



Off Campus Housing

[Morris Housing and Redevelopment Authority Website](#)
[Rental Listings](#)
[Landlord and Tenants: Rights and Responsibilities \(PDF\)](#)

What you should take into account when making the decision about moving off campus?

- **Identify your priorities regarding housing.** Decide how much you can afford, whether you want to share, how close to campus do you want to live, and what type of unit would you like. What is important to you? What could you not live with? What could you not live without?
- **Become familiar with landlord-tenant responsibilities and rights.** Visit the [Morris Housing and Redevelopment Authority](#) website for information about building inspections and inspection cycle. The site includes all Morris area rental property listings with inspection status as well as contract information for property owners.

- **Review listings from landlords and students who need to sublet or find roommates.** Possible sources: University Register, Morris Sun Tribune, flyers around campus, online [rental listings](#). Visit the Morris Housing and Redevelopment Authority website for rental property listings.
- **Phone or visit landlords or property managers who are advertising units of potential interest to you.** Script a short, positive statement about yourself that you can leave as a telephone message to landlords to encourage them to call you back. Repeat your name and telephone number slowly and clearly. Express an eagerness to see the rental. When you visit a rental property. Be sure to show up on time and dress well. You want to look responsible.
- **Know the basics:**
 - **Leases:** The basic agreement between you and the owner of the rental property. The lease may be in writing or made orally. Whether written or oral, the lease is a binding agreement that is enforceable through the legal system. If you move out before the end of your lease term and the landlord has acted properly, you may be legally responsible to pay the remainder of the lease.
 - **Deposits:** Most owners require you to deposit a sum of money when you rent a unit. Deposits generally range in amount from one half to a full months rent. This is designed to reimburse the owner for any damages to the unit or for failure to pay rent. At the end of the tenancy, the owner

must return the deposit plus interest or submit an explanation as to why the deposit or a portion of it has been withheld. You should find out the exact purpose for which the deposit will be used and the circumstances affecting its refund.

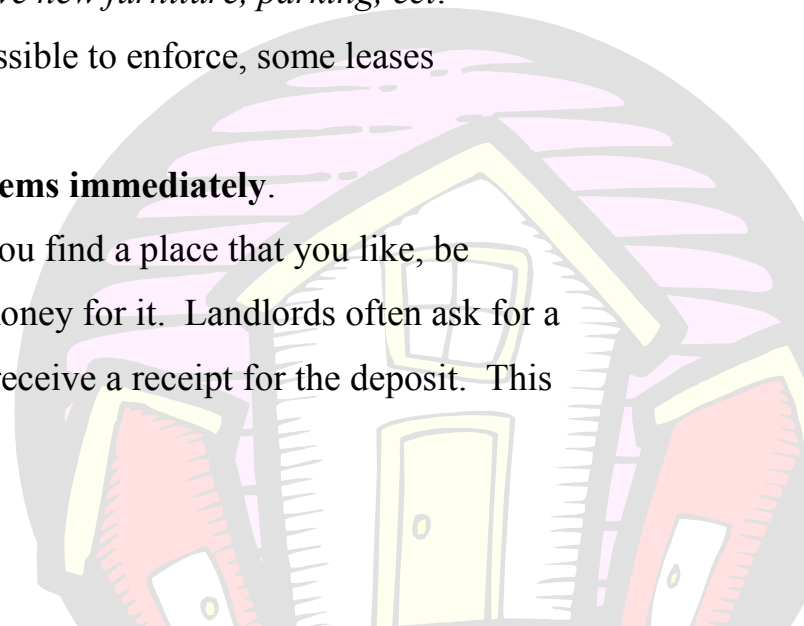
What should I know before renting off-campus housing?

- **Rent:** How much? When is it due? Starting date? What is the policy on late rent? Can rent be paid individually among roommates?
- **Deposit:** How much? How will it be used? How and when is it refunded?
- **Damages:** who pays for breakage or other damages over and above normal wear and tear? Individuals or all occupants? What is the policy on maintenance of minor damages and major ones?
Example: *How long does it take to get a leaky faucet fixed?*
- **Subletting:** Is it permitted? What is the procedure?
- **Roommates:** Should all roommates sign the lease? Are roommates responsible for only a portion of the rent? If someone moves out must the remaining roommates make up the difference?
- **Alterations:** May the unit be altered? Example: *painted? Can you hang pictures on the wall? If yes, how?*
- **Laundry Facilities:** Are they available and are there any restrictions?
- **Noise Restrictions:** For musical instruments, stereo, TV or social events?

