

Finding A Rental

Renting

Community

Before you begin your rental search, set your requirements. Understand the types of leases, agreements, deposit requirements, and questions to ask the landlord. Analyze your finances and know exactly how much you can spend. Rentals come in all types, each of which has its advantages and disadvantages. Your first step is finding the right community. Your current surroundings will mold your family's preferences. You might want something similar or opt for something completely different in your new location. Whatever your likes and dislikes, be open to the advantages of your new locale.

- Every destination has fashionable communities, but you may find rents are lower in less well-known areas
- Take a test drive at rush hour to determine commuting time and find out if bus transportation is available if you have school-aged children
- Consider the quality of the school system

The Community Checklist provided will help you identify your needs in terms of general appearance and convenience. If you have school-aged children, use the Schools Checklist to evaluate the school system.

Affordability

Generally, it is recommended that you try to keep your total monthly housing costs to about one week's gross pay or less, depending on market supply and demand.

In addition to the monthly rent, housing costs may include the following:

- Maintenance fees
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Recreation fees
- Pet-owner fees
- Trash collection
- Water
- Sewer taxes

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Rental Deposits

Most rentals require a deposit when you sign the lease agreement. This deposit can total as much as two months' rent as security plus the first month's rent.

The deposit can be used by the landlord for the following:

Cleaning deposit — For cleaning/painting the unit after you leave (usually not refundable)

Damage deposit — Returned to you unless you caused unreasonable physical damage to the property or economic damage by failing to notify the landlord (in writing) about moving. Document (by writing and/or by photograph) any damage at the time you inspect the unit prior to occupation

Security deposit — May be interchangeable with the damage deposit, but the lease may state that you have to live in the unit for a certain amount of time before it will be refunded

Pet deposit — An additional deposit for any damages your pet might cause or for professional extermination after you leave

Advance final month's rent — Your landlord may want you to prepay your final month's rent

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Types of Rentals

Apartments

Multi-residential units range from two- and three-story buildings to high-rise apartment buildings. Apartment size varies from studios to three-bedroom/two-bath apartments.

Advantages:	Disadvantages:
Lowest cost per square foot of living space	Lack of privacy
No maintenance responsibilities	Noisy
No personal appliances needed (occasionally a refrigerator is required)	Often no enclosed parking
Recreational/social activities are often available on-site	Very often, no pets are allowed
	Limited storage

Townhouses/Condominiums

Duplexes and fourplexes might be considered in this category. A complex may have as many as 40 or more units.

Advantages:	Disadvantages:
Yard space and garage	Appliances may be needed (washer/dryer/refrigerator)
Internal laundry capability	Usually cost more than apartment
More privacy than apartments	
More likely to allow pets	

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Types of Rentals

Single Family Homes

Single family homes can range in size from two bedrooms with one bath to estate-sized mansions

Advantages:	Disadvantages:
Privacy, yard space, and garages	Tenant usually responsible for yard maintenance
More likely to accept pets	Most expensive cost per square foot of living space
	Requires the most individual effort to find

Evaluating A Rental

When inspecting a rental, look at all the rooms thoroughly with the landlord present to avoid surprises or conflicts over property damage.

Use the Rental Checklist provided to help you evaluate and compare rental units.

Are appliances working? Will these be the same appliances when you rent?

Ask who pays utilities: electricity, fuel oil, or gas for heat and hot water; water/sewer charges; cable television; etc.

Ask about snow removal and yard maintenance, if applicable

Make a list of all damages, and give a copy to the landlord (videotape the damages, if possible)

Prior to signing the lease, clearly identify who is responsible for repair of damages and the timing for repairs

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Rental Checklist

Rental Unit

Address and Unit #:

Monthly rent _____

Security deposit _____

Children allowed? _____

Pets allowed? _____

Security system or doorman _____

Elevator or walk-up building _____

Apartment rent controlled or stabilized? _____

Type of heat and cost _____

Air-conditioning (central or window units)? _____

Utilities included? _____

Adequate door locks? _____

Adequate water pressure and hot water? _____

Janitor and superintendent on premises? _____

Is regular extermination service provided, if needed? _____

Provisions for refuse disposal _____

Parking Available/included _____

Appliances provided? _____

Condition of appliances _____

Room measurements:

BR1 _____

BR2 _____

LR _____

DR _____

KIT _____

Den _____

Other _____

Does apartment need painting? _____

Adequate closets and storage space? _____

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Enough wall space for wall hangings? _____

Enough electrical outlets? _____

Enough windows? _____

Laundry facilities on premises or nearby? _____

Cable TV or master antenna outlet ? _____

Front door peephole and/or chain lock? _____

Adequate dining area? _____

Adequate kitchen cabinet space? _____

Adequate kitchen counter space? _____

Additional Notes: _____

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Signing The Lease

For your protection, always insist upon a written lease or rental agreement. Read the lease carefully and know exactly what you are agreeing to. If any clauses prohibit you from using the rental as you intend, finalize those before signing.

Make sure the following items are included in your lease:

Description of property

Duration of the lease, including a clause to terminate the lease in case of a transfer due to employment

Names of the landlord and the tenant

Rent amount and due date

Amount of security deposit and any prepaid rent

Responsibilities for maintenance

Notice requirements when terminating the lease

Rules and regulations of the landlord

Rights and responsibilities of both the landlord and the tenant

Items included in the rental unit (e.g., appliances, carpeting, utilities, etc.)

A statement that will allow you to cancel your lease without penalty if you are transferred by your employer

Questions to ask your landlord:

Do you have the right to sublet?

Are pets allowed?

What deposits are required?

Are you protected if there's a change in property ownership?

Are you protected if the owner wishes to move back?

What are your landlord's entry rights?

Are laundry and recreational facilities included in the rent?

Are electricity, water, and heat included in the rent?

Are you charged a fee if you are late with the rent?

Will you be able to renew the lease; if so, what are the rent increases?

How much time is required for notice of renewal or termination of the lease?

Is the escalation clause within local rent-control regulations?

Are you required to have renter's insurance?

Are there options to extend the lease or options to buy?

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Rights and Responsibilities

A Landlord's Rights and Responsibilities

The landlord has the right to:

- Rent the property
- Collect rent
- Enter the unit (be sure you understand when and why)
- Evict a tenant for late rent payment or otherwise violating the lease

The landlord is responsible for:

- Complying with local housing/building codes
- Making repairs to keep the property habitable
- Keeping common areas clean and safe
- Maintaining all systems in safe, working condition
- Providing trash receptacles and trash removal
- Supplying water and heat, except where tenant has control over the heating system and pays the bill

A Renter's Rights and Responsibilities

The tenant has the right to:

- Normal, operating plumbing, heating, and electrical systems
- An overall safe environment in which to live

The tenant is responsible for:

- Paying rent and utility bills promptly
- Utilizing the unit as agreed to in the lease
- Keeping the unit clean and safe; disposing of trash; operating plumbing, heating, and electrical systems in the correct manner
- Reporting problems to the landlord immediately
- Communicating with the landlord in writing, and keeping a copy along with rent receipts
- Handling any maintenance, such as snow removal, as agreed to in the lease