


A photograph of three students walking on a paved path in a lush, green campus setting. On the left, a young woman with a ponytail, wearing a dark t-shirt and shorts, carries a backpack and a shopping bag. In the center, a young man in a white t-shirt and jeans holds a skateboard. On the right, another young man in a dark t-shirt and khaki pants carries a backpack and books. White hand-drawn outlines are superimposed on the image, framing the students and the text. The background features large trees and a grassy area.

Off-Campus Living Guide



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE



Visit Willie J. Young, Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement

Student Life's Willie J. Young, Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement's (OCCSE) purpose is to foster the iconic off-campus residential experience through education, advocacy and engagement. By collaborating with stakeholders across The Ohio State University and our community, OCCSE empowers students to engage, learn and thrive.



OHIO UNION ROOM 3106

Available Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. by phone, in-person and virtual appointments.

Complementary Services: Off-Campus Housing Consultations, Safety Devices, Roommate and Sublet Ads, Off-Campus Housing Network Housing Search, Access to the Commuter Kitchen and Commuter Lockers and much more.

Whether you are searching for off-campus housing, looking for a roommate or wanting to get involved in your community, we have everything you need to make your time at Ohio State successful.

 @offcampus_osu Website: offcampus.osu.edu 



Events and Services

- Roommate Fairs
- Free Safety Devices
- Commuter Orientation
- Commuter Preview Day
- Off-Campus Living Expos
- Free Food Truck Events
- Clean Up Columbus
- Off-Campus Living Sessions
- Commuter Kitchen, Lounge and Lockers
- Online Modules
- BLOC (Buckeyes Living Off-Campus) Newsletter
- Housing Consultations
- Off-Campus Housing Network Housing Search

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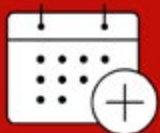
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SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT



studentlegal.osu.edu



STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES

QUESTIONS?

call
or text



614.247.5853

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING



DEBT
CREDIT
NOTARY
CONSUMER
CONTRACTS
EMPLOYMENT
IMMIGRATION
IDENTITY THEFT
VICTIM ASSISTANCE
POWER OF ATTORNEY
& MUCH MORE

CRIMINAL & TRAFFIC DEFENSE



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by phone
video or
in person



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**Welcome to
Life Off Campus**

What to Expect From This Guide

The Off-Campus Living Guide outlines resources and tips to help all students engage, learn and thrive. This Guide provides you with answers about off-campus housing, university and city resources and helps you understand your rights and responsibilities as an off-campus resident.

The Off-Campus Living Guide will also give students a brief introduction to the **Off-Campus Housing Network** and the benefits of utilizing this resource.

PRO TIP



Utilize control + F to easily find the topic you are looking for!



Community Ambassadors and Administrative Associates

WHAT IS A CA?

Community Ambassadors (CA) are fellow Ohio State students who serve as off-campus and commuter student advocates, as well as mentors for students navigating their college living experience.

The Community Ambassador (CA) staff embody a wide array of experiences and backgrounds, and actively work to improve the off-campus and commuter student experience. CAs advocate for students through a variety of opportunities including outreach efforts to share resources both on and off campus, hosting engagement initiatives and fostering peer relationships. Simply put, Community Ambassadors are students who support fellow students.

Our CA team works out in the community throughout the academic year. Look out for them engaging with students on and off campus- and please stop by to say hi!

WHAT IS AN AA?

As members of Student Life Willie J. Young, Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement, Administrative Associates (AA) interact with and serve fellow students and

property managers to provide an extraordinary experience for students off-campus. As an Administrative Associate, students can build an extensive knowledge base while helping their fellow students successfully live off-campus. Not only do they build interpersonal and communication skills, but students are also able to develop project management skills through collaborative events and projects within Student Life and other external organizations. You can find our AAs working hard in our office at 3106 Ohio Union!



THOUGHTS FROM FELLOW BUCKEYES

“One of the things I love most about Ohio State is the sense of community you feel everywhere on campus. Whether I'm studying at Thompson Library or cheering on the Buckeyes at the stadium, there's always a feeling of belonging and pride.”

- Jon, Community Ambassador

“Living off-campus has proven instrumental in fostering independence, responsibility and nurturing meaningful connections.”

- Maddi, Community Ambassador

“Being an Ohio State University student means embracing a legacy of excellence, camaraderie and Buckeye Pride that lasts a lifetime.”

-Ja’Niyah, Administrative Associate





Preparing to Live Off-Campus

Budgeting

Living off campus in an apartment or house on your own for the first time is super exciting, but it's also a big commitment. Developing, understanding and sticking to your budget will not only set you up for success in the future, but it'll lead to an enjoyable experience while you're living off campus.

