

## A CHECKLIST FOR PROSPECTIVE RENTERS

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You can use the list of questions below to check an apartment before you move in. Some questions cannot be answered by simple observation and may require interviewing tenants of other apartments in the building.

### INTERVIEWING CURRENT TENANT(S)

- How responsive is the landlord to requests for repairs?
- During winter, does the heat seem adequate? How responsive is the landlord to complaints about the heat?
- Are there frequent non-structural problems, such as noise or theft, which affect them?
- Is there a nearby grocery store? Laundromat (if facilities do not exist on premises)?
- What is the local parking situation? Does the landlord provide parking for tenants and guests?

### TALK TO THE LANDLORD

- Is there an emergency phone number in case of utility problems, leaks, or other urgent maintenance issues?
- Are there separate meters for individual units? If not, are tenants charged for these utilities?
- Do tenants have access to the circuit breakers if there is a small power outage?
- If not, are maintenance personnel available for flipping circuits on short notice?
- Who controls the temperature in the building?
- Where is the trash/ recycling to be placed? Is it put out by landlord or tenants?

### EXAMINING THE UNIT

Building lobby:

- Is it clean and adequately lit?
- Does it have a lock or other security provisions?
- How are deliveries handled?

Entrance and exit to building:

- Are the stairs well lit and in safe condition?
- Where are the fire exits located? Are fire doors alarmed? (If not, check doors yourself.)
- Is there a fire alarm or other warning system?

Hallways:

- Are they clean and adequately lit?
- Are they otherwise in good condition?

Entry to Individual Unit:

- Does the unit's entry door have a dead-bolt lock?
- A security chain?
- A through-the-door viewer?

Interior of Unit:

- Are there signs of insects, mice, or rats (such as traps, droppings, etc.) present?
- Can you hear neighbors above, below, or on either side of you?
- Is there a fire escape or secondary exit from the unit? Check this for security.

Wiring:

- Are there enough electrical outlets? (Two or three to a room is the minimum.)
- Do all the switches and outlets work?

Windows:

- Are any broken?
- Can they be opened and closed easily?
- Are they provided with locks?
- Are screens provided?
- Are there drafts around the window frame?
- Are they clean? Does the landlord arrange for the outside of the windows to be cleaned?
- Is ventilation adequate?
- Are windows that can allow easy access to intruders equipped with security bars?

Floors:

- Are they clean?
- If carpeted, are the carpets in good condition?
- If not carpeted, is the floor marred or gouged? Are there nails protruding? Does it appear to be safe walking barefoot?
- Do they have any water stains indicating previous leaks?

Ceilings:

- Are they clean?
- Is the plaster cracked?
- Is the paint peeling?
- Do they have any water stains indicating previous leaks?

Walls:

- Are they clean?
- Is the plaster cracked?
- Is the paint peeling?
- Are they free of dents and holes, other than small nail holes?
- Do the walls seem hollow (when thumped) or solid?

Lighting:

- Are there enough fixtures for adequate light?
- Are the fixtures in good working order?
- Do the windows provide adequate natural light?

Bathroom(s):

- Are the plumbing fixtures in good working order and reasonably clean?
- How does the hot water supply seem?
- Are the tiles (if the room is tiled) secure and water tight?
- Is there sufficient storage space, such as a linen closet or medicine cabinet?

Kitchen:

- Is the sink in good working order, reasonably clean, and provided with drain stoppers?
- Is the stove (if provided) in good working order and reasonably clean?
- Is there an exhaust fan?
- Is the refrigerator (if provided) in good working order? Does the freezer compartment have a separate door?
- If there is a dishwasher, is it in good working order?
- Is there adequate cabinet and counter space?

Bedroom(s):

- Is there sufficient closet space?
- Does it appear to be large enough for your bedroom furniture?

Heating:

- (In winter) Does the heating system seem to be in good working order? Is it providing adequate heat?
- Is there a fireplace? If so, are there any signs (such as smoke stains) that it has not worked properly?

Air-conditioning:

- Is the entire building air-conditioned?
- If not, are there separate units and are they functioning properly?

Telephone:

- Are phone jacks already installed?
- Are they in convenient locations?

Outdoor amenities:

- Is there a pool with lifeguards?
- Do they have an outdoor playground? Dog walking area?
- If they have other outdoor amenities, examine them for safety and adequate lighting.

**READ THE LEASE BEFORE PAYING DEPOSIT**

- What is the rent per month? Or per week?
- How much is the security deposit? (This includes any pre-paid money such as “last month’s rent” or “pet deposit.”)
- Does the lease say rent can be increased if real estate taxes are raised, if sewer or water assessments are increased, or for any other reason?
- Does the lease say that the landlord will be providing a stove and refrigerator? (They are actually not required under some county housing codes.)
- Is TV or stereo playing forbidden at certain hours?
- Do you pay extra (and how much) for such things as utilities, storage space, air-conditioning, parking space, master TV antenna connection, use of recreation areas (such as pool or tennis courts), installation of special appliances, late payment of rent, etc.?
- When does the lease expire? Does it contain an automatic renewal clause?
- Are all the amenities promised by the landlord (such as air-conditioning, parking, etc.) listed in the lease?