

A Quick How-To On Your Apartment Search

Looking for an apartment can be difficult. There's a lot of factors to consider such as budget, location, who you'll live with, and more. I know I would have had an easier time if everything I needed to think about when looking for an apartment was all in one spot. That's why I wanted to put this document together in the hopes that it can help other people out, including you! Here's a guide on what you'll need to consider when looking for an apartment!

Budget

One thing you'll want to look at is budget. When you're searching for an apartment, it's easy to prioritize just the monthly rent. However, there's more you'll want to consider. Your budget can consist of several things, such as:

- Your monthly rent.
- Fees you'll need to pay upfront: the first + last month's rent and your security deposit.
- A broker's fee, which is not always charged, but if it is, you will also need to pay that upfront.
- Utilities. The inclusion of utilities in the monthly rent you're already paying is specified in the listing. If a utility is not included, it will be an additional cost.
- Extra services, such as parking or trash services.
- If you have a pet, some apartments charge an initial pet deposit and even an additional monthly rent for your pet.
- Are you considering subletting your apartment? If you're going home at any point during your lease, remember that your portion of the rent is still your responsibility. Because of this, some people sublet their room for some time. Consider that this may not work out and factor that into your budget.



Location

The location of each apartment is important to keep in mind. For some of us, it might be the primary reason why we're looking for an apartment in the first place. Here are a couple of things you'll want to consider when looking at the location of the apartment.

- The distance from your apartment to your school and your job.
- If you don't plan to drive, public transportation is a key factor.
- Street/on property parking is important if either you or people you know plan to drive.
- It's beneficial to live in a place where you'll have easy access to a grocery store and other sources of food.
- Amenities such as cafés, gyms, restaurants, and other fun places aren't necessary to have, but it could add to your personal enjoyment!



Bedrooms and Bathrooms

The number of bedrooms and bathrooms are important to narrow down your criteria as you're searching for an apartment. Here are some questions you can ask yourself when you look at the space for potential apartments!

- How many people are in your group?
- How many people are allowed at the apartment? This can sometimes differ from the total number of bedrooms, so look over the details carefully!
- Do you plan on sharing rooms with any of your roommates if needed?
- Can the living room become a bedroom if needed?
- (If applicable) Will your pet like the space?



Finding Roommates

If you're not able to jump straight to living with your closest circle of people, it can seem daunting to want to find roommates. Here are a few steps you can take to find roommates to live with you!

- First, reach out to people you know and trust. If the people you know can't live with you, they might know others who are looking for a place.
- Next, search online!
 - Consider posting on your own social media accounts.
 - Your university might have an off-campus housing website with features that allow you to post your apartment online and create a roommate profile. With this website you can find other people attending school who are also looking for apartments and/or roommates.
 - You can also go on third-party websites/apps such as Roomster, Craigslist (where my friends and I originally found our apartment), and more. With any of these, exercise caution!
- When connecting with people, ask some important questions about living together. Ask about how often friends come over, if they're good about paying rent on time, smoking, pets, etc.
- Be mentally prepared to need backup options, especially if you're living with new people. They could back out of living with you for several reasons. If you happen to find backup people who could live with you, be honest and let them know that if a spot opens up in your apartment, you'll let them know.



Legal Things to Keep in Mind

When you have a place in mind and roommates that are set to live with you, the paperwork is the final hurdle!

- Apartment applications will always ask for contact information, your social security number, your previous address, employment information, and proof of income.
 - If you're applying for a parking spot, you'll need your vehicle information and your driver's license number or state ID as well.
- Ask for hidden fees and policies, about payment methods, or even ask your landlord if there's anything they haven't told you that you need to know.
- Co-signers might be required to apply for an apartment if you are a full-time student. They have a few requirements:
 - They'll be checked for a good credit score
 - They'll also be asked about their employment and proof of income
- Keep in mind that if potential roommates back out for any reason, you might need to restart the application. Keep all of your important info in one place so that the process is not too tedious!
- Once all goes well and you get approved for the apartment, the last thing you and your co-signer(s) will have to sign is the lease. This can either be a digital (signed through a program like DocuSign) or a non-digital lease. There's a lot of print to go through, but at least try to read through the important rules! Typical parts of the lease you'll want to look at include:
 - When and how landlords can enter the apartment, often to deal with issues such as making repairs
 - Rules prohibiting certain behaviors, such as the use/possession of drugs, smoking, intentionally damaging parts of the apartment, disturbing other tenants, etc.
 - Rules about restrictions such as not allowing waterbeds, bikes in the hallway, etc.
 - Limits on how long a guest can stay at the apartment
 - Attorney and court costs in a lawsuit due to disputes over the rental agreement
 - Rules about terminating a tenancy