Budgeting can often feel like putting together a puzzle, but Scarlet and Grey Financial is there to help! **Scarlet and Gray Financial Coaching** is a nationally recognized peer financial coaching program housed in the Student Wellness Center in the RPAC. The program assists thousands of Ohio State students each year in creating the life they desire through the use of a goal-driven financial process.

THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR BUDGET

Fixed Expenses: Costs that typically remain the same in price and frequency.

- Rent
- Renters Insurance
- Internet/cable
- Subscriptions and membership
- Cellphone bill
- Car payment

Variable Expenses: Costs that can change regularly.

- Groceries
- Personal care
- Utilities
- Clothing
- Gas
- Hobbies
- Entertainment

PRO TIP

Utilize cost of rent filter within the **Off Campus Housing Network** Housing Search to ensure you find a place that fits within your budget. ↩



Roommates 101

PREPARING TO LIVE WITH ROOMMATES OFF CAMPUS

Choose your roommates wisely; depending on your lease terms and the type of lease you sign, you and your roommates may be legally bound together for the duration of the lease. It's exciting to think about living with your friends, but friends don't always make the best roommates. Before you decide who to live with, there's a few things to consider:

Budget

This might be the most important part! It's important that you and your potential roommates are all on the same page when it comes to finances and how much you can realistically spend when living off campus. Get clear on your budget and then share that with your roommates to come to a consensus. There's nothing worse than having to figure out how you will pay your rent and bills each month.

Definition of Cleanliness

Examples of questions to ask yourself:

- Am I someone that puts my laundry away as soon as it's done or is it ok if I leave it in a laundry basket for a day or two?

- Do I wash my dishes as soon as I am done eating or is it ok for them to sit in the sink overnight?
- How often should you:
 - » Take out the trash
 - » Clean out the refrigerator
 - » Clean the bathroom

How do you feel about guests and parties?

- Are you ok having guests over or would you prefer everyone goes somewhere else?
- What are the expectations you have of your roommates when they have guests?
- Can guests sleep in your bed when you're out of town?
- Can guests eat the food in the kitchen?
- Are guests allowed in your personal spaces?

Noise and study preferences

Do you need strict silence to get your work done or are you ok if your roommates are watching a movie in the living room while you're trying to study?

Resources

ONLINE ROOMMATE SEARCH

Willie J. Young, Sr. Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement offers a secure, central platform to assist you in your off-campus roommate search. You can post and/or browse roommate ads at offcampus.osu.edu.

ROOMMATE FAIRS

Roommate Fairs are held each semester and provide a great opportunity to meet potential roommates.

Check out the Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement [website](#) for details on upcoming fairs!

ROOMMATE AGREEMENTS

Work through the **Roommate Agreement** with your roommates to set expectations and have an enjoyable living experience.

PRO TIP

Did you know that OCCSE offers **Off-Campus Living Sessions** year round to walk students through the leasing process and give insider tips to feel confident in your housing and roommate decisions? Sign up for a free session today!



Choosing Your Off-Campus Property

LEASE SEASON

One question many students have is, “when do I need to sign a lease by?” and the answer is whenever you feel confident doing so!

Students seeking housing in the University District typically search for housing October through December, however if you don't sign a lease during these months, that does not mean you won't find a place to live.

DO YOUR RESEARCH


Check out crime statistics at communitycrimemap.com. 

Walk around the outside of the house or apartment in the day and nighttime.

Pick up your complementary safety devices from Off-Campus and Commuter Student Engagement. Safety device info is available online at offcampus.osu.edu/resources/safety. 

The Undergraduate Student Government offers a [Renter's Guide](#) which contains a compilation of ratings from students renting from local property owners/managers.

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING NETWORK HOUSING SEARCH

Utilize the Off-Campus Housing Network Housing Search to find off-campus housing online at offcampus.osu.edu/off-campus-housing-network. 

OFF-CAMPUS LIVING EXPO



The Off-Campus Living Expo serves as a fun and interactive event for Ohio State students, parents, faculty and staff to gather information about off-campus living and safety. This event incorporates available in-network rental properties, transportation options, fire and home safety education, student involvement opportunities and more. We encourage all students to attend the Off-Campus Living Expo as they are navigating their housing search and off-campus life.

Keep an eye on the offcampus.osu.edu for updates on upcoming Off-Campus Living expos!

