



Illegal lockout / self-help eviction complaint letter (NYC)

[Your name]

[Rental address, unit]

[Email] · [Phone]

[Date]

[Landlord / property manager name]

[Landlord address]

Re: Illegal lockout at [rental address, unit] — demand for immediate restoration of access

Dear [Landlord name],

On [date], I was locked out of my home at the above address without any prior notice of a court proceeding and without a warrant of eviction. [Describe what happened — e.g., "the locks had been changed," "my belongings were removed from the unit and placed on the curb," "the electricity/water had been shut off to force me out."]

This is illegal. Under New York law, a landlord may remove a tenant from possession only through a court proceeding that results in a judgment and a warrant of eviction executed by a sheriff or marshal (RPAPL Article 7, §§ 711, 713). Self-help measures — changing locks, removing belongings, shutting off utilities, or otherwise blocking access — are prohibited regardless of how much rent is owed or how the tenancy ended.

Because I was removed in a forcible or unlawful manner, I am entitled to recover treble (triple) damages from you under RPAPL § 853, as amended by the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019. Unlawful eviction of a residential occupant in New York City is also a class A misdemeanor under NYC Administrative Code § 26-521, punishable by a fine of \$1,000 to \$10,000 per violation and/or up to one year in jail, and the NYPD and/or the Department of Buildings/HPD can assist in immediately restoring my occupancy.

I am demanding that you restore my access to the unit and return any belongings that were removed no later than [date/time — e.g., "today" or "within 24 hours"]. If access is not restored, I will call 911/NYPD to report an illegal lockout and request assistance restoring occupancy, and I will pursue all remedies available to me, including treble damages, a court order restoring possession, and referral for criminal prosecution.

Please contact me immediately at [phone/email] to confirm restoration of my access.

Sincerely,

[Your name]