

# The 10-Step Airbnb Getting Started Checklist

## For Toronto & GTA Hosts — Launch Your Short-Term Rental the Right Way

Everything you need to prepare, list, and launch your property on Airbnb — from first-day staging through to your first 5-star review. Built specifically for Ontario hosts navigating STR rules, licensing, and a competitive market.

### 01 Understand Your Local STR Rules & Get Licensed

Ontario municipalities have different rules for short-term rentals. Before listing, confirm your city's requirements to avoid fines or removal.

- ✓ Check if your city requires an STR licence (Toronto, Mississauga, etc.)
  - ✓ Register your property with your municipality & obtain a licence number
  - ✓ Confirm you are the principal resident if required (Toronto rule)
  - ✓ Review Ontario's Short-Term Rental Accommodations Act requirements
  - ✓ Add your licence number to your Airbnb listing once obtained
- *Toronto Tip: STR licences must be renewed annually. Set a calendar reminder.*

### 02 Deep Clean & Stage Your Space

First impressions are everything. A spotlessly clean, well-staged space earns higher ratings, more bookings, and better reviews from day one.

- ✓ Hire a professional cleaner for the initial deep clean
  - ✓ Remove personal items, clutter, and anything irreplaceable
  - ✓ Add hotel-quality white bedding, towels, and bath mats
  - ✓ Stock basics: coffee, tea, dish soap, paper towels, toilet paper
  - ✓ Add thoughtful touches — a plant, a candle, a local welcome treat
- *Staging Tip: Less is more. Clean, neutral spaces photograph better and feel more premium.*

### 03 Get Professional Photography

Listings with professional photos earn up to 40% more revenue. This is the single highest-ROI investment you can make before launch.

- ✓ Hire a photographer experienced with real estate or hospitality
  - ✓ Shoot during the day for maximum natural light
  - ✓ Include every room, outdoor spaces, and any unique features
  - ✓ Lead with your strongest photo — it appears in search results
  - ✓ Add a neighbourhood / building exterior shot for context
- *Pro Tip: Airbnb offers a built-in photographer program — check availability in your city.*

## 04 Write a High-Converting Listing

Your listing title, description, and amenity list are your sales pitch. Optimise every field to attract the right guests and rank higher in search.

- ✓ Write a title that highlights your top 2-3 selling points (e.g., "Bright 1BR | King Bed | Steps from TTC")
- ✓ Open your description with your #1 guest benefit in the first line
- ✓ List every amenity — even "obvious" ones like Wi-Fi and AC
- ✓ Describe nearby transit, restaurants, and attractions
- ✓ Proofread carefully — errors signal low quality to guests

■ *SEO Tip: Include neighbourhood name, transit access, and guest type (e.g., "perfect for business travellers") in your description.*

---

## 05 Set Your Pricing Strategy

Smart pricing is the difference between an average host and a top earner. Use dynamic pricing to maximise occupancy and revenue simultaneously.

- ✓ Research comparable listings in your exact neighbourhood
- ✓ Enable Airbnb Smart Pricing or use a tool like PriceLabs / Wheelhouse
- ✓ Set a competitive launch price (10-15% below market) for first reviews
- ✓ Configure minimum nights, weekend rates, and seasonal pricing
- ✓ Set gap-night pricing rules to avoid costly single-night gaps

■ *Revenue Tip: The first 3 reviews define your trajectory. Price slightly lower at launch to accelerate them.*

---

## 06 Set House Rules & Guest Policies

Clear house rules protect your property, set guest expectations, and give you grounds to charge for violations.

- ✓ Decide on: pets, parties, smoking, extra guests, noise curfew
- ✓ Write rules in a friendly but firm tone — avoid sounding aggressive
- ✓ Set a reasonable check-in window (e.g., 3PM–10PM)
- ✓ Require guests to read & agree to rules before booking
- ✓ Consider requiring security deposits or damage protection

■ *Pro Tip: Add your house rules to your House Manual as well as your Airbnb listing — guests will need reminders.*

---

## 07 Create a Digital Welcome Guide

A detailed welcome guide eliminates the most common guest questions, reduces your message volume, and consistently earns 5-star communication ratings.

- ✓ Wi-Fi name and password (prominently displayed)
- ✓ Check-in / check-out instructions step-by-step
- ✓ Appliance guides (TV, laundry, dishwasher, thermostat)
- ✓ Parking details, building access, and elevator instructions
- ✓ Local recommendations: restaurants, cafés, transit, groceries

■ *Tool Tip: Use Airbnb's built-in guidebook feature or tools like Touch Stay for a polished digital guide.*

---

## 08 Set Up Smart Access & Security

Keyless entry eliminates key-handoff headaches, enables flexible check-in, and makes your operation far more scalable.

- ✓ Install a smart lock (Schlage, Yale, or August recommended)
- ✓ Generate unique codes per guest and schedule them to expire at checkout
- ✓ Install a Ring or SimpliSafe doorbell for exterior security
- ✓ Check your building's rules on smart lock installation
- ✓ Have a backup key plan in case of tech failure

■ *Tip: Tell guests their door code in the check-in message on the day of arrival — not weeks in advance.*

## 09 Build Your Cleaning & Maintenance System

Reliable cleaning between every stay is non-negotiable. A consistent system protects your ratings and keeps your property in top condition.

- ✓ Hire or vet a professional STR cleaning team (not a regular house cleaner)
- ✓ Create a detailed room-by-room cleaning checklist for your cleaner
- ✓ Build a restock system for consumables (toiletries, coffee, etc.)
- ✓ Add a same-turn buffer (e.g., 3 hours min.) in your availability settings
- ✓ Set up a maintenance contact for plumbing, electrical, and appliance issues

■ *Toronto Tip: AsleepAway provides full-service turnover cleaning and maintenance coordination for GTA hosts.*

## 10 Launch, Get Reviews & Optimise

The first 30 days are critical. Focus on getting 5-star reviews quickly, then use the data to continuously improve your listing's performance.

- ✓ Publish your listing and enable Instant Book to maximise early momentum
- ✓ Message every guest promptly — response time affects your search ranking
- ✓ Send a check-in message on arrival day with all key details
- ✓ Follow up after checkout to thank guests and gently invite a review
- ✓ Review your metrics monthly: occupancy %, average daily rate, revenue

■ *Growth Tip: After 10+ reviews, revisit your pricing and photos — small tweaks can unlock a significant revenue jump.*

### Ready to Start Earning?

Get a free income estimate for your property — no commitment required. Our team manages 50+ Toronto & GTA properties and will show you exactly what your space could earn.

■ [asleepaway.com/host](https://asleepaway.com/host)

■ 647-981-2784