

A CHECKLIST FOR RENTERS

Students may find the following questions useful in checking their room/apartment before signing a lease and occupying the premises. Some of the questions cannot be answered by simple observation and may require interviewing current or previous tenants, or seeking the advice of an expert knowledgeable in these areas.

1. What is the amount of the rent? Is this amount per month, per semester, etc.? On what date is the rent due? Does the rent include any utilities?
2. Is a security deposit required? If so, how much and under what circumstances is it held?
3. Is a written lease required? What period of time does the lease cover? Does the lease call for increases in rent to compensate for higher costs of utilities, real estate taxes, or other services?
4. Is a rental permit required? If so, ask the landlord to see his copy.
5. Do you pay extra (and how much) for such things as storage space, air conditioning, parking space, cable tv, use of laundry facilities, installation of special appliances, late payment of rent, etc.?
6. Are the premises furnished? If so, what do those furnishings include? Are the furnishings clean and in good repair?
7. **Read the lease carefully**, making note of any provisions which are objectionable and which you may wish to negotiate with the landlord. Consult the landlord about any additional clauses you wish to include for your own protection. When possible, insist on a “separate” rather than a “group” lease. **Keep one signed copy of the lease for your own records.**
8. Assess the maintenance services: Is there a building manager living on the premises? What are the hours during which routine maintenance services are performed? Are tenants adequately forewarned of routine maintenance services to be performed within their living units? How is emergency maintenance service handled?
9. How is refuse disposal arranged? Are disposal facilities easily accessible? Are they clean and well maintained?
10. Laundry facilities: Are washers and dryers provided? Are the machines well maintained?
11. Building lobby area: Is it clean and well lighted? Are there adequate provisions for building security?
12. Entrances and exits: There should be at least two exits. Are stairwells adequately lit and structurally sound? Are fire exits provided? Are exit doors equipped with panic hardware? Are fire alarms or heat/smoke detectors provided and in working order? Are fire extinguishers provided and in working order? Ask landlord to show his inspection permit.
13. Hallways: Are they clean and well lit? Are they in good condition and free of obstacles?

14. Are there signs of insect infestation? Is there evidence of mice or rats?
15. Bathrooms: Are plumbing fixtures in good working order and reasonably clean? Is the hot water supply adequate for the size of the unit? Is there adequate ventilation?
16. Kitchen: Is the sink in good working order? Are the stove and refrigerator in good working order and reasonably clean? Is there adequate ventilation?
17. Wiring: Are there enough electrical outlets? Do all the switches and outlets function properly? Are switches and electrical outlets properly covered?
18. Does the heating system appear to be in good working order? Is adequate heat provided? Ask the age of the furnace.
19. Windows: Are any broken? Can they be opened and closed easily? Are screens provided? Are window frames properly weather-proofed?
20. Floors and ceilings: Are they well maintained? Is there evidence of water stains from previous leaks?
21. Walls: Are they well maintained? Is the plaster cracked? Is there any paint peeling?
22. Telephone: Is there a telephone already installed? Is the phone conveniently located?
23. Television and stereo: Is tv or stereo-playing prohibited during certain hours? Is an exterior antenna provided? Has a cable tv connection been installed?
24. Lighting: Do the room fixtures provide adequate light? Are the fixtures in good working order? Is there adequate natural light from windows?
25. Storage space: Is there adequate space for storage in room closets, and kitchen and bathroom cabinets? Are there facilities in the building available to tenants for the purpose of long-term storage?
26. Security: Are the exterior doors of the living unit equipped with deadbolt locks? Security chains? Through-the-door viewers?
27. Soundproofing: Can tenants in the neighboring living units be heard through the walls, ceilings, or floors?
28. What special regulations does the landlord impose on tenants regarding the keeping of pets, the entertaining of guests, subletting the premises, interior house-cleaning, disorderly conduct, the use of alcohol beverages and drugs?

Contact a local building inspector if there are questions or doubts about any safety issue.