

THAILAND PLAINLY • FREE FIELD GUIDE

Move-In Photos, Meters and Utility Questions: A Thailand Rental Handover You Can Reconstruct

An evidence-first rental handover: photographs, utilities, written promises, and a first-bill reconciliation you can actually perform.

Inside: specific examples, source-checked official guidance, reusable checklists and practical methods — no account or purchase required.

Renter's practical handover companion
31 October 2026 · Original article · TH-PG-04

Free reader edition. This guide explains decisions and evidence, not personal legal, financial, banking or immigration advice. Check official pages and the real terms applicable to you.

THAILAND PLAINLY • TH-PG-04 • FREE READER EDITION

Intended reader: A person moving into a rented room, condominium, or apartment in Thailand, particularly someone who cannot yet read Thai bills confidently.

At 5:40 on a rainy afternoon, you are standing in a new apartment with a key in one hand and your phone in the other. The air-conditioner starts. The shower runs. The agent points at a meter in a service cupboard and says the figures will be sorted out later. There are five minutes before everyone leaves.

This is the moment to make a small, quiet record. It will be much harder to reconstruct the state of a room—or which day's electricity you paid for—after you have unpacked, used the appliances and forgotten the conversation.

You do not need an elaborate inspection report. You need to answer four practical questions with evidence: **What condition did I receive? What did the meters show? Which charges belong to which period? Who agreed to handle a problem?** A handful of well-chosen photos and a short written acknowledgment can answer most of them.

This article gives you a working handover method. It does **not** promise that a particular photograph automatically proves legal liability, that every building has a separately billed meter, or that a landlord's account is the same as the utility's account. Those are things to establish, not assume.

1. Build one dated handover record, not a chaotic camera roll

Start a note headed **Address / unit / date / names present**. Include the full unit designation used in your agreement, the time of handover, the name and role of the person providing access, and how to send that person a written follow-up. If you are dealing with a property manager rather than the owner, record that distinction. Do not photograph other residents, their documents, or common-area access codes unnecessarily.

Take a wide photograph of each room before photographing any detail. For a kitchen, a useful sequence is one wide shot showing the layout, a second showing the counter and sink, and close-ups of an existing chip or leak. With a wide shot, a close-up of a scratch can be located later; without it, the image could have come from several surfaces. Photograph the floor where furniture will soon hide it, the bathroom around the shower and toilet, ceilings below possible leaks, window seals, doorframes and the main appliances.

Do not try to collect a hundred pictures. For each existing defect, record a **location, observable condition and severity in everyday words**, for example: “Bedroom, left window, 18 cm dark damp patch below frame; wall dry to touch; no cause identified.” The last phrase matters. A dark mark may indicate old staining, new moisture, surface dirt or something else. You are documenting what you see, not diagnosing a building.

The first few minutes also reveal what cannot be established visually. You may hear an air-conditioner rattle without knowing its cause. You may see water collect under the sink only when the tap is running. Make a ten-second video showing the tap being turned on and the water appearing, rather than stating that the plumbing is defective in a way that requires professional judgment. Use your own narration if helpful: “October 31, under kitchen sink, water visible after tap runs.” A moving image supplements a photograph; it does not replace a written request for action.

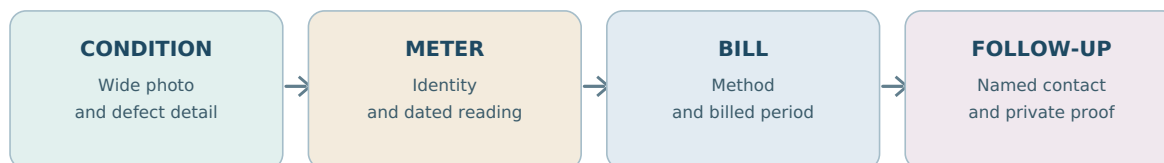
If a representative discourages photos, avoid an argument at the door. Ask what documentation process they prefer, keep a factual note of the limitation, and request a joint written condition sheet. Do not enter a locked technical area or tamper with seals for a photograph.

