



Consumer Tips

From
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Rental Application Fees

When you are trying to rent a house or an apartment, the property owner may want to review your credit history, check to see if you have a criminal record and talk to your former landlord. To cover the costs of this background check, the property owner may ask you to pay a rental application fee.

Before you pay a rental application fee, read these tips:

- The application fee should be a fairly small amount of money, such as \$15.00. Be wary if the owner asks for a large amount of money. The fee should only be used to cover the actual costs of the background check, not to make a profit.
- Do not expect to get the fee back once you have paid it. If your application is accepted, the fee probably will not be credited to your first month's rent or security deposit. If your application is denied, the fee will not be refunded.
- Before you pay an application fee, make sure there is an apartment for you to rent. It is improper for a landlord to accept a fee if there are no premises available to rent or if he or she knows that you will not qualify for a lease.
- Before you sign a lease, orally agree to a lease, or give the property owner any money, be sure that you want to rent the apartment or house. If you agree to begin renting on a specific date for a specific amount, you can be legally bound to pay the rent even if you change your mind or decide to rent a different property.
- Some property owners may ask prospective tenants to pay a non-refundable "reservation fee" to hold the apartment for them. This is a practice that is not expressly authorized under North Carolina law and it is not advisable to pay a reservation fee. Better to decide for certain whether or not you want to rent the property and then enter into a lease.

For More Information:

See also tips on Understanding Your Lease and Security Deposits.