OTHER LIVING GUIDES

- The [Commuting 101 guide](#) is helpful if you are living off campus and plan to drive to campus!
- [Graduate and Professional Student Guide](#)

WHAT IS THE OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING NETWORK?

- You can search for off-campus housing directly through offcampus.osu.edu! 
- Only In-Network Property companies can feature properties on the **Off-Campus Housing Network Housing Search**. 
- In-network property companies prioritize safety through inspections with the City of Columbus and agree to certain criteria that go above and beyond city code. For example:
 - » Lighting on the front and back exterior of the building and carbon monoxide detectors
 - » These property owners also receive regular updates on Ohio State and City resources.
 - » In-network property owners also provide information about their business practices so that you can be knowledgeable about making decisions on where you want to live and know what to expect from them.



Before You Sign on the Dotted Line

UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEASE

When renting off campus, you will be asked to sign a lease, which is a legally binding document between you (the tenant) and the property owner. It is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities before signing this lease. Everyone who signs the lease may be asked to fill out an application which is usually associated with a \$50-\$75 per person rate plus administrative fees. Most property owners require all tenants on the lease under the age of 23 to have a co-signer, often a parent or guardian.

One of the best ways to gain a good understanding of your lease is to schedule a Lease Review with **Student Legal Services**. 📄

Leases in Ohio are not standard and can differ by property. Student Legal Services' professionals will review your lease with you line-by-line and explain your rights and responsibilities under Ohio law. You can schedule a Lease Review on the Student Legal Services website. They will read through your lease and then meet with you to make sure you understand what you are signing, what is expected of you as a tenant and what you can expect from your property owner or manager.



TIPS TO CONSIDER

- Once all documents have been signed, make sure each roommate keeps a copy.
- Once your lease is reviewed and signed, your property owner collects a security deposit to pay for any unpaid rent or damages to the property during the lease term. To ensure that you are not charged for damages you did not cause, take photos and video of the property when you move in. Complete the move-in checklist provided by Student Legal Services. Communicate damages to your property manager so they can repair them, and always stay up to date on rent.
- You can find information on individual property owner/manager business practices **online**. It's a great idea to familiarize yourself with these so that you can understand what to expect of your property owner/manager.
- The City of Columbus provides additional options and protections for tenants renting from property owners and managers in Columbus. Property owners may be held criminally liable for a misdemeanor offense for violating these laws:
 - » **Renter's Choice** requires a property owner with more than five units to provide the tenant with written notice and the option to pay any applicable security deposit in full or in payments over 3, 6 or more monthly payments due when rent is due.
 - » Rental Receipt obligates a property owner to provide the tenant with written receipt of any security deposit or rent payments at the time the money is received, unless the payment is processed electronically such as through a third-party portal.
 - » Source of Income protections for tenants prohibit property owners from discriminating against a tenant because of the tenant's source income, including social security, child support, spousal support, housing choice vouchers and other lawful means of payment. For example, based on source of income, a property owner cannot refuse to lease, make a distinction between price or terms, discourage a tenant from renting, tell a tenant a unit is not available when it is or deny renting a unit to a tenant that, but for the source of income, would satisfy any application criteria and/or income thresholds.

Rental Property Inspection

Moving into a new rental property is an exciting step, but it's important to ensure that your new home is in good condition before you settle in. A thorough inspection can help you identify any issues that need to be addressed and protect your security deposit. Our rental property inspection worksheet is designed to guide you through this process, ensuring that you don't miss any important details. By completing this rental property inspection worksheet, you can ensure that your new home is safe, well-maintained, and ready for you to move in. This thorough documentation will also provide you with peace of mind and help protect your interests throughout your tenancy.

- Turn on all faucets and shower heads to make sure the hot and cold water works.
- Confirm that there is at least one smoke detector per floor, especially in or near each bedroom (ideally there would be one smoke detector per bedroom as well).
- Check the thermostat and make sure the heat and air conditioning work properly.
- Make sure there is enough outdoor lighting for your safety.
- Open windows to check the condition of their hardware and to make sure they are not painted shut. Bedroom windows should be large enough to escape through in case of emergency.
- Inspect the walls, floors and carpet for moisture damage or mold.
- Make sure all exterior doors have functioning locks.
- Check all appliances to be certain that they work.
- Talk to the current tenants to see if they have had any problems or issues with the unit or appliances.
- If you see any issues or needed upgrades, discuss each item with the property owner; if they agree to your requests, be sure to put each item in writing in the lease.
- Check if there are carbon monoxide detectors installed. Be sure to test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Contact your property manager to replace any expired batteries or detectors.

