

INSPECTING THE PROPERTY

Make notes about the various properties you visit, since they will all tend to blur after you visit a few. Write down distinctive features that will help you to recall a particular place. Be observant and pay special attention to safety and maintenance features. Some items you might want to consider include:

1. Is it a safe area? Visit at night with a friend to get a feel for the neighborhood. See if the door has a deadbolt lock and if windows are secured with locks. All sliding glass doors should have a bar or a stick of wood in the inside door path to prevent them from being opened from outside.
2. Check for safety measures in case of fire. Is there a fire escape? Does the place have one or more smoke detectors?
3. If you are renting a house or townhouse, check the basement. Notice the heating/air conditioning unit and size of the hot water tank (especially if a number of people are sharing). If you are renting an apartment, does it have its own thermostat?
4. Check the plumbing -- Flush the toilet and run water in the sinks and tubs to observe flow and drainage of water. Notice any faucet drips and/or leaking pipes--especially if you are responsible for the water bill! Run the garbage disposal to see if it works.
5. Make sure the appliances are in good working order and that they have the necessary accessories such as a broiler pan for the oven. Turn on all burners on the stove and the oven to see if they work, and check the refrigerator to see if it is cold.
6. Contact the appropriate utility companies to find out what the average utility bills were for previous tenants.
7. How thin or thick are the walls? Can you hear the neighbors? Can they hear you?
8. Observe the electrical fixtures for any frayed wiring. Turn on the lights. Check to see if there are sufficient overhead lights or if you will need to supplement the lighting with lamps. Check to see if entrances are well lit at night.
9. Is there sufficient closet space?
10. Do you observe any bug or rodent infestations? Check the cabinets under the kitchen and bathroom sinks.
11. Take a look at how the premises are kept. Appearances of entrances and hallways are good indications of the type of maintenance you can expect.
12. Examine the condition of the walls (paint, plaster, etc.). Will they be repainted before you move in? Get it in writing before you sign the lease!
13. Talk to neighbors and tenants if possible and ask them what they think of the premises, the neighborhood, and the landlord. Check with the Off Campus Housing Office to see if former tenants have registered any complaints against the landlord.
14. If the property does not have its own washer/dryer, does the building have a safe, well-lit laundry area?
15. If furnished, what is the condition of the furniture?
16. Notice if there are any unpleasant odors such as mildew, smoke, or pet odors.