

When You Look for an Apartment

- ✓ Keep a list of all of the properties that you visit, that way you can go back and look through them and compare them when you are done. Use the **Locating Housing Checklist** on the Off-Campus Housing Website to keep track.
- ✓ Make an appointment. Landlords or apartment managers are busy people so making an appointment is always a good idea. Depending on the apartment complex an appointment may be necessary to view the apartment.
- ✓ Walk around the neighborhood. Take a stroll and see what the neighborhood is like. You may want to do this on a weekday as well as a weekend or in the morning and in the afternoon so that you see what the neighborhood is like at different times.
- ✓ Make sure you get a written receipt for all monetary transactions.
- ✓ Make sure that you are completely comfortable with the decision you are making before you sign a lease. Get all of your questions answered and ensure that nothing is bothering you about your decision.
- ✓ Don't sign a lease for an apartment or house unless you are certain you want it. A lease is a legally binding document, so you are usually responsible for the rent, even if you move out.
- ✓ Do not commit yourself to a place that you cannot afford! Anyone who has signed the lease remains legally liable for the full rent.
- ✓ Once you decide to move-in, do a thorough inspection of the apartment. Use the **Inspection Checklist** on the Off-campus Housing website as a guide. You also may want to go over the Inspection Checklist with the landlord or manager and make sure that anything that is wrong will be fixed, but it is essential that you get this in writing, not just an oral agreement.
- ✓ Make sure you read your lease and know your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.
- ✓ Get renter's insurance for your belongings. If your things are ruined or stolen for any reason other than the landlord's proven negligence, then the landlord is usually not responsible. Renter's insurance does not have to be expensive.
- ✓ Notify the landlord of any problem immediately, and keep a written record of events and communications between you.

THIS IS FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE LEGAL ADVICE. IF YOU NEED LEGAL ADVICE, YOU MUST CONTACT AN ATTORNEY.

Sources: <http://www.clevelandtenants.org/>; www.hud.gov