The three-image rule for a disputed item

For a specific issue, preserve (1) **context**, (2) **detail**, and (3) **identifying evidence**, where safe: an appliance label, a room feature or the meter identification printed beside the reading. Never share personal identifying details, Wi-Fi credentials, or someone else's account number in a public review.

For example, a picture of a cracked air-conditioner cover is more useful when a second frame shows which of the two units it belongs to. A photograph of a water meter without its serial number might be impossible to match to the apartment later. If the serial is accessible, include it in a private file shared only with the authorized manager, not social media.

Four links in a reconstructable handover



Original reader diagram: each box names a separate check, not a guarantee that a payment or tenancy is valid.

2. Find out which meter is actually yours

“Electricity is charged by the meter” sounds precise but leaves essential questions unanswered. Is the building billed by a public utility directly? Does it use a master meter and divide costs among units? Is there a privately managed submeter for this apartment? What counts as one unit, and who takes the readings?

Ask the manager to show the meter **serving this unit**, not simply a meter near it. Record the visible meter number or identifying label, the numeric display, and the date/time. If the meter cycles through several displays, ask the authorized representative which reading is used for billing. An electronic meter can show data other than cumulative energy use; a single number on a screen is not automatically the monthly billable quantity. Do not reset, open or test a meter yourself.

In much of Thailand the **Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA)** provides electricity services; the **Metropolitan Electricity Authority (MEA)** serves the metropolitan area. The agencies operate different customer channels. PEA's official customer site and Smart Plus app provide bill and usage services; MEA has its own official channels. Your building may still bill you through its management

company even when the property ultimately draws power from a public utility. See the source directory below for official entry points. The correct practical question is not just “Is this PEA or MEA?” but “Who issues *my* bill, against which meter, using which method?”

Apply the same logic to water. The Metropolitan Waterworks Authority (MWA) and Provincial Waterworks Authority (PWA) offer separate public services. PWA's official customer guide describes scheduled meter reading and notes that customers can inquire about readings they question. But it does not establish how a particular private condominium apportions water charges. Do not conflate the authority's public billing method with a building's internal billing system.

A simple handover entry looks like this:

Field to record	Example (fictional; not a real account)
Unit / service	Room B-602, electricity
Meter identity	Submeter label B-602-E; utility account relationship unconfirmed
Reading	18,274.0 kWh shown on cumulative display
Captured	31 October, 17:52 local time
Present	Tenant and property manager
Basis of billing	To be confirmed in writing: direct utility bill or building invoice
Open question	Who pays for usage between previous tenant's departure and this handover?

If the display is obscured or inaccessible, record **“reading not available at handover”** rather than guessing. Ask the manager to send a dated photograph and explain how it will be verified against the first invoice.

3. Separate a meter reading from a price

A photographed meter can help establish the starting quantity. It cannot tell you the full price without the rate structure, fees, taxes, billing period and who invoices you. This difference can be illustrated without pretending to know your tariff.

Worked example (invented numbers for teaching only). Your entry photograph shows electricity at **18,274.0 kWh**. A later verified cumulative reading shows **18,323.0 kWh**. The difference is **49.0 kWh**. If the two readings are from the same correctly identified meter and there was no reset, this is a quantity calculation, **not** a baht amount. You still need the agreed and legally applicable billing method. An invoice may include additional components; the meter difference alone does not calculate your total payment.

For a fictional water meter, **613 m³ at entry** and **620 m³ at a later date** is a **7 m³** difference. Once again, you have a quantity, not proof of the final charge. Confirm that the reading dates correspond to the invoiced period. A calendar month, a utility reading cycle and a lease anniversary can have different boundaries.

There is a further reason to avoid copied price tables: tariff and regulatory conditions can change. PEA published a residential tariff information update dated **11 September 2026**, with September 2026 billing implications. The notice distinguishes certain residential energy rates from separate service fees, adjustment components and VAT. That is a reminder to check the current official tariff and the specific account classification—not permission to apply one example tariff to every building. [PEA official notice](#).

