

OFF CAMPUS LIVING QUICK TIPS

Once you've decided to move off campus, protect your interests and be a good neighbor. Here are some hot tips:

1. Location matters

- Visit potential neighborhoods a few times, at different times of the day, before making a choice.

2. The landlord is not your buddy

- Your relationship should be about business, not friendship. Check into your landlord's reputation before you sign a lease. It is perfectly fine to ask him/her for references.
- Inspect the property before signing a lease.
- Get everything in writing and keep copies of all correspondence.

3. READ (don't skim) the lease

- A lease is a binding legal document and they are NOT all the same. Get good, satisfactory answers to any questions you have about the lease. If repairs are needed, have that written into the contract.
- Never let anyone pressure you into signing with just a once-over.

4. You're in charge of your own safety

- 80% of student fatalities are due to a fire occurring in off campus housing. Know the location of smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, and how to maintain them. Do not rent any apartment that is not equipped with smoke detectors.
- Know who to call in an emergency.
- Lock doors and windows and leave an outside light on.
- Do not travel alone, especially at night.
- Report any crime by calling 911 in an emergency situation or 311 in a non-emergency situation.

5. Roommates aren't perfect

- Before you sign a lease together, compare expectations and fill out a roommate agreement. A little communication up front will help you get along later.

6. Insurance is cheap

- If your belongings are stolen or destroyed, your landlord isn't responsible for replacing them. Renter's insurance could save you thousands.
- Costs as little as \$12 per month.
- Can cover fire, theft and liability claims (i.e. your dog bites someone or a guest falls at your apartment).

7. Go shopping

- Furnishings and other necessities can cost hundreds of dollars so be sure to include these costs in your budget: cleaning supplies, small appliances, dishes, light bulbs, shower curtains, plunger, etc.
- Resist the urge to snag a couch off of the curb as bedbugs are very common.

8. Rent is just one cost

- The cost of utilities is often overlooked.
- Before you sign a lease, contact utility companies to find out the average monthly utility costs, set-up fees and deposits.
- If utilities are included in your rent, find out how much control you'll have over their use.

9. You have rights

- Inspect the property before signing a lease.
- Landlords and staff cannot enter your apartment at will. Unless it's an emergency, appropriate notice is required (usually at least 24 hours).

10. Be a good neighbor

- Get to know your neighbors – they can be a valuable resource.
- Be responsible. Keep noise down and the property clean.
- Join the neighborhood association and/or visit your Neighborhood Service Center to learn how to help your neighborhood.