

Off-Campus Renter's Guide



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before you apply **FINDING YOUR NEW HOME**



research the area

- Check proximity to campus, public transportation if applicable, grocery stores, hobbies, and safety ratings.
- Visit during the day and at night to get a feel for the neighborhood and community.

set your housing budget

- Include rent, utilities, internet, and renter's insurance.
 - Don't forget deposits and application fees.
- Many communities require proof that your income is 2.5x – 3x the base rent, so make sure to have this in mind when budgeting.

Expense	Cost
Rent	\$X,XXX
Electric	\$XXX
Internet	\$XX
Parking	\$XXX
Renter's Insurance	\$XXX
Deposit	\$X,XXX
Application	\$XX
Total	\$X,XXX

before you apply

FINDING YOUR NEW HOME

understand and determine your needs

- Decide if you want roommates, a furnished or unfurnished home, and how far you are willing to commute to campus.
- What kind of housing do you want?
 - Types of housing include: shared housing, apartments, townhomes, or single-family homes
- Consider amenities like laundry, parking, fitness centers, and study space.

inspect the property

- Schedule a tour or virtual walkthrough.
- Read online reviews for the community and/or property management company.
- Look for signs of damage, mold, pests, or poor maintenance.



ask questions

- What's included in rent? (utilities, parking, etc)
- Are there quiet hours?
- What are your lease term options?

application PROCESS

1

prepare documents

- Valid ID
- Proof of income or financial aid
 - Many companies will accept an offer letter, bank statements, or paystubs
- Housing Applications for International Students & Scholars
 - Some landlords may accept alternative documentation in place of a U.S. credit score or Social Security number, such as:
- Funding or stipend letter
 - Bank statements (U.S. or international)
 - Other proof of financial support
 - Depending on the property, you may also be required to pay a higher security deposit or provide a U.S.-based guarantor.
- Requirements vary by property, so be sure to check with the landlord or property management before submitting an application or paying any fees.
- Co-signer information (if needed)

2

review the lease carefully before signing

- Understand the [sections and terms](#)
- Watch for hidden fees or automatic renewal clauses

application tips



Be prepared to have a background and credit check.



Research and apply early—good rentals go fast.



Be as thorough and honest as possible.



Follow up if you haven't heard back in a few days.

MOVING IN

Document Everything

- Take photos/videos of the unit before moving in and keep them.
- Note any damage or malfunctions and report them immediately.
- Thoroughly fill out and turn in your move-in condition form and keep a copy for your records.

Stay Organized

- Track rent payments and due dates.
- Save your lease and receipts in a secure folder.

Decorate

- Decorate your home to make it feel like you.
 - Make sure to read your lease agreement to ensure you are in compliance.
- Renter-friendly tips
 - Use Command hooks and strips to hang art, mirrors, and lights without having to make nail holes.
 - Use peel and stick wallpaper and backsplash to add color and texture to your home – it is removable and easy to apply.
 - Use curtains with a tension rod to bring warmth into your home.
 - Over the door organizers and under-the-bed storage bins can give you more storage space without using square footage.

MOVING OUT

review your lease and give proper notice

- Check your lease for move-out notice requirements (usually 30–60 days) and confirm any cleaning expectations or repair responsibilities.
- Provide written notice to your landlord by the deadline stated in your lease and keep a copy for your records.

schedule inspections

- Ask for a pre-move-out inspection to identify issues you can fix before leaving.
 - Schedule the final walkthrough with your landlord.

clean thoroughly and repair minor damages

- Deep clean all rooms: floors, walls, appliances, and bathrooms.
 - Remove all trash and personal belongings.
- Patch small holes, replace light bulbs, and fix anything you broke.



MOVING OUT

return keys and access items

Return all keys, fobs, and parking passes if applicable.

document everything

- Take dated photos of the property after cleaning.
- Keep receipts for repairs and cleaning services.



security deposit

Provide your forwarding address for deposit return.

Tip: Start planning at least 4 weeks before your move-out date to avoid last-minute stress.

safety TIPS



personal safety

- Choose well-lit and secure buildings.
- Avoid isolated areas or units with broken locks and windows
- Get renters' insurance.
- Consider an upper floor if you have a balcony.



online safety

- Never send money or personal information without seeing the property.
- Avoid listings with vague details or pressure tactics.
- Use trusted resources.



roommate safety

- Meet potential roommates in person or via video call.
- Discuss expectations such as cleaning, guests, bills, noise, etc.
- Consider creating a roommate agreement including all agreed upon items, such as chores, quiet hours, or how to split utility bills.

university RESOURCES

	Contact
Housing and Relocation Support	https://www.vanderbilt.edu/healthwellness/people-and-areas/housing-and-relocation-coordinator/ https://offcampushousing.vanderbilt.edu/resources/article/4012-starting-your-search
Parking and Transportation	https://www.vanderbilt.edu/transportation-parking/
Campus Dining	https://www.vanderbilt.edu/dining/
Campus Safety Office	https://publicsafety.vanderbilt.edu/
Vanderbilt Credit Union	https://vanderbiltcu.org/

Lease Terms

- **Lease:** A legal contract between the landlord and tenant outlining the terms of the rental agreement, including rent amount, duration, and responsibilities.
- **Security Deposit:** A sum of money paid by the tenant to the landlord at the beginning of the lease to cover potential damages or unpaid rent that is usually refundable at the end of the lease if there are no issues.
- **Renters Insurance:** An insurance policy that provides coverage for a tenant's personal belongings and liability within the rental property.
- **Eviction:** The legal process by which a landlord can remove a tenant from the rental property for violating the lease terms, such as non-payment of rent.
- **Sublease:** An arrangement where the original tenant rents out the apartment to another person (subtenant) while still holding responsibility for the lease.
- **Utilities:** Services such as electricity, water, gas, and trash collection that may or may not be included in the rent.
- **Move-in/Move-out Inspection:** An inspection conducted by the landlord and tenant at the beginning and end of the lease to document the condition of the rental unit.
- **Grace Period:** A set period after the rent due date during which the tenant can pay rent without incurring a late fee.
- **Late Fee:** A fee charged by the landlord if the tenant fails to pay rent by the due date and grace period.
- **Tenant Rights:** Legal protections afforded to tenants, including the right to a habitable living environment and protection against unfair eviction.
- **Landlord Responsibilities:** Obligations of the landlord to maintain the rental property, make necessary repairs, and ensure it meets health and safety standards.
- **Renewal:** The process of extending the lease agreement for another term, often with updated terms and conditions.
- **Application Fee:** A non-refundable fee paid by the prospective tenant to cover the cost of processing the rental application.