

SMOOTH MOVE

Common Terms Defined

- **Joint and several liability:** each tenant is responsible for the entire rental amount and any damages caused to the property. Examples:
 - If one of your housemates decides to move out in the middle of the year without finding a replacement tenant, your landlord can still require that you pay the full rental amount
 - If there is damage to the unit, the landlord can hold you all responsible, even if only one of your housemates caused the damage.
- **Co-signer/guarantor:** a person who pledges to bear responsibility for unpaid rent and damages to the property.
- **Security deposit:** money paid upon signing lease that is intended to cover any unpaid rent or damage to the unit.
 - Typically, equal to one month's rent. Should be returned at the end of the lease period, minus unpaid rent and cost of damage and repair.
- **Holding deposit:** money paid to “hold” a unit while lease signing process is unfinished.
 - Be careful with putting money down prior to signing anything. If a holding deposit is required, ensure the transaction is recorded in writing, and ensure that landlord signs to give back your deposit if you decide to release your hold.
- **Egress requirement:** every bedroom must have an “exit” that meets city code, should you encounter an emergency.
 - Windows no than 44 inches off the floor higher typically meet this requirement.
- **Renter’s insurance:** your landlord’s insurance does not cover your personal property. You must purchase Renter’s insurance for your personal property loss up to a certain amount called the “coverage limit.” Renter’s insurance premiums are typically low-cost.
- **Sublease:** an agreement between a tenant on the original lease with the landlord and another person who was not on the original lease (the sublessee). The agreement is that the sublessee will take over the tenant’s lease for a specified duration. Generally, the landlord does not have a separate agreement with the sublessee.



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Finding Peace Before You Lease

How to use this guide: Only you can decide the off-campus housing that is “right” for you. We put together this guide to help you evaluate your off-campus housing choices. We suggest you go through this checklist for each property you consider renting. Note that some points on the checklist may not apply to your off-campus housing choice. What is most important is that you do sufficient research and evaluation for any property you are considering renting.

Price

- How much is the monthly rental cost per person?
- How much are the utilities?
- Do you have to pay for parking? How much?
- Do you pay a security deposit? How much?
- Is there a holding fee? How much? What happens to the money if you don't rent the property?
- Are there any other monthly or one-time fees?

Location

- What would be your commute (walking, biking, bus, driving, etc.) to campus from the property?
- Are you viewing a “model” unit, rather than the actual unit you'll be renting? Hint: ask to see the actual unit!

Exterior Safety

- The path to entry is unobstructed and is well-maintained
- There is external lighting on all walkable sides of unit and parking area
- The street address number is clearly visible on unit, both facing street and alley (note: this is important for emergency services to easily reach you if necessary)
- Are there non-elevated 1st floor windows? Do they have locks?
- All doors leading outside are made of solid material (metal instead of wood and/or glass) and have a deadbolt
- No trees or landscaping significantly block exterior lighting
- No trees or branches at risk of falling on house or power lines
- No blind spots on the walk to exterior doors, either due to landscaping or architectural features
- Mailboxes are present and in good repair. If the mailbox has a lock, does the lock work properly?

Interior Safety

- All windows have functioning locks/latches and are able to be fully secured
- All bedroom doors have their own lock and key (note: this is not a code requirement, but you may prefer for privacy and/or security)
- No loose/hanging wires in basement and all insulation is secured



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- Area surrounding furnace is fully cleared and accessible
- All smoke detectors functioning and placed according to [Columbus city code](#)
- Egress/exit (door, window, etc.) available on each floor of unit
- GFCI outlets (see picture) in bathrooms, kitchen, and other areas within 6" of water
- If a multi-unit building, adequate hallway lighting and safe stairwells
- Enough outlets for the number of appliances, lights, fans, etc. you will bring
- Are there any attic or basement bedrooms? If so, do they have adequate egress and meet code requirements?



