

Questions that You Should Ask Before Renting an Apartment

General:

- How much is the rent?
- Is there an application fee?
- Is there a security deposit?
- How much of the deposit is refundable?
- Is a credit check required?
- Is the first month rent required upfront? How about the last month rent?

Lease Agreement Terms:

- How long is the lease? (make sure you understand the exact start and end date)
- Is the lease collective (all roommates are responsible for the rent to be paid in full and if someone moves out, everyone else picks up their share) or individual (you pay for your portion regardless of another roommate's status)?
- When is the rent due?
 - Is there late fee? If so, how much is it, and when does it apply?
- What forms of payments are acceptable?
- Is subletting allowed?
- Is it possible to break the lease before the end date? If so, is there any fee applicable?

Amenities:

- Have an understanding of the exact size of each room, doors, corridor, and windows. This will help you have a better vision of the physical set-up of the residence, especially if you are not able to see it before deciding if it is the right choice that fits your needs.
- When was the house/apartment last renovated?
- Who is responsible for painting?
 - Are you allowed to change colors if you want?

- If there is damage in the house, up to what extent will the landlord pay for it? (for example: painting the walls, fixing pipes, fixing bathrooms, fixing walls, fixing the carpet and floors, etc.)
- Is there any storage space available internally or externally? If so, what are the dimensions of it?
- What kinds of safety systems are provided (sprinkler system, fire alarm, intrusion alarm)?
 - Are alarms tied to the fire station and local police station?
- What utilities are included in the rent?
- Is parking available?
 - Is parking included in the rent payment?
 - Are there spots available or reserved?
 - Is a town parking permit required?
 - Is there a parking fee? If so, how much is it, and how frequently do you pay it (once a year, once a month)?
- Are washer and dryer hook-ups available in the apartment?
 - If not, how distant is the laundry facility?
 - How much does it cost?
 - What are the hours of operation of the laundry facility?
- Does the apartment/house have appliances? If so, what are they?
 - Are they electric or gas?
 - How old are the appliances?
 - In case of a malfunction or damage, who is responsible for fixing or substituting the appliances?
- Is there any furniture in the apartment/house (knowing this in advance will help you estimate your cost)?
 - Is it possible to add any new furniture?
- Is the heat and central AC shared among apartments, or is it individually controlled by each unit?
- Is there a gym?
 - If so, what are the hours?
 - Does it cost extra to be part of the gym?
- Are extermination treatments extra charges?

Neighborhoods:

- What public transportation is available?
- When is the trash pick-up day?
 - What is the policy for recycling?
- Are there public/private schools in the area, if you have children?

- What are the options available for grocery shopping stores?
- Is there any activity club, sports courts, pool, or any entertainment facility in the area?
- Is the area near a very busy highway or road? If so, ask about noise level.
- How convenient it is to get to the highway?
- Is the Internet connection and cell phone reception good?
- What is the crime rate of the area?
 - What type of crime issues have been reported to the management company or police for the apartment community?

Policies and Procedures to Follow:

- What is the proper way to submit a maintenance request?
 - How quickly do maintenance requests get handled?
 - Is there an emergency maintenance contact?
- What is the policy on guests?
- Is there any limitation on decorations?
- Is renters insurance required?
- Is there any incident reporting log for the apartment community?
- Is there a pet fee (some owners will require extra deposit if you own a pet)?
- In case it snows, who is responsible for the plowing and shoveling?

Other Tips When Looking to Rent an Apartment:

- Talk to other residents/tenants
- Read your lease carefully before signing. Make sure the provisions of the lease DO NOT require you to:
 - Give the landlord the right to access the residence when you are not present
 - Give the landlord the right to seize your belongings when rent is not paid
 - Give the landlord the right to shut off utilities when rent is not paid
- Weigh the rent and the cost of the amenities for each option you have