

FILING AN EVICTION LAWSUIT

JURISDICTION:

An eviction case is a lawsuit to recover possession of real property under Chapter 24 of the Texas Property Code, often by a landlord against a tenant. A claim for rent may be joined with an eviction case if the amount of rent due and unpaid is not more than \$20,000, excluding statutory interest and court costs but including attorney fees, if any. Eviction cases are governed by Rules 500-507 and 510 Party V of the Rules of Civil Procedure.

VENUE:

Suit for possession of property, precinct in which all or part of the property is located.
Suit for rent in which all or part of the property is located.

NOTICE:

Refer to Step 2 of the "Self-Help Information Packet" attached.

FILING SUIT:

The **responsibility for filling out your petition and civil case information sheet rests with you**. Court clerks will assist you if you have *procedural questions*. Please state the tenant's full address including the apartment number. List any known work address or other address where the tenant may be located for service. The filing fee is (\$54.00) and the service fee is (\$90.00) **per defendant** to be served in Caldwell County, for a total of **(\$144.00)** When filing, the Landlord should bring the following:

1. Copy of the lease (if you have one);
2. Copy of the Written Notice to Vacate; and **\$144.00** (if only one person being served).

****Payment must be in the form of a MONEY ORDER or CASHIER'S CHECK made payable to CALDWELL COUNTY TREASURER**** **Effective 01/01/2026**

CITATION:

The Constable/Sheriff will serve each tenant with a citation, based on the information you provide to the Court. The citation will inform the Defendant of the date and time of the hearing and that a Default Judgment may be rendered if he/she does not appear at the appointed time.

REPRESENTATION:

In eviction suits, either of the parties may represent themselves or be represented by their authorized agents in justice court or be represented by an attorney.

HEARING:

Always arrive at least 10 minutes prior to trial and check in with the clerk. Be sure to have a copy of your lease, the notice to vacate and payment records or any records pertaining to the case.

If the defendant **does not appear** at the Hearing:

- A. The plaintiff will present their case to the Judge;
- B. If the Judge rules in the Plaintiff's favor, a default will be granted.

If the defendant **does appear** at the Hearing:

- A. The Judge will hear both sides;
- B. The Judge will render a judgment;

If the defendant does not vacate the property or appeal the case within 5 days after the judgment; the plaintiff may request a Writ of Possession. The cost of the Writ of Possession is **\$250.00**. (Payment: Money order or Cashier's check payable to *Caldwell County Treasurer*)

Eviction Lawsuits may be dismissed only in open court or by written request. A "Motion to Dismiss" form is included in this packet.

IF YOU HAVE PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE COURT

**LEGAL QUESTIONS WILL NOT BE
ANSWERED BY THIS OFFICE**

CAUSE NO. _____

_____	§	IN THE JUSTICE COURT
PLAINTIFF	§	
	§	
v.	§	PRECINCT 2
	§	
_____	§	
DEFENDANT	§	CALDWELL COUNTY, TEXAS

PETITION: EVICTION CASE

COMPLAINT: Plaintiff hereby sues the following Defendant(s) *(include name, email address, DOB, and last 3 digits of DL & SSN, if known)* : _____

for eviction from Plaintiff's premises (including storerooms and parking areas) located in the above precinct. The address of the property is:

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Street Address	Unit No. (if any)	City	State	Zip

GROUND FOR EVICTION: Plaintiff alleges the following grounds for eviction:

- Unpaid rent.** Defendant(s) failed to pay rent for the following time period(s): _____
The amount of rent claimed as of the date of filing is: \$_____. Defendant has or has not been late/delinquent in paying rent before the month in which notice was given. Plaintiff reserves the right to orally amend the amount at trial to include rent due from the date of filing through the date of trial.
- Other lease violations.** Defendant(s) breached the terms of the lease (other than by failing to pay rent) as follows: _____
- Holdover.** Defendant(s) are unlawfully holding over by failing to vacate at the end of the rental term or periodic tenancy, which ended on _____, 20__.
- Squatter.** Defendant(s) never had a right to possess the property and are unlawfully occupying the premises after a demand to surrender possession given on _____, 20__. Plaintiff has or has not attached a Motion for Summary Disposition under Rule 510.10.
- Expiration of Tenancy at Will or by Sufferance.** Defendant(s) had no lease agreement and have failed to vacate the premises after being given a termination notice, if applicable, and a demand to surrender possession given on _____, 20__.