Six utility questions to ask in writing

1. **Who issues the invoice?** The named electricity/water authority, the juristic person or building management, or the landlord?
2. **Which meter serves this unit?** Ask for its displayed number or written submeter identifier. If utilities are shared, ask how allocation works.
3. **What exactly was the opening reading and when was it taken?** Request a dated image or jointly signed entry, and any adjustment for the gap between the previous occupant and your arrival.
4. **What is the calculation method?** Ask for the rate or tariff source, units, fees, taxes, any minimum, and the billing interval. Do not equate an advertised per-unit number with the entire charge.
5. **Where can a discrepancy be challenged?** Identify a real person or official customer service route, required documentation and time frame under your actual contract.
6. **What happens at move-out?** Decide now how the closing readings, final invoices, adjustments and any deposit reconciliation will be documented.

The answers deserve a written message even if the agent has explained them clearly in conversation. If the building uses a fixed fee for water or includes utilities in rent, do not force a per-meter calculation where none is agreed; document the actual arrangement.

4. Test the room safely, and distinguish function from fault

Make a short function check while a representative is present. Switch on permitted lights and the air-conditioner, test available water taps and flushing, check that doors and windows lock normally, and test ordinary outlets only with a safe appliance you own or a suitable tester operated appropriately. Never remove socket covers, open an electrical panel, or attempt a dangerous test to prove a point. If you smell burning, see sparks, or suspect exposed wiring, stop and ask building staff or emergency services for appropriate help.

Record outcomes in neutral language. “Bedroom air-conditioner runs but makes a repeated tapping sound” is an observation. “Air-conditioner compressor is failing” is a technical diagnosis. “Shower drain was slow during a one-minute test” is useful. “Plumbing not up to code” is a conclusion you may not be qualified to make.

Ask what appliances are included, which are owner-supplied, and whose job it is to service them. A room advertisement may show appliances that are not listed in the inventory. Put their presence and condition on the handover record. For a furnished unit, photograph the mattress, sofa edges, table surface, curtains and existing marks before your belongings cover them. Record the number of working keys, access cards and remotes, but do not publish photographs that reveal key-cut patterns or security codes.

A short inspection order that works under time pressure

First five minutes: room-wide photographs, entrance door/window condition, any active water leak, the electricity/water reading that can be safely seen.

Next ten minutes: appliances, taps, toilet, lights, walls and floors, inventory of keys and furnishings, remaining defects. Ask the manager to demonstrate any unusual controls. If something cannot be checked because a service is disconnected, mark it **“not testable today”** and arrange a later check rather than calling it working.

Before leaving the room together: compare the defect list aloud, assign the immediate safety issues, decide the next action and confirm a follow-up contact. Send the dated record soon afterward through an agreed channel and retain delivery evidence.

5. Turn a verbal promise into an action someone can complete

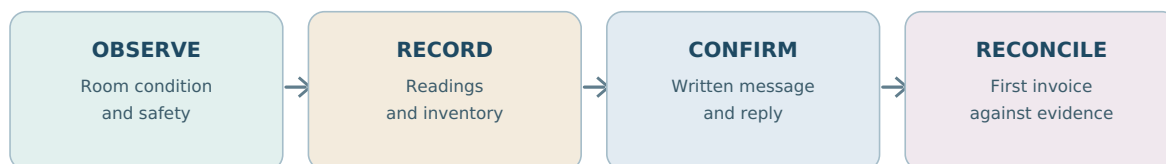
“Will fix later” is difficult to use. Replace it with a message that identifies **the issue, the observed evidence, a safe interim condition, who will respond and when you should check back**. If the promised timing is not yet known, write “date to be confirmed” rather than fabricating one.