- **Inspection by Landlord:** When may the landlord enter your unit? How much notice must be given? What, if any work will be done to the rental before the next tenants move in?
- **Parking:** Is it available? Is it included in the rent or is there an additional charge?
- **Pets:** Are pets allowed? Is there an additional charge for having a pet?
- **Utilities:** What utilities are included in the rent? How much is the installation fee for those utilities not included? What are the billing and payment procedures? Is the unit wired for cable TV hookup/internet access?
- **Security:** How is the security in the building? Are there deadbolt locks and a peephole on the door? Do windows all close and lock securely? How is the security in the laundry room, storage and parking areas?

Tips for Prospective Tenants:

- **If the landlord makes any promises or representation about the unit have him/her put it in writing.** Example: *Make sure the lease reflects that you will have new furniture, parking, ect.* Verbal contracts can be impossible to enforce, some leases preclude verbal agreements.
- **Notify the landlord of problems immediately.**
- **Carry your checkbook.** If you find a place that you like, be prepared to put down some money for it. Landlords often ask for a deposit. Make sure that you receive a receipt for the deposit. This



receipt should specify whether or not the deposit is refundable if you do not end up renting the unit, and how the deposit will be used if you rent the unit. Example: as part of the security deposit or first months rent.

- **Make notes about the various properties that you visit.** They will tend to blur after you visit a few. Write down the distinctive features that will help you to recall a particular unit.
- **Don't sign a lease until you are certain that you want the rental.** It can be difficult and/or expensive to cancel a lease once it's signed.
- **Know your neighbors.** The first step in fostering good relationships with your neighbors is getting to know them. Make an effort to introduce yourself to them; it will be much easier to solve any problems that may arise later.
- **Don't commit yourself to a unit that you cannot afford.** Each fall, there are students who have rented a multi-bedroom unit in the spring and have not been able to find enough housemates to make the payments. Anyone who has signed the lease remains legally liable for the full rent.
- **Be a reasonable tenant.** Realize that things sometimes go wrong, and give the landlord reasonable time to fix them. Treat the unit, your neighbors and landlord with common respect and expect the same in return.

Renter's Insurance:

- **Renter's insurance is an item that you should purchase.**
Landlord's property insurance does not cover your personal property. If you cannot afford to replace your belongings if they are damaged, lost, or stolen, then you should look into buying a policy. If you are still on your parent/guardian's insurance, the least expensive policies can be added to theirs. If these alternatives are not available to you, you can purchase personal property insurance from many insurance agencies.

Safety Considerations and Inspecting the Property:

- Are the locks on the doors and windows in good working condition?
- Are they strong enough?
- Are the doors secured with a deadbolt?
- Is there a peephole in the door?
- Are the doors and windows solidly constructed and in good repair?
- Are the alleys surrounding the unit clean and in good repair?
- Is there enough indoor and outdoor lighting?
- Does the parking lot appear safe?
- Is there broken glass scattered throughout the lot?
- Are there working smoke detectors? A fire escape?
- Are there adequate and displayed emergency routes from the unit in case of a fire?
- What is the area crime rate?
- Check the plumbing: notice any faucet drips or leaking pipes.
- Make sure that the appliances are in good working order.

- Talk to neighbors and other tenants in possible and ask them their opinion of the premise, neighborhood and landlord.

What to do when you move in:

- Complete a move in checklist by documenting all aspects of the unit that in need of repair. Is the refrigerator working, are the window's and doors in good repair, is the unit clean? Have a witness, a friend or the landlord; use a camera for documentation. It is important that you can prove that the pictures or video are dated correctly. Take these precautions when you move out as well in order to avoid extra repair charges.
- Call the utility companies the week before you move in. If you do not, you may be without phone, water, or electric service for a couple of days.
- While your landlord is in the unit for the initial condition check, have him/her show you the location of the fuse or breaker box as well as where the water shuts off.
- Introduce yourself to the neighbors. Having a good relationship with them will increase your enjoyment and safety.
- Put your name/roommates names on the mailbox. You man wish to only put you last name in order to protect your privacy.

What to do when you move out:

_____ *date* _____

Please be advised that the following conditions or defects exist in rental property and are in IMMEDIATE need of your attention and repair:

_____ *dat* _____ at _____

Your prompt attention to this matter will be appreciated.

Vacating Notice:

SAMPLE N077CE.

Be sure to retain copies of this and any other communication between you and your landlord.

VACATING NOTICE

Mr./Ms. Landlord

Address

Dear M. Landlord:

This is to notify you that I am vacating Apartment No. _____
on _____

For the purpose of returning my deposit, my forwarding address is _____

Sincerely,