PRE-SUIT NOTICE: Plaintiff has given Defendant(s) a notice to vacate notice to pay or vacate (according to Property Code § 24.005(f-3) or (f-4)) and demand for possession. Such notice was delivered on _____, 20____ by this method: _____

SUIT FOR RENT: Plaintiff does or does not include a suit for unpaid rent.

ATTORNEY'S FEES: Plaintiff will be or will not be seeking applicable attorney's fees. The attorney's name, address, phone and fax numbers are:

IMMEDIATE POSSESSION BOND: If Plaintiff has filed a bond for immediate possession, Plaintiff requests that: (1) the court set the amount of the bond; (2) the court approve the bond; and (3) proper notices, as required by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, are given to Defendant(s).

SERVICE OF CITATION: Service is requested on Defendant(s) by: personal service at home or work, or by delivery to a person over the age of 16 years at Defendant's usual place of residence. If required, Plaintiff requests alternative service as allowed by the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure. Home or work addresses other than the premises where Defendant(s) may be served are:

Plaintiff knows of no other home or work addresses of Defendant(s) in this county.

RELIEF: Plaintiff requests that Defendant(s) is served with the citation and that Plaintiff is awarded a judgment against Defendant(s) for: possession of the premises, including removal of Defendant(s) and Defendant's possessions from the premises, unpaid rent, if set forth above, attorney's fees if applicable, court costs, and interest on the above sums at the rate stated in the lease, or if not so stated, at the statutory rate for judgments.

I hereby request a jury trial. The fee is \$22 and must be paid at least 3 days before trial.

SERVICE BY EMAIL: (Normally, documents in this case are sent by mail. If it is easier for you, you can choose to get some of the documents sent by email. If you choose to get documents by email, you must have an email account where you can receive, open, and view large attachments, and it is important that you check this email account every day. **Even if you receive some documents by email, you will still receive some documents about the case by mail or personal service, so you must not ignore any documents from the court or other parties received by mail or personal service.**)

Yes, I would like to receive documents related to this case by email at this email address:

No, I do not want to receive any documents by email.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION:

Hearing by Phone Call: *(When a hearing happens by phone call, you will be able to talk to and hear the judge, Defendant, or any witnesses, but you will not be able to see them. Copies of any evidence to be used must be exchanged by the parties and sent to the judge before the hearing.)*

- Yes, I am able to have any hearings in this case, except a jury trial, by phone call with the judge and Defendant and understand that I must have a phone to use on the date and time of the hearing.
- No, I am not able to have hearings by phone call.

Hearing by Video Conference: *(When a hearing happens by video conference, you can hear, see, and talk to the judge, Defendant, and any witnesses. You will be able to see any evidence presented during the hearing. You will need to have a computer, a smartphone, or tablet that has a camera feature. You will also need access to the internet to be able to have a video conference.)*

- Yes, I am able to have any hearings in this case, except a jury trial, by video conference. I understand that I am responsible for having the equipment and internet access needed to participate in a video conference on the date and time of the hearing.
- No, I am not able to have hearings by video conference.

NOTE: Your responses in this section do not guarantee that hearings will be held remotely, but rather they help the court know how you are able to participate.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature of Plaintiff

Signature of Agent or Attorney, if any

Printed Name: _____

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Fax: _____

State Bar No.: _____

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me on _____, 20____.

CLERK OF THE JUSTICE COURT OR NOTARY



FORM 126 – SERVICEMEMBER’S CIVIL RELIEF ACT

CAUSE/DOCKET NO. _____

**AFFIDAVIT
50 USC Sec. 520**

Plaintiff being duly sworn on oath deposes* and says that defendant(s) is (are)

(CHECK ONE)

- not in the military
- not on active duty in the military and/or
- not in a foreign country on military service
- on active military duty and/or is subject to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act of 2003
- has waived his/her rights under the Servicemembers Civil Act of 2003
- military status is unknown at this time

PLAINTIFF

(Select the applicable title under the signature for the jurat below)

Subscribed and sworn to before me no this the ____ day of _____, 20__.

