



United Tenants of Albany

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When Looking For A Place To Live...

- When possible, leave yourself around 2 months to look for an apartment. If you are currently renting, make sure you give any proper notice to your current landlord (see month to month or leases handout)
- You may wish to check ownership of the apartment you are interested in. Property ownership is public information. In the City of Albany, you can call the local tax assessors at (518)434-5155 to find out the owner of the apartment. You can also ask if the owner lives in the area, this may mean that they will be more responsive to make repairs.
- Amount of rent to be charged – stay within your means. It is against the law for the landlord not to give you a receipt. Even if you pay by check, request a receipt. See Paying the Rent handout for more information.
- Who pays for the utilities? If you are to be responsible, the landlord by law is responsible for supplying you with information as to what the utilities have been for the past two years. This request must be in writing—keep a copy. Be sure to find out: 1-size of apartment, 2– type of heat (gas, electric or oil), 3– who controls the heat, 4– access to meters/fuse box; get a key to that area. By law tenants must have access to the meters in case of an emergency.
- When you go to look at the apartment, check for broken windows, if there are storms or screens (which are not mandatory by law), number of outlets, ceiling stains for leaks, working faucets, sinks in both bathroom and kitchen, peeling paint, deadbolt locks, solid doors (front and rear exits), window locks, sufficient working heating equipment. If stoves and refrigerators are included, be sure that all parts are included. Make a list of all problems in the apartment and request that they are corrected in writing. Date and sign your request with tenant/landlord and or witness(es).
- Deposits to hold an apartment– when putting a deposit on an apartment, make sure to get a receipt. **Find out if it is refundable before paying**; if so, make sure it is noted on the receipt. You may have to pay an application also.
- Security Deposits– are for damages which a tenant causes outside normal wear and tear. It can only be used for the last month’s rent with the permission of the landlord. Take pictures of damages moving in, date them. See Security Deposits handout for more information.
- Think about whether you want to ask for a fixed-term lease. A lease, once signed by both parties, is binding. A landlord can put anything in a lease that they want to, but, N.Y.S. law overrides anything in a lease that is illegal. See Leases handout for more information.
- If you and the landlord would rather go month to month– this means that a proper calendar month notice is required to make any changes in a tenancy (rent increases, notice to move, utility change, pets, etc.). See Month to Month handout for more information.
- Apartment sharing allows you as a tenant to have a member(s) of your immediate family, fiancée, or companion move in regardless of who is listed on the lease. Tenants must inform their landlords of the name of any occupant within 30 days after the occupant has moved into the apartment. This should be acceptable as long as there is not an overcrowding condition. See APARTMENT SHARING handout for more information.
- Remember that NYS law allows you to have overnight guests stay with you for short periods of time.
- ****Once you've located an apartment that you think you'd like to rent, call your local code enforcement agency to make sure the landlord has their rental permits in place. This will usually indicate that a semi-recent third party inspection has been done in the apartment to ensure the space is safe. In the City of Albany, we strongly recommend you call (518)434-5995 to find out if there is a valid residential occupancy permit at the apartment before moving in!****

