightness of your lights. While this DIY task is a pretty easy one, it does require re-wiring as you switch out the wires from the old outlet with the wires from the dimmer.

If you don't install the dimmers properly, you risk causing electrical problems, Scalzo says. Plus, the dimmers might not work on some of the lights and may cause electrical noise that can interfere with televisions, radios and other devices that share a circuit panel. This is one of the rental tasks you'll want to ask permission to do, and it may be better left to electricians.



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Adding wallpaper

The scenario: You move into an apartment and the walls are bleak. Your landlord told you no hammering nails into the wall. It may be

tempting, but you'll also want to avoid making a statement wall with traditional wallpaper.

“Wallpaper can be messy to remove and it leaves behind a residue,” Marte says. And who has time to be scraping away at that mess when you're on a move-out deadline? Thankfully, there's a solution: **Removeable wallpaper**. When you apply it correctly, it peels away like a sticker so you can have your statement wall and still walk away with your security deposit.

Want your full security deposit back? Of course you do! Here are **23 more things** that could cause damage to your rental and could eat up your security deposit.

Fixing drains

This DIY isn't one that adds to an apartment's aesthetics, per se, but it is a maintenance task renters often try to tackle on their own: Unclogging drains with store-bought drain cleaners. Some drain cleaners can actually harm the pipes, though, explains **Elias Marte**, a New York real estate agent with DJK Residential, because they create heat.

“This heat can warp or melt the pipe, leading to leaks,” he says. Other times, drain cleaners just push the clog further down the drain, which makes it harder to reach and clear away. If you've got a clogged drain, give your landlord a heads up, stat.

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