NOTARY / CLERK

Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

Clerk of the Justice Court

SEAL

***Penalty for making or using false affidavit – a person who makes or uses an affidavit knowing it to be false, shall be fined as provided in Title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not more than one year or both.**

Self-Help Legal Information Packet: *Filing an Eviction Case*



Self-Help Legal Information Packets are provided for the benefit of justice courts and individuals seeking access to justice through the court system. They do not constitute legal advice, and the court is not responsible for the accuracy of the information contained in the packet.

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- 3) The person was a **tenant at will** (meaning there was no set time when the lease would be over), **and** there was no rent due under the agreement, you gave a proper notice to vacate, and the person didn't leave; or
- 4) The person entered the property without permission by you or someone authorized to give permission like a tenant, or someone else in possession of the property, and refuses to leave immediately upon demand (**squatter**).

You do **not** need to file an eviction case if:

- 1) You are excluding someone from your property who was not renting the property or using it as their residence (such as an overnight visitor);
- 2) The person has already permanently vacated the property. If they have vacated but still owe you back rent, you can file a Small Claims Case to recover the back rent (see the information packet on ***How to File a Small Claims Case*** for details).

What Do I Do Before Filing an Eviction Case?

Step 1: Breach of Lease or Notice of Termination of Lease

If the defendant has a written lease agreement or pays you rent, you cannot just evict them from the property for no reason. If they have a lease with a set end date, they are entitled to stay in the property until that date, unless they don't pay their rent or violate some other term of the lease.

A **termination notice** is required if either:

- 1) The tenant has a written lease that they did not breach, and that lease does not have a set end date; or
- 2) They do not have a written lease, but there is an agreement that they pay you rent.

The termination notice is a written notice telling them the day that their lease now ends. This notice must be at least one rental payment period. Most agreements without set end dates are "month-to-month" agreements, so you would need to give at least one month's notice. For example, you could give a

- 2) Mailing it to the premises, addressed to the defendant,
- 3) Delivering to the inside of the premises, in a conspicuous (prominent or noticeable) place, or
- 4) If you and the tenant have agreed in writing, electronic communication, including email or other electronic means.

You **must** give a notice to vacate or pay, or a notice to vacate, even if you already gave a termination notice setting a lease end date. In the example above, you gave a termination notice on January 27th telling the tenant the lease will end on February 28th. If the tenant is still there on March 1st, you would be required now to give them notice to vacate and allow the period in that notice to run out before filing an eviction case.

If the person is a squatter, you can give them an oral notice to vacate the property immediately. If they fail to leave, you can file an eviction at that time. There may also be other options available to you.

Where Do I File an Eviction Case?

Eviction cases **must** be filed in the in the justice court in the precinct and county where the property is located. If you file the case in any other precinct, the court must dismiss your case, and you do not get a refund of the filing fees.

The court may be able to help you determine the proper precinct to file in. Other resources you may use include precinct maps or the elections office. It is ultimately **your responsibility** to file your case in the proper location!

How Do I File an Eviction Case?

The first step in filing a case is to file a **petition**, which is a form that says who you are suing, why you are suing them, how much you are suing them for, and provides contact information. An eviction petition must contain information about what the reason is for eviction (nonpayment of rent, they stayed past the

of Inability to Afford Payment of Court Costs form – the court **must** provide this form for you.

You must swear to the information that you provide on this form and can face legal consequences if you do not fill it out to the best of your ability. Fill out the form completely and truthfully!

Do I Need a Lawyer to File a Case?

While you are allowed to have a lawyer in an eviction case, the rules and procedures are designed to be simple and straightforward, allowing people to seek justice without needing to hire a lawyer.

If you do not have a lawyer, the judge may allow you to be assisted or represented in court by a family member or other person, such as a property manager.