For a non-urgent air-conditioner noise, this might read:

Thank you for handing over Unit B-602 today. Our joint inspection noted repeated tapping from the bedroom air-conditioner when running. The attached 12-second video records the sound; it does not establish the cause. Please confirm who will inspect it and the proposed date. I will leave the unit unused if you advise that continued use may be unsafe.

For a visible leak near an electrical outlet, the language should be more urgent and conservative: notify management immediately, avoid touching affected equipment or standing water, and follow qualified safety instructions. Do not use the opportunity to create a dramatic inspection video.

A good handover record is cooperative, not accusatory. It can prevent a reasonable manager from spending hours searching for the history of an old stain, and it helps an honest tenant distinguish prior wear from something newly damaged. If the manager later supplies an entry condition sheet, compare it with your own observations before signing. Add a written qualification if an item is missing or inaccurately described. Never sign a claim that something was tested if it was not.

A short handover-to-first-bill timeline

Original reader diagram: each box names a separate check, not a guarantee that a payment or tenancy is valid.

6. When a first bill does not match the record

Suppose a building invoice arrives with a higher opening reading than your photograph. Avoid two immediate leaps: the manager must be dishonest, or your photograph must be conclusive. Start by checking whether the image shows the same meter and register as the invoice. Ask for the meter ID, initial and closing figures, dates, units, applicable rates and any shared or fixed charges. Some displays cycle through several values; an image of a different screen is not a counterexample to the invoice.

Then make a two-column reconciliation:

Evidence you have	Verification you need
Photo labelled B-602-E, 18,274.0	Does the bill use B-602-E or another meter?
Capture time 31 October, 17:52	What is the invoice's start date/time?
Later reading 18,323.0	Is this the same register and unit?
49.0 kWh calculated difference	What fees, adjustments and tariff apply?
Lease starts 31 October	Does the manager allocate pre-handover use separately?

Ask for a **corrected itemized statement or an explanation**. Keep your communication private. Do not put an individual's full name, utility account number, identity document or address into an online dispute post. For a direct public-utility account, use that authority's official customer service route. For a building-issued invoice, ask the building or landlord for the billing basis first; the public authority may not have an account under your name.

The **Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB)** published an official explainer on **8 June 2026** about standard residential rental contracts and linked the Contract Committee's **B.E. 2568 (2025)** notification and a model contract. The June 2026 webpage is **an explanatory publication, not a claim that the contract rules first took effect that day**. It is important to ask whether *your particular lessor and lease* are within the notification's scope; do not assume that a private individual renting out one unit must follow every condition applied to a regulated rental business. See the [OCPB 8 June 2026 explainer](#).

If a tenancy-related consumer complaint remains unresolved after you obtain the contract, meter basis, dates and supporting records, OCPB publishes an [official online consumer complaint service](#) and the **1166** contact number. The portal describes how to submit and track a consumer complaint; it does **not** guarantee that a particular private-rental dispute will fall within its jurisdiction or be resolved in the tenant's favour. Verify eligibility and instructions from OCPB, and keep sensitive records out of public posts. The notification, the individual contract and qualified local advice are more authoritative for disputed legal rights than this general article. Our practical method is deliberately about **recording the evidence** before legal questions arise.

7. A one-screen handover template

Copy this into a private note and fill it out before the room feels familiar. It is a practical prompt, not an official inspection form.

THAILAND RENTAL MOVE-IN RECORD

Property / unit: _____

Agreement start: _____

Handover date/time: _____

Representative / role: _____

Agreed contact channel: _____

CONDITION: kitchen / bath / bedroom / windows / doors / furnishings

Pre-existing issue 1: location; observation; image reference; agreed action

Pre-existing issue 2: location; observation; image reference; agreed action

Not testable at handover: _____

ELECTRICITY: provider or building; meter ID; display; reading; date/time

WATER: provider or building; meter ID; display; reading; date/time

If shared/fixed: actual agreed allocation or fee _____

Opening amounts or unpaid period to reconcile: _____

Keys / remotes / cards received: _____

Safety issue requiring immediate notice: _____

Other issues / response owner / follow-up date: _____

Message and evidence sent to: _____ at _____

Written acknowledgment received? yes / no / pending

Do not email the complete record and all identity data to a new contact address that the agent texts you without verification. Confirm the recipient through the agreement or a previously verified management channel. Keep an unedited copy of the original photographs, a dated exported copy of the note, and the subsequent message thread. If you make a revised version, date the revision instead of silently changing what you recorded at handover.

