

Renting Primer

Renting an apartment can be a daunting task. Whether this is your first time renting or you are a seasoned pro, follow these tips to ensure a problem-free renting experience.

1. Most landlords will require that you earn three times the monthly rent per month. However, most landlords near the UW are experienced with renting to international students. You should expect that there may be an extra deposit required, you may need a co-signer or you may need to show bank statements to prove that you can pay your rent because you cannot always be qualified using the standard rental methods. (Usually this is due to both lack of credit and lack of a social security number). Don't let this be intimidating. Most students seeking an apartment do not have rental references or credit so they will go through the same process you will.
2. Your landlord may require a screening fee which is used to run background checks and often criminal checks on you and therefore the rest of the tenants living in your building. We strongly suggest that you rent from landlords who screen their tenants thoroughly. You will know that everyone has gone through the same process that you have. Keep in mind that screening fees are not usually refundable.
3. Deposits are refundable monies collected to provide damage security on your apartment. A deposit is always refundable, however charges such as carpet cleaning can be deducted from the deposit when you move out. Make sure that you understand how the deposit will be used. You should have a deposit and fee receipt which explains what will happen to your deposit money when you move-out. You should also be issued a written receipt when you pay a deposit. It is advisable for you to pay your rent, fees and deposits with travelers checks, money orders or with your checking account. You should avoid using cash as most legitimate landlords do not accept cash.
4. Your lease agreement is a legal document. Always insist on a written rental agreement! Make sure you understand what your obligations are and what the landlords obligations are. You should always be asked to do a move-in inspection which reports the condition of the apartment when you move-in. Definitely ask for a copy of your completed lease and the move-in for your records.
5. Rent from someone who is responsive and has a friendly staff. Hopefully you won't have a problem in your apartment, but if you do, you want a landlord who will help you through the problem, rather than someone who will ignore your requests or is difficult to reach either in person, by phone or e-mail. Most landlords truly want your residency to be problem-free. If no one is around when you are trying to rent an apartment, it could very well be the same when you are living there. Look for a building that has a staff member living on site and a helpful office staff. You want to make sure that there is someone around in case you have a complaint, there is an emergency or you just need to borrow a cup of sugar!

Stop by our office for a free copy of "Information for Tenants" an abbreviated version of the Seattle Landlord-Tenant Law.



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