State of _____ Rev. 133C5EE

RESIDENTIAL RENTAL LEASE AGREEMENT

This Lease Agreement (this "Agreement") is made as of this _____, by and between _____ ("Landlord") and _____ ("Tenant"). Each Landlord and Tenant may be referred to individually as a "Party" and collectively as the "Parties."

1. **Premises.** The premises leased is _____ located at _____, _____, _____ (the "Premises").

2. **Agreement to Lease.** Landlord agrees to lease to Tenant and Tenant agrees to lease from Landlord, according to the terms and conditions set forth herein, the Premises.

3. **Term.** This Agreement will be for a term beginning on _____ and ending on _____ (the "Term").

4. **Rent.** Tenant will pay Landlord a monthly rent of _____ for the Term. Rent will be payable in advance and due on the _____ day of each month during the Term. The first rent payment is payable to Landlord when Tenant signs this Agreement. Rent for any period during the Term which is for less than one month will be a pro rata portion of the monthly installment. Rent will be paid to Landlord at Landlord's address provided herein (or to such other places as directed by Landlord) by mail or in person by one of the following methods: and will be payable in U.S. Dollars.

5. **Guaranty.** _____ located at _____, _____, _____ ("Guarantor") promises to unconditionally guarantee to Landlord, the full payment and performance by Tenant of all financial duties and obligations arising out of this Agreement. Guarantor agrees to joint and several liability with Tenant for Tenant's financial duties and obligations under this Agreement including rent, damages, fees and costs. Guarantor further agrees that this guaranty shall remain in full force and effect and be binding on Guarantor until this Agreement is terminated.

6. **Late Fee.** Rent paid after the _____ day of each month will be deemed as late; and if rent is not paid within _____ days after such due date, Tenant agrees to pay a late charge of _____.

7. **Additional Rent.** There may be instances under this Agreement where Tenant may be required to pay additional charges to Landlord. All such charges are considered additional rent under this Agreement and will be paid with the next regularly scheduled rent payment. Landlord has the same rights and Tenant has the same obligations with respect to additional rent as they do with rent.

8. **Utilities.** Tenant is responsible for payment of all utility and other services for the Premises.

9. **Security Deposit.** Upon signing this Agreement, Tenant will pay a security deposit in the amount of _____ to Landlord. The security deposit will be retained by Landlord as security for Tenant's performance of its obligations under this Agreement. The security deposit may not be used or deducted by Tenant as the last month's rent of the Term. Tenant will be entitled to a full refund of the security deposit.

Lease Agreement (Rev. 133C5EE) 1 / 6

- There is one part of the lease that your co-signer will have to sign, and your landlord will most likely ask to get it notarized.
 - This could be digital or non-digital depending on what is legal in your state and what your landlord wants
 - To get a document notarized means to sign the document in front of a legal witness and have that witness indicate on the document with a stamp/signature that they saw your co-signer sign the document.
 - Some options to find a notary include the bank, a UPS store, and a post office. These can either be available through prior appointment or you can walk-in during operating hours. If your family knows a notary, that may be an option as well.



That's it! The process might seem difficult and time-consuming, but the light at the end of the tunnel will keep getting closer as you persevere. The reward you'll get is your independence in your own apartment and being able to pursue your ambitions while living in a convenient location. Trust me, it's all worth it in the end. Good luck on your search!

One last thing: if you want more detailed steps on this process and to look at more possible scenarios you could run into, consider reading my E-Book called "Navigating your Apartment Search." I put some personal experiences in there that I feel like other people may run into since I wanted to prepare you guys as much as possible to find an apartment! You can download it from our website!

