



United Tenants of Albany

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When Looking For A Place TO Live...

- When possible, leave yourself around 2 months to look for an apartment. If you are currently renting, make sure you give any proper notice to your current landlord (see Month to Month Tenant or Leases handout)
- Amount of rent to be charged – stay within your means, so that you will not be put into an eviction situation for nonpayment of rent. It is against the law for the landlord not to give you a receipt. Even if you pay by check, request a receipt.
- Who pays for the utilities? If you are to be responsible, the landlord by law is responsible for supplying you with information as to what the utilities have been for the past two years. This request must be in writing– keep a copy. If you are responsible find out: 1- size of apartment, 2– type of heat (gas, electric or oil), 3– who controls the heat, 4– access to meters/fuse box; get a key to that area. By law tenants must have access to the meters in case of an emergency.
- When you go to look at the apartment, check for broken windows, if there are storms or screens (which are not mandatory by law), number of outlets, ceiling stains for leaks, working faucets, sinks in both bathroom and kitchen, peeling paint, deadbolt locks, solid doors (front and rear exits), window locks, sufficient working heating equipment. If stoves and refrigerators are included, be sure that all parts are included. Make a list of all problems in the apartment and request that they are corrected in writing. Date and sign your request with tenant/landlord and or witness(es).
- Deposits to hold an apartment– when putting a deposit on an apartment, make sure to get a receipt. **Find out if it is refundable before paying**; if so, make sure it is noted on the receipt. You may have to pay an application fee to apply for an apartment as well.
- Security Deposits– are for damages which a tenant causes outside normal wear and tear. It can only be used for the last month's rent with the permission of the landlord. Take pictures of damages moving in, date them.
- Think about whether you want to ask for a fixed-term lease. A lease, once signed by both parties, is binding. A landlord can put anything in a lease that they want to, but, N.Y.S. law overrides anything in a lease that is illegal. It should have the move-in date and the moving out date. Unless there is an automatic renewal clause, it is not necessary to give notice that you are moving when the lease expires.
- If you and the landlord would rather go month to month– this means that a proper calendar month notice is required to make any changes in a tenancy (rent increases, notice to move, utility change, pets, etc.). Proper notice is if the rent is due on the first of the month, the landlord must notify you on or before the first that the change will occur the first of the following month. If notice is given on the second of the month, the notice would not go in to effect until the first of the month after.
- Apartment sharing allows you as a tenant to have a member(s) of your immediate family, fiancée, or companion move in regardless of who is listed on the lease. Tenants must inform their landlords of the name of any occupant within 30 days after the occupant has moved into the apartment. This should be acceptable as long as there is not an overcrowding condition.
- Remember that NYS law allows you to have over night guests stay with you for short periods of time.
- Once you've located an apartment that you think you'd like to rent, call your local code enforcement agency to make sure the landlord has their rental permits in place. This will usually indicate that a semi-recent third party inspection has been done in the apartment to ensure the space is safe. In the city of Albany, we recommend you call (518)434-5995 to find out if there is a valid residential occupancy permit at the apartment before moving in!



Helpful Hints When Calling a Landlord about an Apartment

- Ask to speak to the person listed in the advertisement.
- Introduce yourself.
- Ask if the apartment is still available.
- Are the utilities included in the rent?
- If the tenant must pay for the heat, is the heating system gas, oil, or electric?
- Is there a lease?
- Where is the apartment located?
- Is it on a bus route (if you don't have a car)?
- Is there on or off street parking (if you have a car)?
- If you have assistance from Section 8 or the Department of Social Services (DSS) in paying your rent, ask the landlord if he/she will accept Section 8 or a voucher from DSS.
- Ask to see the apartment at a time convenient to both you and the landlord
- Thank the landlord for his/her time and consideration

