

How to be a Smart Renter



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If you are looking for a place to live in State College, the best time to look is during Penn State's Housing Fair. The Housing Fair held at the University Park Campus, sponsored by the Office of Off-Campus Living, this is the only housing event sanctioned by the University. To date, it's the largest gathering of rental agents and property owners in the area.

Prior to looking for a place to live in State College, please review the tips listed below Take your Time Choosing a Place to Live. You are the customer; it's your money. This is a financial commitment that is legally binding. Where you live and with whom you live over the next twelve months can have a profound effect on you, positively or negatively. In this type of situation, haste does make waste.

Applications

Do not sign anything, or fill out any applications until you are certain you have identified the place you want to rent. Some applications will automatically legally bind you to the lease. Don't sign anything unless you can afford to pay for it.

Talk is Cheap

This is a business arrangement between you and the landlord. Get everything in writing and document conversations so there are no misunderstandings by you or the landlord later or during the lease.

Know What You are Signing

There are two types of leases commonly used in this area. Joint and Several, and Individual. With a Joint and Several leases, you are responsible for your portion of the rent and your **ROOMMATES'** if they do not pay their portion. If your roommates are unable to pay their portion of the rent, you will be expected to make up the difference.

If you don't pay their portion of the rent, the co-signer (parental guarantee) will get a bill requesting them to pay the difference. Essentially, you are your brother's/sister's keeper with a Joint and Several Lease.

With an Individual lease you are responsible for paying only your portion of the rent. If your roommates do not pay their portion of the rent, the property owner/manager goes after them and not you. Now you make the decision which lease is better for you.

Before You Move In

Document the condition of the apartment—do a damage checklist, take pictures (give the landlord a copy and keep a copy for yourself). The damage checklist lets in the landlord know what needs to be repaired in the unit and it provides you with a record of the condition upon move-in. Most landlords want to know what is wrong with the unit so they can repair it.

Repairs/Maintenance

Help the landlord and yourself by reporting all needed repairs management immediately. Get the name of the person to whom you report the problem and the date and time you reported it. Document the request for maintenance in writing for you own records.

Security Deposits

When you are ready to move out, get the damage checklist and the photos. Review your comments regarding the unit. Clean like you have never cleaned before. If at all possible, get the landlord to walk through the unit before you turn over your keys. Take pictures again before you move out. Give the keys to the landlord and wait for a response within thirty days after you turn over your keys.

If, after all these precautions, you have questions of you need a copy of a damage checklist, contact the office of:

Office of Off-Campus Living
125 HUB-Robeson Center
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 865-2346

The Office of Off-Campus Living is here to assist students that live off-campus or that intend to move off-campus.