The court is required to make the Rules of Civil Procedure available to you at no cost. Rule 510 contains the rules that apply to Eviction Cases.

The court is **not** allowed to give you advice on whether you should file a case, who you should file a case against, or what steps you should take to win your case or collect your judgment.

Questions the court **can** answer for you are questions like “What do I need to do to have a jury trial?” or “How many days do I have to file an appeal?”

Questions the court **cannot** answer for you are questions like “Is it a good idea to get a jury for this case?” or “Am I going to win?”

If, after reviewing these materials and the rules, you still are not sure what to do, you may talk to an attorney.

What Happens After I File an Eviction Case?

The court will generate the **citation**, which tells the defendant that they are being sued and what day the trial will be on, which has to be at least 10 and not more

To fight a motion for summary disposition, the defendant must file a response within 4 days after receiving notice of the motion setting out supporting facts and providing any applicable documents that the defendant is relying on.

What if We Reach an Agreement?

If the case goes to trial, usually there will be a “winner” and a “loser.” resulting in someone being happy and someone being unhappy. To reduce that risk, parties will often come to a **settlement**, or an agreement on how to resolve the case. Settlement agreements should be in writing. They should also be signed by both parties or their attorneys. If you reach a new agreement with the defendant allowing them to remain in the property, you will need to file a **nonsuit**, which is a request for your case to be dismissed. If the defendant then breaches that new agreement, you will have to start over from the beginning with a new notice to vacate and a new case.

Can I Have a Jury Trial?

Yes. Either side in an eviction case may request a jury trial. You must make a request in writing to the court at least 3 days before the date set for trial, or 3 days after the day the defendant is served, whichever is later, and pay a jury fee of \$22.

If no one requests a jury, the trial will be heard by only the judge, which is called a bench trial.

What if I Need More Time for Trial?

If you need more time for trial or have a conflict with the date that the trial is scheduled, you can file a motion (request) for **postponement**, also called a **continuance**. You should explain in writing why you need the postponement. In eviction cases, the case can't be postponed for more than 7 days unless both sides agree in writing.

information to the court about things such as how and when you delivered the notice to vacate before the court can award you a judgment.

To get a default judgment, you will also need to provide the last known address of the defendant to the court in writing, as well as an affidavit stating whether or not the defendant is on active duty in the U.S. military (or that you do not know if they are), and how you know that they are or not, or why you do not know if they are.

You can verify military service at <https://scra.dmdc.osd.mil/>.

What Happens if I Lose My Eviction Case?

If the judgment is in favor of the defendant, they will be able to remain in possession of the property. If you wish, you can file an **appeal**, which is a request for the county court to hear the eviction case over again. You can file an appeal within 5 days of the judgment. The 5 days include weekends and holidays. If the fifth day is a weekend, holiday, or day the court closes for all or part of the day, you have until the next business day to file your appeal.

To appeal, you will have to file either:

- 1) An **appeal bond** (a promise from you and another person, called a **surety**, to pay the bond amount to the defendant if you don't pursue the appeal) in an amount set by the court;
- 2) A cash deposit in an amount set by the court, which may be awarded to the defendant if you don't pursue the appeal; or
- 3) A Statement of Inability to Afford Payment of Court Costs if you cannot afford an appeal bond or cash deposit.

If you appeal with an appeal bond or a cash deposit, you must pay a filing fee of \$54. You must also send notice of the appeal to the defendant within five days of filing it with the court.

Once your appeal is filed with the county court, you will be required to pay a separate filing fee or file a Statement of Inability to Afford Payment of Court Costs

To check military status – <https://scra.dmdc.osd.mil/>

Texas Justice Court Training Center information for self-represented litigants –
www.tjctc.org/SRL

Office of Court Administration Self-Represented Litigant Site -
www.txcourts.gov/programs-services/self-help/self-represented-litigants/

State Bar of Texas Information, including Legal Information and Low or No-Cost
Legal Assistance - www.texasbar.com, and then click on “For The Public.”

Forms and Information, including for other types of cases –
www.texaslawhelp.org