

Tenant Screening Checklist & Decision Flowchart

1. Understand & Comply With Fair Housing Laws

Follow fair housing guidelines:

- **Treat all applicants equally:**
 - Avoid any form of discrimination or bias during the process of screening tenants.
- **Use consistent screening criteria:**
 - Develop a clear set of qualifications and requirements based on factors like income, rental history, creditworthiness, and references.
- **Advertise responsibly:**
 - Avoid any language, images, or statements that could be interpreted as discriminatory.
 - Describe property features, amenities, and location.
- **Ask legal and objective screening questions:**
 - Avoid inquiries about protected characteristics, family status, or disabilities.
- **Maintain accurate records:**
 - Document interactions, communications, applications, and screening results.
- **Use screening services:**
 - Utilize reputable tenant screening services or credit reporting agencies.

For a more in-depth guide to understanding Fair Housing Laws, check out our article on [Fair Housing Definition: A Comprehensive Guide for Real Estate Agents](#) and [Landlord Tenant Laws by State: Renter's Rights & Compliance](#).

2. Use a Rental Application to Prescreen Tenants

Include the following items in your rental application:

- Personal and contact information
- Employment history
- Income verification
- References
- Rental history
- Consent for credit and background checks
- Additional information (*questions about pets, vehicle information, or ask any specific questions that might help in determining their eligibility*)

Safeguard sensitive information

- Personal and contact information
- Employment history
- Income verification
- References
- Rental history

Download our free rental applications in [Rental Application Forms: What to Include & Free Templates](#).

3. Run a Credit Report & Background Check

- **Credit score:** _____
 - Higher than 700 Yes No
- **Payment history:**
 - Late payments Yes No
 - Delinquencies Yes No
 - Accounts in collections Yes No
- **Debt-to-income ratio:** _____

- **Outstanding debts:**

- > Debts Yes No
- > Judgements Yes No

- **Criminal records:**

- > Major convictions Yes No
- > Minor convictions Yes No

4. Verify Income & Employment

- Determine a tenant income qualifier
- Contact employers
- Requesting pay stubs and other income documents
- Review employment contracts

Find all essential documents here: [10 Proof of Income Documents Landlords Use to Verify Income](#)

5. Check Previous Addresses, Landlord & Eviction History

- **Eviction history:**

- > Previous evictions Yes No
- > Multiple evictions Yes No

- **Previous landlord questions:**

- > Can you confirm the applicant's tenancy at your property?

- > How long did the applicant reside at your property?

- > Did the applicant consistently pay rent on time? Were there any instances of late payments?

- How would you describe the applicant's communication and cooperation during their tenancy?

- Did the applicant maintain the property in good condition?

- Were there any reported issues or complaints from neighbors or other tenants related to the applicant?

- Did the applicant provide proper notice when planning to move out?

- Were there any lease violations, disputes, or conflicts during their tenancy?

- Would you consider renting to this applicant again in the future?

6. Interview Applicants & Ask Screening Questions

- Set up an in-person or virtual interview with a potential tenant

- Ask set screen questions:

- Do you have any pets? If so, what type, breed, and weight?

- Are you willing to comply with the property's rules and regulations?

- Can you pay the lease application fee?

- Have you ever broken a rental agreement?

Are you able to meet the monthly rent obligations?

Do you smoke?

What date would you like to move in?

Why are you moving?

