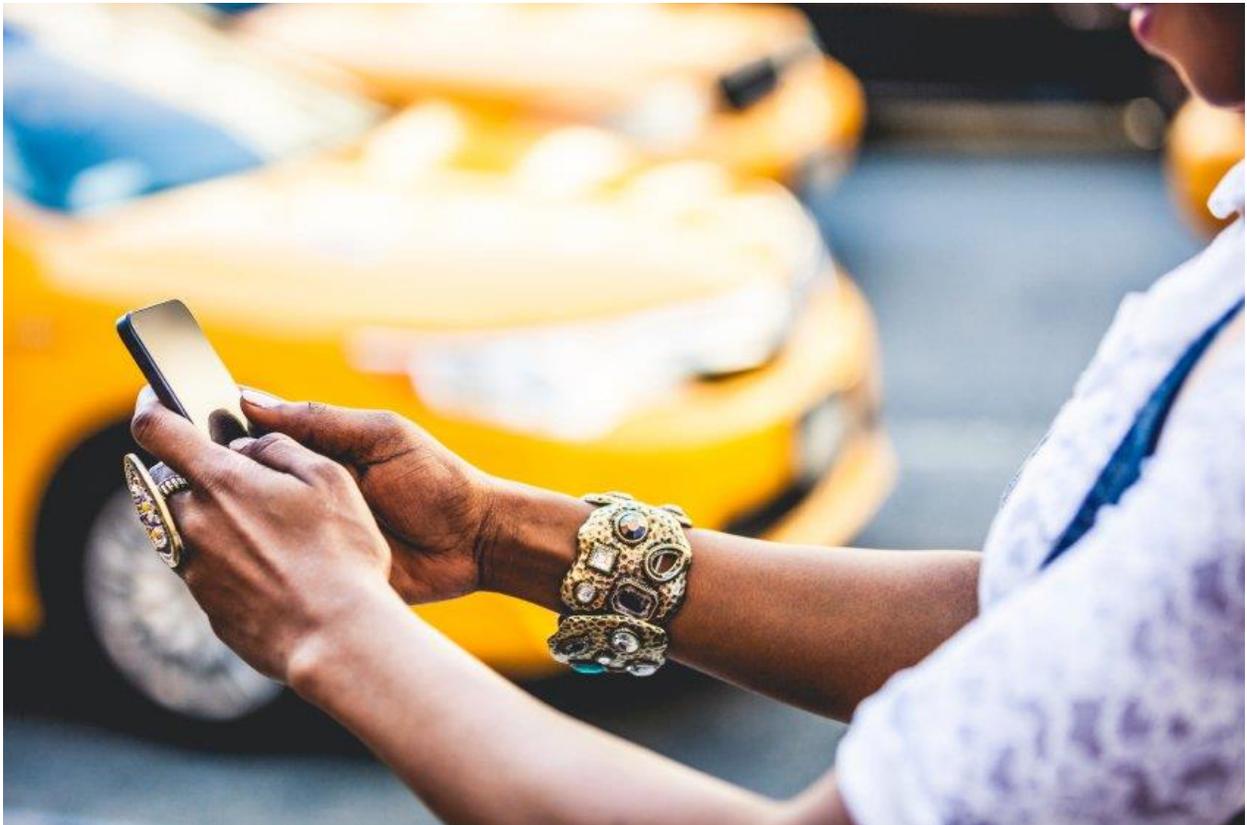


Should We All Be Paying Our Rent With Apps Like Venmo?

By Virginia K. Smith | February 1st, 2016



Any smartphone-using renter who's ever dealt with the old-school hassles of bank transfers—or even more quaint, *physical paper checks*—has probably thought to themselves at some point, "Ugh, can't I just Venmo in my rent??"

And with a small but growing number of landlords, the answer to that is 'yes'. "It's definitely on the rise," says Citi Habitats agent Kevin Kemble. "I have one landlord who specifically adds a rider into the lease that tenants have to pay through Venmo, and another in the building who was thrilled when a

tenant suggested it, because [the landlord] is based in a different country, and it made the payment so much easier." (Anecdotally, one Brick editor also just signed a lease with a specific requirement to pay rent via Square Cash, another payment app.)

"Tenants are demanding it, and we've actually put pressure on a couple of landlords to start accepting rent this way because so many tenants want it," concurs Eric Kidhardt, a broker who works with a lot of owners of small multi-families. Besides the convenience of being able to pay at the touch of a button and have money taken out of your account immediately (as opposed to waiting around for someone to cash a check), Kemble points out that a lot of renters are eager for the ability to pay rent with a credit card—and thus, rack up rewards points. And since these apps keep an easy record of your payments (some also email you receipts), it's an accessible paper trail should you ever find yourself in a dispute with the landlord over payment.

For renters, there are two potential downsides here: First is security, as some apps (Venmo in particular) have been criticized as lacking when it comes to protecting users' personal information. (For a breakdown of the pros and cons of options like Venmo, PayPal, Square Cash, and Google Wallet, *Time* has a solid guide here.) And if you *do* want to pay via credit card, check your particular service's policy, as many will charge a fee of around three percent for using a card instead of a bank account. (For high rents, this could negate the appeal of any potential rewards points.)

While the convenience factor is a perk for landlords, too, payment-by-app is still mostly the territory of small landlords rather than larger management companies with a number of properties.

Instead of apps, many of these companies use digital options like direct bank transfers (Chase QuickPay, for example), or online property management portals like Appfolio, Buildium, or Quickbooks that facilitate ACH or credit card payments, but aren't generally set up to work with specific payment apps. "We're not making the switch yet," explains [Platinum Properties' Daniel Hedaya](#). "From a management perspective, you want to make sure rent collection is seamlessly incorporated into whatever property management software you're already using. I think [app payment] is something that will happen eventually, but we're just not doing it yet."

Similarly, Related Rentals, which has many buildings in the city, offers two digital options through its website: automatic withdrawal from a bank account or a credit card payment (the latter of which means you can still rack up rewards points). Miron's Jeff Schleider tells us that many of their clients also use these kinds of management portals (as opposed to a specific app).

Still, if you'd like to use this kind of payment system, it can't hurt to simply ask. And if you get the go-ahead, on to the *real* challenge: What emoji will you pair with your payment?