

Questions You Need to Ask

When you conduct your search for that perfect rental, make sure you protect yourself by asking the following important questions before you sign the lease:

1. Who lives around you in the building? What about adjacent properties and the neighborhood in general?
2. Is the building clean/well maintained on both the interior and exterior?
3. Does the landlord live on the premises? Is there a maintenance person living there or in the vicinity?
4. Are there private grounds around the apartment?
5. Has the apartment been exterminated since the previous tenants moved? If not, when will it be done?
6. Does the apartment need to be painted? If so, who will paint it and/or pay for paint?
7. Does the building have a security system?
8. Are hallways well lit? Are there fire extinguishers and smoke detectors?
9. Does the building have a fire escape? If not, where is the nearest emergency exit?
10. Is the street well lit?
11. Does the apartment door have an adequate lock? Is there a dead bolt?
12. What happens if you lose your apartment keys?
13. Is there a doorbell? Does it work?
14. Whom do you call for emergencies or repairs? Is there someone on call at all times for emergencies?
15. Are there laundry facilities in the building? If not, are there facilities nearby?
16. Is there storage space allocated for you outside the apartment?
17. Is there a private, secure mailbox?
18. Is there private parking available? If so, is it free? If not, where can you park? If you have to park on the street, what are the parking rules there?
19. Is the apartment near public transportation? If not, how will you get to campus?
20. How far are grocery and convenience stores from the apartment? What about other places you shop, eat, work, etc.?
21. How, where, and when do you dispose of trash?
22. Is there sufficient closet space in the apartment?
23. Will your furniture fit comfortably in the apartment?
24. If the apartment is furnished, is the furniture adequate for your needs and in good condition?
25. Are there ample wall outlets?
26. Do the light fixtures work? Will you need additional lighting in the apartment?
27. Are there sufficient phone jacks?
28. Are there enough windows in the apartment? Do they work? Do they lock? Are screens provided?
29. If the apartment is carpeted, is the carpet clean and in good condition?
30. Who pays for utilities? What is the average cost per month?
31. How is the apartment heated (gas or electric)? Who pays for and/or controls the heat? When is it turned on?

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32. Is the apartment air-conditioned? Who controls and pays for it? When is it turned on?
33. Are appliances gas or electric? Are they in good condition? When were they last serviced?
34. Is the refrigerator clean and in good condition? Is there plenty of freezer space?
35. Is there ample water pressure in both the kitchen and bathroom?
36. Who pays for water? Do the faucets, traps, or toilets leak?
37. Is there a shower as well as a tub in the bathroom?
38. Are there any signs of water damage around water fixtures or on the ceiling?
39. What are your limits in decorating the apartment? Can you hang pictures without being penalized?
40. Are there draperies, rods, or blinds included?
41. Are there any stipulations regarding guests, parties, etc?
42. Is there ample room to study for all occupants of the apartment? Is there sufficient privacy?
43. Are there limits to the number of allowable occupants in the apartment?
44. What are the requirements for full refund of your security deposit?
45. Are pets or children allowed? If so, is there an additional charge?

Also, if possible, talk to other tenants that live there. Ask them if the landlord is fair and responsive. Make sure all agreements you reach with the landlord are in writing, make sure all damages/deficiencies are noted and get a copy of the lease signed by the landlord. In addition, check with the Better Business Bureau to see if they have any complaints on file against your prospective landlord or rental agency.

Home security tips

- Trim shrubbery around the house to increase visibility
- Clearly mark your address on the front curb
- Close and lock doors, windows, garages, and sheds
- Ask landlord if it is possible to install door peep holes
- Ask landlord if it is possible to install electronic security, fire, and emergency systems
- Keep home well-lit and curtains closed at night
- If you live alone, use initials rather than Ms., Miss, or Mrs. in directories and on personal checks
- Do not let anyone inside whom you do not know, or whom you haven't planned on visiting
- Have a lighting notification system to let neighbors know you're okay
- Notify police when you are planning on being out of town
- Don't leave notes on doors as to your whereabouts
- Do not leave a house key near entrances