Important things to keep in mind and understand:

Lease Term

Know the duration of your lease. Leases typically run for 11.5 months, but some landlords may offer shorter or longer terms. Understand the start and end dates of your lease.

Security Deposit

Know the amount of the security deposit required and the conditions under which you may get it back when you move out. Landlords may deduct for damages beyond normal wear and tear.

Maintenance and Repairs

Understand the process for reporting maintenance issues and repairs. Know your responsibilities as a tenant and the property owner's obligations to maintain a habitable living space.

PRO TIP

5 Make sure you save your property company's emergency maintenance phone number in your phone so if an emergency occurs you don't have to waste time figuring out who to call.

Rent Payments

Clearly understand how much rent you need to pay and when it's due. Late payments often incur fees, so it's important to stay on top of your rent payments.

Utilities and Additional Costs

Clarify which utilities (e.g., water, electricity, internet, gas) are included in the rent and which ones you are responsible for. This will help you budget appropriately.

Subleasing and Roommates

Check whether subleasing is allowed if you plan to be away for a semester. If you have roommates, ensure that the lease outlines each person's responsibilities and how rent will be divided.

Rules and Regulations

Be aware of any specific rules and regulations outlined in the lease, such as noise restrictions, pet policies and any other restrictions that may affect your daily living.

Renewal Options

Know whether there is an option to renew the lease at the end

of the term and the conditions for doing so. Some leases may automatically convert to month-to-month if not renewed.

Termination Clause

Understand the conditions under which the lease can be terminated early and what penalties or fees may apply if you need to break the lease before its natural expiration.

Document Condition

Before moving in, document the condition of the rental property through photos, videos and a move-in checklist. This can help protect your security deposit when you move out.

Communication

Know the best way to communicate with your property owner or management company. Keep a record of any communication, especially regarding repairs or concerns.

Legal Obligation

Familiarize yourself with state and local tenant laws and regulations to understand your rights and responsibilities as a renter.



Life Off Campus



Tips For Moving Into Your New Home

PRIOR TO MOVING DAY

- Schedule a date to pick up your keys. This is a great opportunity to ask your property owner to do a walkthrough of the property with you before you move your furniture into the unit.
- Set up your utilities: gas, electric, water, internet, etc. - be sure to check in with your property owner or manager to see if any are included or already set up and confirm activation dates.
 - » Create online accounts for all utilities and make note of all bill due dates.
- **Set up mail forwarding** with the US Postal Service.
- Purchase a renters insurance policy.
- If you plan to drive to and park on Ohio State's campus, you will need to purchase a campus parking permit through the **CampusParc website**.
- If your property does not include parking and you plan to park on an off-campus street, keep in mind that many streets require you to purchase a City Parking Permit **online**. ←



MOVE-IN DAY!

- Document the condition of the property with pictures and videos.

PRO TIP Save these photos and videos to your computer in a folder you'll remember. You can also share these with your property owner so they have a copy, too.

» Utilize the **move-in checklist!**

- Check the condition and functionality of all appliances and confirm they are clean and in working order.
- Test all keys and fobs to ensure they work properly.
- Inspect cleanliness of the living space and report any maintenance issues to the property owner or manager.
- Note any needed repairs and inform the property owner or manager.
- Verify that all utilities are in working order.
- Pick up any equipment needed (i.e. wifi router, cable box, etc.)
- Locate and test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors (Did you know CO2 detectors are not a requirement in units; however, in-network property owners have made a commitment to having CO2 alarms in all of their properties).
- Identify fire extinguisher locations and purchase one if not already provided.
- Identify emergency exits and ensure windows are easily accessible.
- Confirm all windows and doors are secure and lock properly.
- Install any safety devices (i.e. window and door alarms from OCCSE!).
- Familiarize yourself with the local area, amenities, and emergency services.
- Program emergency numbers and property owner or manager contact into your phone.



Be a Good Neighbor

GET TO KNOW YOUR NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

Each neighborhood in the University District is unique. Explore all of the neighborhoods and what they have to offer by visiting the [University District Organization](#) website.

GET YOU KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

- Introduce yourself
- Respect noise levels
- Communicate parties and events
- Consider the parking situation
- Respect shared spaces and property boundaries
- Be mindful of trash disposal
- Observe good pet etiquette and cleanliness
- Be conscious of safety and security measures
- Participate in community events
- Address concerns properly
- Observe local ordinances
- Be considerate, inclusive and respectful



Trash Talk

Trash is collected once a week and is managed by the City of Columbus Department of Public Service – **Division of Refuse Collection**. ↩

- Determine your designated trash-collection day.
- Trash and recyclables are collected weekly in Columbus.
- Schedule a bulk item pick-up: remember, bulk items such as mattresses and couches are not collected unless the resident schedule a pick-up. Download the MyColumbus app, where you can schedule bulk pick-ups and have several other city resources at your fingertips.
- If you have old furniture, appliances, clothing and other items in good condition, consider donating them to a local organization.



