

Everything I should have known about renting but was afraid to ask



As you look for rental housing, please ask the following questions of prospective landlords or property managers. Learn as much as you can about a place before you submit a rental application or a lease.

Rent

- How much is the monthly rent?
- How many of us may rent and live at this rental address?
- May I rent from you for a twelve-month, nine-month, or lesser time period?
- Where and when must rent be paid? If rent is paid after that date, do you charge a late fee?
- How much is it?
- If one month's rent payment is late, does the lease contain an acceleration clause?
- That causes all remaining rent to become due and payable?
- May each roommate pay his/her portion of the rent with separate checks?

Do I pay for:

- Heat (Electric, gas, or oil)
- Water/sewer
- Hot water
- Electricity
- Gas or Oil
- Parking (What about quest parking)
- Air conditioning
- Garbage collection
- Repairs of any kind. If so, why?
- Pets (Are pets allowed at all?)
- Cable TV

Lease Applications

- Must prospective tenants submit an application for a lease?
- Is a fee required with my application? If so, what happens to that money?
- Does the act of submitting an application commit me and/or my parents to sign a lease?
- What are my obligations if my application is accepted?
- Can you give me a copy of the lease at this time?

Security Deposits

- How much is the security deposit?
- When must it be paid? When is it returned, or may it be used as my last month's rent?

- Do I receive interest on my deposit?
- What must I do to have my security deposit returned in full?
- Which bank will hold my security deposit?

Lease Obligations

- Who are the landlord and/or the landlord's property manager?
- What are their addresses?
- Will the lease be written or oral?
- What rules and regulations must I follow upon signing the lease?
- How much notice is needed to renew or terminate the lease?

Lease Guaranty

- Will my rent payments have to be guaranteed? If so, why and by whom?

Escalator Clause

- Does the lease contain escalator clauses that could cause my rent to increase during the lease period? For example, are any energy-cost increases passed on to the tenant?
- In previous years, were such assessments made: and if so, by what amount did they exceed the base rental figure?

Subletting

- May I sublet or assign my lease?
- May I find someone who is willing to make a new lease and end my responsibility?
- Must you approve my sub lessee or assignee?
- Will you assist me in finding a sub lessee or someone willing to assume a new lease?
- Are fees charged for these options?

Lease Termination

- Is notice required to terminate or renew the lease, or will it automatically renew for another year? When must notice be given and in what form?
- If the lease automatically terminates, will I have the first right to renew it?
- Is it possible to terminate the lease before the stated date?
- What fee, if any, is charged for early termination?
- How much notice is required for early termination? In what form?
- If the rental premises are destroyed, does the lease affirm my right to move elsewhere and cease paying rent?

Facilities

Is the apartment furnished or unfurnished?
Are a stove and refrigerator provided?
Are drapes and curtains provided?
Are there screens on the doors? Windows? Sliding Glass Doors?
Is there a fire extinguisher in the apartment? Are there smoke alarms? How often are they checked and tested?
Has the apartment been insulated or weather-stripped for more energy efficiency?
What are average heating/cooling bills?
Is a laundry available on the premises? If not, where is the closest Laundromat?
Is a storage area outside of the apartment provided?
How is access to the area obtained? Is a fee charged?
Is indoor or outdoor bicycle storage provided?
Does a bicycle have to be registered? If so, with whom?

Parking

How many parking spaces are provided per apartment?
How do I get a parking space? Is a fee charged?
If I pay for parking, is it assigned? What if someone parks in my space or the lot is full?
Do you tow vehicles out of the lot?
How are the ones that belong in the lot identified?
Can my guests park in the lot? Is there a designated guest parking area?

Neighborhood Services

Is a supermarket within walking distance? Is a corner grocery store within walking distance?
How accessible is public transportation? Do you provide a bus pass for public transportation?
If public transportation is unavailable, does the apartment supply bus service?
What are the hours of bus service to and from town/campus/shopping?

Neighbors

Who are the other tenants in the building/apartment complex? Will we be compatible?
Are building quiet hours imposed? How are they enforced?

Repairs (paid by the landlord)

How do I notify you of emergency repairs during the work day, on weekends, and after office hours?
Do you have an on-site maintenance staff to handle normal repair requests?
How soon after my request will repairs be made?
If I want something special done, may I request that you do it if I am willing to pay for it (e.g. paint my apartment a color other than the standard white)?

Right of Entry

How much advance notice will I receive before your staff comes to make repairs or conduct an inspection?

Do I have to let someone in if doing so is inconvenient?
If I am not renewing my lease, will I have to allow people in to see my apartment?
How about if I am renewing?

Security

Do you change locks at no charge between the moving out and moving in of tenants?
Is there a charge for keys?
Do you have a dead-bolt lock or other secure locking device that operates only from inside the apartment on all doors?
Do you have a mechanical locking device operated only from inside the apartment, other than those manufactured as part of the window or door, on all windows and sliding glass doors?
If I wish to install a dead-bolt lock or other locking device, may I do it? Will there be a charge?
Do you have a peephole or viewer in solid doors that enables the tenant to see who is at the door before opening it?
If I lose my key and want either another key or the lock changed, is there a charge? If so, how much?

Moving In

What's the earliest date I may move in?
May I move in earlier if the present tenant leaves early? Do I need the tenant's written permissions to do so?
Is there a fee for moving in early? (If so, do I pay you or the tenant?)
If my apartment isn't ready, clean, or in good repair, who's responsible? When will the repairs or cleaning be done?

Damage Report

Will someone help me complete the damage report when I move in and out?
How much time is allowed to report damage that wasn't initially apparent (e.g. a broken refrigerator-shelf support that won't stay up when groceries are put on it)?

Visitors

Does the lease contradict a tenant's legal right to have visitors for a "reasonable time?"
Does it attempt to define "reasonable time?"

Renter's Insurance

Do I need to purchase it or do you provide it?

Don't forget to get receipts for money paid!

Also, keep copies of all correspondence between you and your landlord/property manager.