

Ready to Make the Next Move?

The Transition from On to Off-Campus

There are several *key considerations* when looking for off-campus housing. Items listed are to help you prepare for your search, move, and living. Other forms are referenced to assist you with this process.

Location:

- Distance from campus
- Neighborhood
- Type – apartment, house, room

Safety:

- personal
- property
- night time/lighting

Budgeting:

Determine how much money you can afford each month and calculate the following to all be included: (see *Financial Planning Worksheet*)

- rent
- deposit
- utilities: gas, electricity, water, garbage, cable, internet/DSL, basic phone service, long distance phone service
- transportation
- parking
- cleaning supplies
- credit card bills
- renters insurance
- pets and vets

Roommates:

Figuring out with whom you are going to live is a start. Making sure you can live together harmoniously is another issue. Commonly we assist people when they are past a point of frustration. Sitting down before moving in together and agreeing on basic ground rules is key. It is also important to revisit your ground rules to determine if they are working or could use some tweaking. Below are common issues: (see *Model Roommate Agreement*)

- overnight guests
- cleanliness
- paying the bills

Laws and Leases

Be sure to fully understand the contract into which you are entering. Scrutinize the lease and negotiate terms with which you don't agree. Remember, it's too late to change the lease after you have signed it. Ask questions and inquire about provisions in the law of which you may be uncertain. Many landlords may ask students for co-signers on a lease. This is not, by itself, a form of discrimination. This is a precaution some landlords may exercise to ensure payment of rent.

Know how your landlord/rental agent handles the following”

- Lease – Terms can vary, so read it!
- Sublease – Can you sublease? (see *Model Sublease Agreement*)
- Shared Lease – How are individuals held responsible?
- Renter Copy of Lease – Make sure you have one!
- Deposits – How much is it and when is it due? What is the refund process?
- Maintenance – What is the process to report repair requests?(see *Sample Letter Issues to Be Resolved*)
- How to Terminate Your Lease – When do you need to inform them? Can you break the lease early? Is there a penalty? (see *Sample Letter End of Lease*)

Also make sure you know what rights and responsibilities both you as the tenant and your landlord have. This can help you more confidently address issues. (see *Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants and Landlords*)

Know that you do have legal resources in case you need them. Learn more about the following on the OCH website:

- Mediation Resources
- Tenant Action Group
- Small Claims Court

Searching (see *Off-Campus Living Tips...From Someone Who's "Been There"*)

Start your search 6 months in advance of your move in date to maximize your options. Make sure that you know the following:

- Budget
- Roommates
- Location

investigate listings regularly

- in Campus Activities
- www.drexel.edu/oca/offcampushousing
- Triangle classifieds
- UPenn database (most extensive for University City)
- Philadelphia Weekly
- City Paper
- Inquirer/Daily News
- signs on buildings/doors
- bulletin boards on campus and in community stores
- word of mouth
- landlords and rental companies
- Other on-line search tools



First Walk Through

Once you have a lead for housing, your next step will be to inspect the unit. It is often hard to remember details and amenities related to each place you visit. We suggest that you find answers to the a wide range of questions during your inspection including: (See the *Apartment Scouting Checklist*)

- What is the cost of rent and what utilities are included?
- Is the rental unit furnished?
- Are pets allowed?
- Is there a washer or dryer?
- Do the faucets work properly?
- Do sinks and tubs drain properly?
- Do kitchen appliances work well?

Moving In/Out

Be sure to fully understand the contract into which you are entering. Scrutinize the lease and negotiate terms with which you don't agree. Remember, it's too late to change the lease after you have signed it. Ask questions and inquire about provisions in the law of which you may be uncertain.

Many landlords may ask students for co-signers on a lease. This is not, by itself, a form of discrimination. This is a precaution some landlords may exercise to ensure payment of rent.

- Be present for final walk through and key exchange.
- Have the rental agent complete check-in/out condition sheet for each room. (see *Tenant Move In/Move Out Checklist*)
- Read and understand the conditions of lease.
- Before signing the lease, add and initial (both you and rental agent) any upgrades or repairs you are requesting.
- Take photos when you move in and out for record of apartment condition. This may come in handy when you are requesting your deposit to be returned.

Living

Once you move in maintaining a positive relationship with your landlord/building manager is important. Clear, concise, and timely communication can help. Just remember that you should make sure that you are watching out for yourself as all landlords/building managers are not equal. So consider the following:

- Keep a written record of communication with landlord/building manager in a journal format which includes: date, time, person with whom you spoke or wrote, action requested, and when it was resolved.
- Act in accordance with the conditions in your lease – to which you agreed.
- Invest in renter's insurance to cover your belongings against theft and damages – most insurance agents handle this on a regular basis and the cost is nominal. You may want to check to determine if your property is protected under your parent's homeowner insurance policy.



Other Useful Resources:

Tenants Action Group 215-575-0700

Small Claims Court, Philadelphia 215-686-7987

Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) [http:// www.pgworks.com](http://www.pgworks.com)
Emergency number..... 215-235-1212
Customer Service 215-235-1000

PECO <http://www.peco.com/college>
Emergency number..... 1-800-841-4141
Customer Service 1-800-494-4000

Comcast <http://www.comcast.com/>
Customer Service 800-COMCAST

Urban Cable Works <http://www.ucwphilly.com/>
Customer Service 215-581-6100

Verizon <http://www.verizon.com/>
Customer Service 800-660-2215

Water Revenue Bureau <http://www.phila.gov/waterrev/>
Customer Service 215-685-6121

Waste Management <http://www.wastemanagement.com/>
Customer Service 800-869-5566

City of Philadelphia Garbage <http://www.thecityofphiladelphia.com/garbage/>
Customer Service 215-686-5564

University Offices <http://www.drexel.edu/oca>
Off-Campus Housing 215-895-1328

Commuter Student Programs and Services
Campus Activities
3210 Chestnut Street, Creese 001
Philadelphia, PA 19104
M-F 8am – 5pm other times by appointment

General Legal Assistance Websites
<http://www.peoples-law.com/>
<http://www.findlaw.com>

other resources listed on OCH website