Utilize Your Resources

- **COTA (Central Ohio Transit Authority)** is the public bus system throughout Columbus. Riding the COTA bus is a great way to commute to campus, but also to get around areas like the Short North, Arena District and more!
 - » All Ohio State students have access to ride COTA which is paid through student fees- so take advantage!
 - » Utilize the Transit app to track routes and arrivals.
 - » A valid BuckID is required to ride.
- **CABS** (Central Area Bus Service) is the Ohio State free bus system Free transit service to get around campus.
 - » Anyone is welcome to ride the CABS buses.
 - » If you drive to campus and park in the Buckeye Lots, you can hop on a CABS bus to get to campus.
 - » Utilize the OSU app to track routes and arrivals.
- **CBUS 3-1-1** is your one-stop source for all non-emergency requests for city services. Download the app to:
 - » Report repairs such as potholes, burned out street lights, clogged street drains, etc.
 - » Request bulk trash pick-up.
 - » Link to pay for street parking.
 - » And more!
- PickUp CBUS is an app to:
 - » Find your trash, recycling and yard waste **collection schedule.**
 - » Get service notices.
 - » Use the Waste Wizard to find out what is recyclable and how to properly dispose of items.
- The Commuter Hub is located on the third floor of the Ohio Union:
 - » Commuter Lockers
 - » Available on a first come, first served basis.
 - » Reservations open at 8 a.m. on the first day of classes - they go quickly!
 - » Commuter Lounge
 - » Open during the hours of the Ohio Union.
 - » Great place to study, relax and spend time with friends.
 - » Commuter Kitchen
 - » Refrigerators, microwave, cabinet space, sink and more!
 - » Gain access through the **OCCSE website.**

Stay Safe

FIRE SAFETY

Since 2000, Campus Firewatch has documented that 87% of fatal campus fires national occurred in off-campus areas.

Help prevent house fires:

- Test smoke alarms once per month and change batteries each semester.
- Don't grill on a porch or have open burning (i.e. fire pit) within 25 feet of a building. Check out [grilling safety tips online](#).
- Keep a working fire extinguisher near your kitchen and know how to use it. Student Life Facilities offers complimentary fire extinguisher education. Find more information on the [website](#).

PERSONAL SAFETY

Ohio State offers resources and services to help support your safety; it is up to you to take the necessary precautions to stay safe. By creating a close-knit community, you can look out for one another by informing each other of suspicious activity in your neighborhood. Community Ambassadors help you and your neighbors to be the eyes and ears in the community by offering opportunities to meet your neighbors and tracking observations about issues that could impact your off-campus experience (i.e. lights not working). In-network property

owners also contribute to your experience by agreeing to additional safety standards such as exterior lighting.

Below are some additional recommendations to aid in your safety:

- Introduce yourself to your neighbors and exchange contact information.
- Walk in well-lit areas, never walk alone at night; remain alert and aware of your surroundings.
- Keep all windows and doors locked, even when you are home.
- Ask a neighbor or friend to keep an eye on your home while you're away.
- Avoid posting on social media sharing that you are away.
- Utilize Lyft Ride Smart at Ohio State it offers eligible students discounted rides inside the university designated service area.
- Download the free Rave Guardian app. This service allows you to select friends or family as a virtual guardian to follow you via GPS tracking, using a destination-based timer.
- Schedule a date and time to pick up complimentary safety devices from the OCCSE office in 3106 Ohio Union.
- Bookmark the [Department of Public Safety's](#) website and take advantage of their resources and services.
- **Be Smart, Be Safe, Be a Buckeye**

Moving Out and Moving On

Tips to create a smooth move-out experience:

- Double-check your lease for your defined move-out notice period and let your property owner know within that timeframe that you will not be renewing your lease.
- Clean your unit thoroughly.
- Document the condition of the property with the same checklist you used to move in.
- Cancel all of your services and utilities.
- Forward your mail to your new home.
- Return any used equipment like cable boxes, internet routers, etc.
- Return your keys to the property company.
- Send the property company written notice of your **forwarding address** so they know where to send your security deposit.



**THIS GUIDE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE OFFICE OF
STUDENT LIFE WILLIE J. YOUNG, SR. OFF-CAMPUS AND
COMMUTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

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