



CENTER FOR
STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES

How to Prepare for Rentals

Some pointers for off-campus living.

There are ways to ensure that you have an enjoyable year off-campus. As long as you prepare correctly, most problems can be prevented. Here are some key issues to focus on while getting ready to move in.

Shopping for a Landlord

Finding the right landlord is every bit as important as finding the right apartment or house. Having a bad landlord can mean having a bad off-campus living experience.

1) Go to the Code Enforcement office.

From Shafer Street, turn left onto W. State Street, turn right at Miller's Chicken onto Central and then left on Clark Street. Take a right on Curran Street and Code Enforcement is located at 28 Curran. They will let you see all records regarding the house/apartment you are looking at. Just give them the address of the property. Their phone number is 740-592-3306. Be cautious of renting a house/apartment if there are a lot of code violations!

2) Talk to former and current tenants. This is your best source for information about the landlord. Ask about their experiences with their landlord.

Move - In Inspections

- 1) Check your lease for the date of move-in. This is sometimes different than the lease start date.
- 2) Upon arrival make sure all facilities are in good working condition. This includes all sinks, showers, and toilets.
- 3) Become acquainted with the location of the fuse box and make sure all outlets are in safe working condition.
- 4) Complete proper Move-In Procedure.
- 5) A move-in checklist needs to be completed. Keep a copy of the completed checklist.
- 6) If your lease does not state when the move-in sheet must be turned in, turn in the move-in sheet within 24 hours from the lease start date.

- 7) Take pictures and videos of the condition of the residence at the time of move-in.
- 8) Send a written letter to your landlord of all requested repairs that need to be made. Keep a copy of the letter.

Utilities

- 1) Call ahead of time to change all utilities into a resident's name.
- 2) These utilities include gas, electric, water and sewage, garbage, phone, and cable.
- 3) A security deposit is usually required for gas and electric.
- 4) Water, sewage, and garbage can be set up at City Hall.
- 5) Make sure you understand how garbage is charged.
- 6) If you are going to use a landline, be sure to set up an installation time.

Paying the Bills

- 1) Pay bills on time!
- 2) Split up the responsibility. Every person put one or two bills in his or her name.
- 3) Another suggestion is to start a checking account that has all tenants or one appointed tenant in charge. At the beginning of the quarter, deposit enough cash to cover all utilities. Split what's left over.

Tips For Tenants

- 1) When shopping for a place to live check with the utility company to determine previous winters' heating.
- 2) **Read your lease.** Any provision of your lease that conflicts with the landlord-tenant law is not enforceable.
- 3) Understand if your lease is joint and several liability of individual liability. If your lease is joint and several liability, complete a co-tenant agreement with the other tenants.
- 4) Don't agree to an oral modification of a written lease. Write all modifications down and sign with the landlord.
- 5) Avoid "shared utilities systems." (Several apartments and one electric/water, etc. bill)
- 6) **Do not pay rent in cash.** Get receipts.
- 7) To increase chances of getting your security deposit back, photograph/videotape/document

your apartment when you move in and when you move out.

- 8) Contact your landlord in writing at the first sign of condition problems in your apartment.
- 9) Make a copy of everything you send the landlord. Keep everything you receive from the landlord.
- 10) Don't argue with your landlord, or write in haste or anger.
- 11) Be a good neighbor. Respect yourself and others.
- 12) Don't accept legal advice from your landlord.
- 13) Meet all your legal obligations: Keep your apartment safe and sanitary, get rid of garbage in a clean, safe, and sanitary manner, use appliances properly, prevent others from damaging your place, don't disturb your neighbors, don't unreasonably withhold consent for your landlord to enter your place.
- 14) Get renter's insurance.
- 15) **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.**
- 16) When you move out, leave a written forwarding address for your ex-landlord.
- 17) If your landlord fails to repair a problem that materially affects your health and safety, you must put your landlord on notice of the condition and permit thirty days, or a reasonable amount of time (shorter for heat and water conditions) to correct the problem. If your landlord fails to make the necessary repairs, you may be able to escrow your rent. In order to escrow, you must be current on your rent. Please schedule an appointment with an attorney to discuss the escrow process.
- 18) Seek help at the first sign of a problem.
- 19) Register and vote in local elections.
- 20) Try not to rent from your employer or work for your landlord.
- 21) Landlords must give reasonable notice, presumed to be 24 hours, to the tenant before entering the apartment. This notice doesn't apply in emergencies.
- 22) If problems arise between housemates or your landlord, consider *mediation* as a way to resolve the conflict.
- 23) Know where the fire extinguishers are and make sure they are in working condition. Check smoke detectors monthly.

The information as listed above does not constitute legal advice, nor is it intended as a substitute for legal advice. Ohio University students with questions may contact the Center for Student Legal Services for an appointment.