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A Rent-Stabilized Tenant Seeks to Negotiate

By JAY ROMANO
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Q. *I live in a rent-stabilized building, but the new rent (coming up in April) is still rich for my blood. Can tenants negotiate rent-stabilized rents? Would you have a suggestion as to how to approach a landlord or management company?*

A. The legal stabilized rent is the maximum a landlord can charge, said **Dov Treiman**, a Manhattan landlord-tenant lawyer. The law also permits a “preferential rent,” he said, “whereby the landlord and the tenant agree to a lower rent than the full legally permissible maximum rent.”

So, **Mr. Treiman** said, it is possible to negotiate a rent-stabilized rent that is lower than the legal maximum rent. “The landlord’s willingness to negotiate the rent will vary with a number of factors,” he said, “and the chief factor is often location.” Landlords in boroughs other than Manhattan are often more flexible about negotiating rents than those in Manhattan.

Mr. Treiman added that a tenant who is serious about entering negotiations should do some homework. This entails checking the real estate advertisements to see what similarly appointed apartments in the same neighborhood are renting for. “Real estate brokers are a very valuable resource for the purpose because of their professional access to various databases showing what rents are being asked,” he said.

Another factor is the history of the particular tenant. “Landlords will sometimes be willing to make concessions to tenants who are meticulous about paying their rent, minimal in asking for repairs and cheerful in dealing with management employees,” **Mr. Treiman** said.