Check for red flags during interviews

Unusual behavior

Ambiguous responses

Inconsistent rental history

Unwillingness to provide consent for background checks

Impractical expectations

7. Accept or Reject the Applicants After Screening

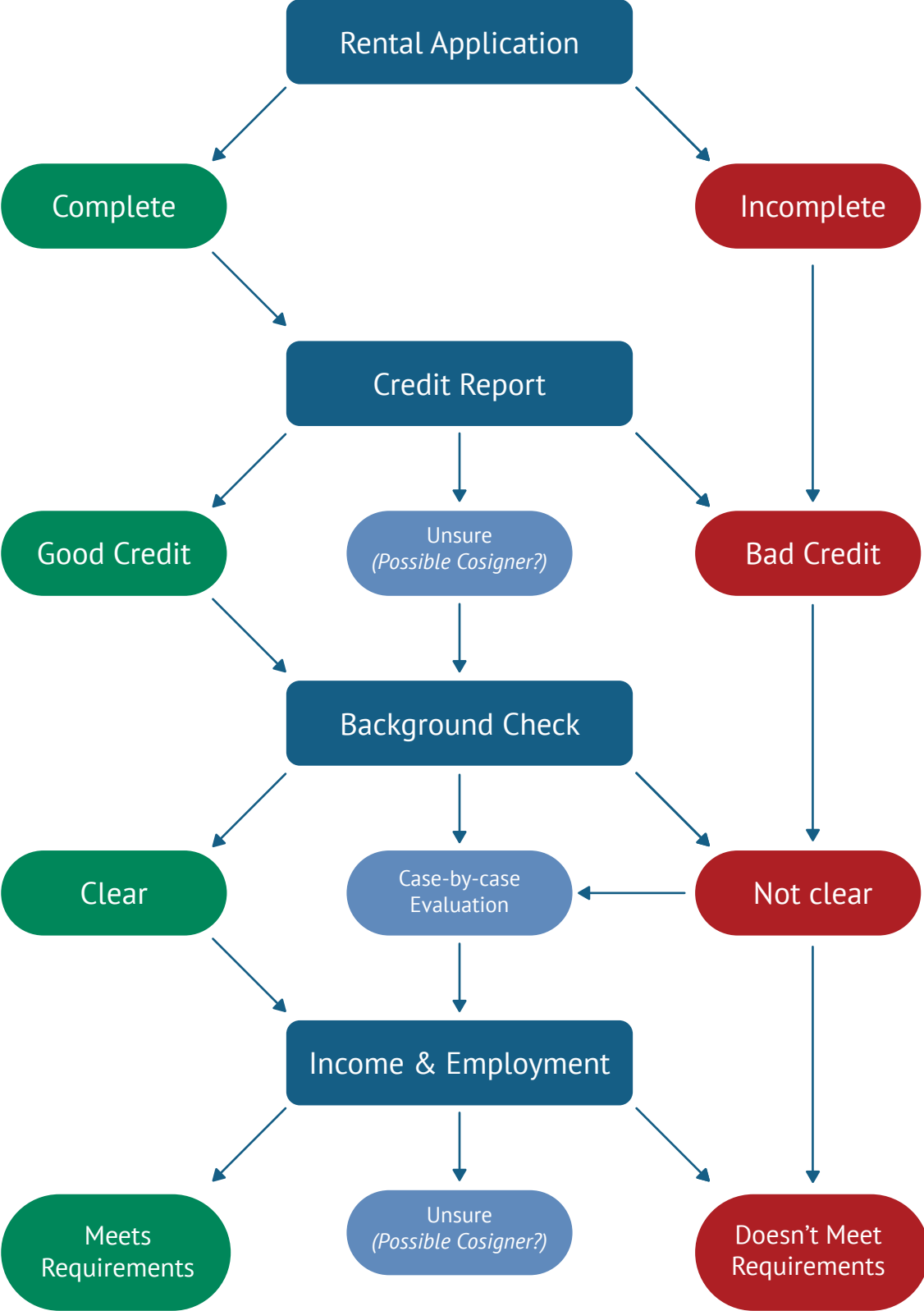
Determine acceptance or rejection by reviewing your criteria:

- **Sufficient income:** Yes No
- **Stable employment:** Yes No
- **Verifiable income:** Yes No
- **Satisfactory credit:** Yes No
- **Clean criminal background:** Yes No
- **Positive rental history:** Yes No

Accept: Yes No

- Accepted:** send lease and follow-up documents
- Rejected:** send a rejection letter, with reasoning
 - Their income can't support the rent
 - Their credit is too low, or payment history is poor across several accounts
 - They have a criminal history that indicates a potential risk
 - Employment is unverifiable, they have too little work history, or the employer indicates workplace trouble
 - Prior residence research turns up evictions, judgments for property damage, unpaid rent, or problems with neighbors or law enforcement

Decision Flowchart



>> continued on next page

