

# Housing Search Tips

- **Determine your budget.** Figure out your household expenses (food, car payment, gas, diapers) and figure out what is affordable for you to pay in rent.
- **Plan ahead.** You will need first month's rent and possibly a security deposit wherever you look for an apartment. Start saving.
- **Consider where you want to live**— is it convenient for your child's school, work, transportation, childcare, etc.
- **Network.** Ask family and friends if they know of any units open that you and your family would like, or if their landlord has any openings.
- **Look for signs** on your way to and from work, errands, childcare, school, etc. Houses that are for sale are sometimes for rent as well.
- **Call the Neighborhood Association** in the area you would like to live. They often have information that is helpful or can refer you to a place that can help.
- **Places to Look for Apartments Listings:**
  - Newspaper Classifieds
  - Telephone Book (under Apartments in the Yellow Pages)
  - Bulletin Boards in public places
  - Shoppers Guides
  - Internet Sites (accessible at the public library)



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Housing Resources Inc.

**MISSION:** ASSURING HOUSING FOR SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY

## Housing Search Information



Housing Resources, Inc.  
Opening doors in our community

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FAIR HOUSING  
IT'S YOUR RIGHT

## How to Talk to a Landlord

### Making the First Call:

- **Eliminate background noise** such as the television or radio. First impressions are important, as is the information you are calling for
- **Ask when the apartment is available to look at** and make the soonest appointment with the landlord
- **If you leave a message** make sure to clearly state your name, phone number and a good time to call you back, along with the unit address you are calling about

### Looking at the Apartment

- **Be on time, if not early!**
- **If you have to cancel or reschedule, call the landlord to let them know.** Be sure to apologize, and let them know if you're still interested
- **Leave the kids at home if at all possible.** It will make your interaction easier. You and the landlord will then not be distracted by the kids; and the kids will not be bored.
- **Be prepared to fill out a rental application.** This would include a list of past rental references, dates of previous addresses, phone numbers of past landlords, and proof of income. Ask if you can fill out the application on the spot to save time and effort on both parties. This shows the landlord that you are serious about renting from them.

### Inspecting The Unit/Moving In

- **Inspect it thoroughly and report needed repairs before moving in.** Use the inventory checklist given to you at move in and keep a copy to record the condition of the unit before you live there. If you are not given an inventory checklist, ask for one.
- **Get a rental agreement** signed by both you and the landlord and keep a copy.
- **Always get receipts of rent payment** and save them. **Put anything important you say to your landlord in writing and keep a copy of it.**

## Questions to Ask Before Renting

- When is the apartment available?
- Are the utilities included? What is the average cost of the utilities?
- Is the unit city certified?  
(contact City Inspection Services for more information 337-8026)
- Are the stove and refrigerator provided?
- Does the apartment have private entrances, storage, and bathrooms?
- Is the apartment furnished?
- What kind of parking is available?
- Is a security deposit required? How much is it?
- Is a lease required? How long of a lease?
- Where would rent be paid and when is it due?
- Is there access to public transportation?
- Are pets allowed?
- When can the apartment be viewed?
- Is garbage service available?
- What is the exact address of the unit?

## Safe Housing Checklist

These are suggestions for you to make a guideline of your own for your housing search

- Are the floors absent of cracks, slopes, ripped carpeting and damaged flooring?
- Are walls and ceilings crack-free and clean?
- Is there chipped/peeling paint on the walls?
- Are all light/electrical switches/outlets covered? Do they all work?
- Does the water work in the kitchen and bath?
- Do you have enough hot water that is enough for showering/washing dishes appropriately?
- Are all the inside/outside railings, stairs, & handrails sturdy and in good condition?
- Is the furnace in good working condition and able to heat the home to at least 68 degrees?
- Are basement walls free of large holes where rodents can enter?
- Is the ceiling at least 7'6" tall?
- Does the basement, if used for living area, have a fire escape?
- Do the upper levels of the house, if used for living areas, have a fire escape?
- Are there enough outlets to service your appliances?
- Are the bathroom and kitchen floors non-absorbent and water-tight?
- Do all windows open, have screens, and lock? Do all rooms have ventilation?
- Do the sink and toilet work properly and are they leak free?
- Is the apartment free of broken windows, glass, molding?
- Are smoke alarms on each floor of the unit and in each bedroom? Do they work?
- Are there deadbolts on the doors?
- Did the previous tenants return all keys? If not, have the locks been changed?
- Is the apartment free of exposed wiring?
- Where are the circuit breakers, and do you have access to them in case of emergency or power outage?
- Are there signs of water damage on the walls or ceilings? (Bulging walls and ceilings, wrinkled/chipped paint)
- Is there a history of water problems in the unit?