

**Apartment Rental: Some Questions to Ask When You Are Searching**

*You are the renter; the apartment owner/manager is the landlord.*

**# of bedrooms?**

**Anything furnished?**

**Intended for how many renters?**

**1 lease for all renters or does each renter do a separate lease?**

**If apartment is for more than one person, does landlord have the option of choosing additional renters (your future apartment mates)? (a bad idea)**

**What type of heat (gas, oil, or electric)?**

**What are average utility bills?**

**Type of stove and oven?**

**Good fridge provided?**

**Laundry facilities?**

**If there are laundry facilities, do you have to pay?**

**Who pays for utilities (including water)?**

**Is renter's insurance required?**

**Is cable/internet hook-up provided?**

**Does it have a wireless router or do you have to provide that?**

**Who pays for cable/internet?**

**What cable internet options are locally available and how much do they cost (if you pay)?**

**Is parking available?**

**If parking is available do you get an assigned space?**

**If parking is available is there a garage?**

**Do you have to pay extra for parking or is it included in rent?**

**Do you have any maintenance responsibilities, such as mowing the lawn?**

**What is rent?**

**Is the apartment you are being shown the apartment you would actually rent?**

**Will the apartment be ready on the date you need it? Is this date acceptable to your landlord?**

**What is security deposit? (Should be no more than 1 month)**

**Is landlord looking for parental co-sign or some other commitment?**

**Lease is 12 months?**

**After 12 months does landlord then insist on another 12 month lease or does it go to month by month?**

**What is the penalty for leaving your apartment before the lease is up?**

**Read entire lease carefully. Apartment leases are one of the long complicated legalese documents where the “fine print” DOES matter. You WILL be held to what you sign, no matter what the landlord tells you! Any promise they make you should be put in writing as part of the lease. And anything on the lease the landlord says does not matter should be crossed out (below). Handshakes and fine words are not enough if it isn’t in writing!**

**If there is a part of the lease you don’t like you can try to get the landlord to agree to remove it. The way this is usually handled is the related text is crossed out and both the landlord and the renter initialize the crossed out text. You can also add extra text (for example, to clarify vague terms). Again, when this is done everyone initializes it.**

**Often you “apply” to be considered for an apartment. The landlord will then “investigate” to see if you are likely to be a good renter. They may contact references, do a check to see if you have a criminal record, contact your employer, etc. This is not unusual.**

**Sometimes there is an application fee. Often this fee is deducted from the 1<sup>st</sup> month’s rent or returned to you if they turn you down (make sure you know the terms before you pony up this money). (But you would lose the fee if you backed out for some reason). If you apply for an apartment it should only take a day or two (at the most) to get a final decision from the landlord. Keep in mind that once you apply for an apartment and sign a lease, this “freezes” you from choosing another apartment, so you want to be really sure about the place before you either apply or sign a lease.**

**Many landlords will want proof that you have a job and confirmation of your salary. Bring documents with you that prove this (job offer letter and/or pay stub, for example). Bring name, address, phone number, and e-mail of your employer.**

**You should bring names, phone numbers, addresses, and e-mail addresses for references. Often the landlord will contact references about you before moving forward with a lease.**

**I suggest that you don’t sign anything without letting someone with experience (ideally, someone with legal experience) take a look first at the lease.**

**If the landlord does want some sort of parental co-sign or something else, there may need to be some communication/negotiations between your parents and the landlord. The landlord may run a credit check on your parents.**

**Keep in mind the option of renting a room in someone’s house as an alternative to actually renting an apartment.**

**Do not allow yourself to be pressured or bullied by the landlord into applying for an apartment and/or signing a lease you are not comfortable with. There should always be time to have someone else look over a lease before you sign it.**