

LOOKING FOR HOUSING OFF-CAMPUS?



Common problems you may wish to prevent.

What's in writing is what counts—legally binding

Applications (credit checks) that most realtors will ask you to fill out “to see if you can be accepted as a tenant” are sometimes (often) legally binding. Don't fill the application out unless you are sure you want to rent from the realtor. Tell the realtor you will take the blank application and return it when you are sure. Even if someone tells you their application is not legally binding, if you feel compelled to fill it out, ask them first to write at the top of the page that “This is **NOT** a legally binding application” and to initial the statement. Don't just take someone's word because they seemed really nice. Leave no room for miscommunication...and financial commitments for which you are not prepared. Penn State University cannot get you out of a contract you sign downtown.

If you expect something to be included in your apartment (utilities or repairs) or expect the landlord to allow you to sublet (get someone else to take over your lease before its time is up), **MAKE SURE WHAT YOU WANT OR HAVE VERBALLY DISCUSSED WITH THE LANDLORD IS WRITTEN INTO THE LEASE—BEFORE YOU SIGN IT.**

Lots of people say things and then don't follow through. If necessary, see if you can write into the lease any specific additions before committing yourself...it's your money!

Joint and Several vs. Individual Leases

Joint and Several leases means roommates all sign the same lease (paperwork) and if one person bails out the others are responsible for the missing rent.

Individual leases mean each roommate signs their own individual lease (paperwork) and if one person bails out the other the others are not responsible for the missing rent. In such a case, the realtor may however have the option to find the next roommate for the apartment if the remaining roommates can't find someone to fill the vacant spot.

Security Deposits

During the first couple day after you move into your place, fill out a Damage Checklist and try to get someone from the reality company to sign it in agreement. Even small stains, dents or poorly working appliances should be noted. Take pictures when possible...dated pictures are best. Keep a copy of everything you document and give a copy to you landlord. Within 30 days after you move out of you apartment you should get either you deposit back or an itemized list telling you why you were deducted money from your deposit. If you are charged for something that was wrong before you moved in, you damaged checklist can be of help.

If any questions, please contact:

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