Two mistakes worth catching early

Mistake A: signing an empty inspection form. You are asked to sign a form with a blank condition section because “management will fill it in.” The safer response is to ask for the condition details to be completed or for your written reservations to be attached before signing. You need not turn an ordinary handover into an argument; you simply need your signature to refer to something that can be read later.

Mistake B: computing a bill from a photo alone. An opening reading of 18,274.0 kWh and a later 18,323.0 kWh reading suggest 49.0 kWh of measured usage on that display. They do *not* prove which party should pay, which tariff applies, or whether a bill includes other charges. The next step is to obtain the bill basis, not multiply by a rate copied from a travel forum.

The handover is finished when the unknowns are named

A perfect-looking apartment can still have an unresolved utility allocation. A room with two clearly photographed scratches may be perfectly suitable if everyone knows they were present before occupancy. Aim for a record that another person—someone who was not at the doorway—could use to reconstruct what you received and what remained to be clarified.

Before your representative leaves, ask one final question: **“What in today's record still needs a written answer?”** If the list contains only the meter account relationship, a repair appointment and the first billing cycle, that is a manageable outcome. Write those three questions down. The purpose of inspection is not to predict every future dispute; it is to prevent easy uncertainty from becoming an expensive one.

Official verification directory and source boundaries (checked 31 October 2026)

These sources establish the named authorities' services or the existence of specific public guidance. They do not verify the terms of any individual private tenancy, submeter setup or utility rate. Do not treat the sample readings in this article as observed facts.

1. **Provincial Electricity Authority (PEA), customer contacts** — <https://www.pea.co.th/en/contact-us> — official customer-support identity and service channels; includes 1129 contact center.
2. **PEA Mobile Application** — <https://www.pea.co.th/en/our-services/mobile-apps> — official description of PEA Smart Plus bill viewing, payments, service requests and outage reports.
3. **PEA residential tariff notice, 11 September 2026** — <https://www.pea.co.th/news/corporate-news/2412> — verified PEA Thai-language announcement (11 September B.E. 2569 / 2026), explicitly describing September 2026 residential billing changes and noting that monthly service fee, Ft adjustment and VAT are additional. A Thai-language page is not

evidence of an English translation. Recheck for future billing periods and account classification.

4. **Metropolitan Electricity Authority (MEA)** — <https://www.mea.or.th/> — official electricity authority, for service identification rather than a blanket promise about a building's billing arrangements; MEA customer number 1130 also appears on <https://myenergy.mea.or.th/>.
5. **Provincial Waterworks Authority (PWA), customer guide** — <https://pwa.co.th/en/contents/service/customer-guide> — water-meter reading and queries about recorded readings.
6. **Metropolitan Waterworks Authority (MWA), water-meter service** — <https://mwa.co.th/en/services/request-for-water/request-water-meter/> — meter identity, reading accuracy and service context; details and fees may change.
7. **MWA official contact** — <https://mwa.co.th/en/about/contact-us-mwa/> — current contact route including 1125 call center.
8. **Office of the Consumer Protection Board (OCPB), official 8 June 2026 residential rental contract explainer** — https://www.ocpb.go.th/news_view_en.php?nid=17943 — Thai-language institutional article linking the underlying B.E. 2568 (2025) contract-controlled-business notification and a model form. It does not establish that a new regulation took effect on the article date.
9. **OCPB official consumer complaint portal** — <https://complaint.ocpb.go.th/> — submission and tracking route for consumer complaints; the portal and OCPB site list telephone 1166. A successful outcome or jurisdiction for every tenancy is not promised.