Interior Quality

- No significant damage (e.g. cracks in wall, cracks in basement concrete pad, stained carpet, warped flooring, mold, broken appliances, etc.)
- No minor damage (nicks or nail holes in wall, broken blinds)
- No drafty windows or doors
- All opening windows have screens
- No obvious signs of pests or bugs
- Unit age; for older units, ask about lead-based paint, updates to electrical, HVAC, and plumbing

Other factors to consider:

- Are you signing the lease individually, or are you signing it jointly and severally liable?
- Are you allowed to sublease?
- Unit features: dishwasher, in-unit washer and dryer, parking, air conditioning
- Who are your neighbors – students? Permanent residents? Someone else?
- Noise levels at different times of day/week
- Does the landlord allow pets? Do they charge pet rent and/or a pet deposit?
- Is smoking permitted or prohibited?

Landlord Research

Student Legal Services and OCCSE cannot endorse or otherwise evaluate landlords. It is important to do your research about the landlord to ensure you feel comfortable with signing a lease.

- Search for the landlord on the on Franklin County Municipal Court [website](#)
- Review the landlord's scores on the USG Renter's Guide
- Conduct an internet, Reddit, Yelp, etc. search for reviews of the landlord
- Is the landlord open to discuss expected utility costs?
- Is the landlord willing to negotiate safety and quality improvements into the lease?
- Does the landlord readily provide adequate means to contact them?



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Important Links

- **Interactive off-campus map:**
<https://go.osu.edu/smoothmovemap>
- **OCCSE guides:** <https://offcampus.osu.edu/resources/off-campus-guides/>
- **OCCSE property search:**
<https://offcampus.osu.edu/search-housing.aspx>
- **OCCSE roommate search:**
<https://offcampus.osu.edu/resources/off-campus-resources/roommates/>
- **USG Renter's Guide:**
<https://go.osu.edu/usgrentersguide2019-2020>
- **Student Wellness Center, financial wellness and coaching:** <https://swc.osu.edu/services/financial-education/>
- **Student Legal Services off-campus housing resources:**
<https://studentlegal.osu.edu/civil-matters/campus-housing>



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Important Safety Links

- **Lyft Ride Smart:** <https://ttm.osu.edu/ride-smart>
- **CABS On-Demand:** <https://ttm.osu.edu/on-demand>
- **OCCSE safety resources and safety device sign-up:**
<https://offcampus.osu.edu/resources/safety/enhance-your-home-security/>
- **Buckeye Alerts, Public Safety Notices, Neighborhood Safety Notices sign-ups:** <https://dps.osu.edu/alert-notices>
- **Community Crime Map:** <https://communitycrimemap.com>



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FACTOR ANALYSIS

Directions: based upon your priorities, create a rubric you'll use to rate potential off-campus properties. See the example below as a guide!

EXAMPLE RUBRIC

Factor	1 point	3 points	5 points
Rent	Under \$900	Under \$750	Under \$600
Location	UD East of High	W 10th through King, between High and Neil	W 8th Ave, west of Neil
Parking	No on-street, limited off-street. Under \$300/year	Limited on-street parking and off-street parking Under \$200/year	On-street parking AND off-street parking Under \$100/year
Size	<6 bedrooms, small bedrooms	6 medium bedrooms	6 large bedrooms
Safety Considerations	HELP how do I not be problematic	"High safety area"	Minimal first floor window access + "High safety area"
Unit Condition and Quality	Very lived-in feel	Medium qual., little wear and tear	New OR recently renovated + high qual.
Features	Meets 1	Meets 3	Meets all

Factor	1 point	3 points	5 points
Rent			
Location			
Parking			
Size			
Safety Considerations			
Unit Condition and Quality			
Features			

Non-negotiable Features	Desired Features
Front porch, in-unit laundry, solid air conditioning, pets allowed	Backyard, key less entry, no first floor carpet, updated appliances, separate dining area

Non-negotiable Features	Desired Features

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DECISION MATRIX

*Directions: use the rubric you created to rank your properties.
Properties with higher scores are considered more favorable.*

Property	Rent	Location	Parking	Size	Safety Considerations	Unit Condition and Quality	SCORE