

Tips for renting off campus

Questions? Contact Duke Community Housing, communityhousing@duke.edu

Before you sign your lease:

- ▶ **Inspect the rental property.**
Online photographs are helpful, but show limited information. Physically see the rental, inside and outside, and familiarize yourself with the surrounding area including your route to/from campus.
- ▶ **Review/understand the lease. Negotiate addendums if necessary.**
Leases are a tedious read, but take the time to review it and question anything that concerns you or does not make sense. Conflicts students periodically have include unannounced entry into the rental unit by the property manager or maintenance staff, timeliness of notice of intent to vacate the rental/automatic renewal clauses, and repairs agreed upon before move-in. If a change to the lease is verbally agreed upon, put it in writing.
- ▶ **Check your “gut feel.” If anything is causing you to hesitate, get clarification.**
Once you sign the lease, you are legally committed to the agreement. If you need more information or want more possible options, communicate with Duke Community Housing staff.

Moving in:

- ▶ **Obtain a copy of the lease, signed by you and the landlord.**
It is especially important to have the lease handy if conflicts arise during and/or after the tenancy is complete.
- ▶ **Complete a move-in inspection form.**
Many property managers provide this form at move in. Complete it carefully and within the timeframe required by the landlord. Save a copy of it with your lease. This document is important if conflicts arise with the return of security deposits at the end of your lease. If your property manager does not provide a move-in inspection form, create one yourself.
- ▶ **Check that the rental has smoke detectors and that they work.**
North Carolina Landlord and Tenant statute states, “The landlord shall ensure that a smoke detector is operable and in good repair at the beginning of each tenancy.” When you move in, check that the smoke detectors work. If they do not, notify the landlord immediately.
- ▶ **Purchase at least one fire extinguisher and learn how to use it.**
The property manager may, but is not required to provide a fire extinguisher. Type ABC is intended for use of several types of household fires including those caused by cooking, combustible materials, or is electrical. You can purchase a fire extinguisher at a local hardware store.
- ▶ **Obtain renter’s insurance.**
Your personal possessions are not protected from damage or theft under the landlord’s insurance and students may not be covered under their parent’s property insurance policy.

Before going out of town:

- ▶ **Tell your manager the dates you will be away.**
Some property managers will check your rental while you are away. Property managers will also be better able to respond to problems related to your rental if they are aware of your departure/return dates.
- ▶ **Stop mail/newspapers, or arrange to have someone pick up mail/newspapers/packages.**
Newspapers and mail collecting at your house communicate that no one is home at the residence and that you home may be a good target for a burglary.
- ▶ **Secure outdoor valuables (grill, furniture, plants).**
If you want your outdoor valuables to be there when you return, secure them while you are away.
- ▶ **Park your car in a visible, well-lit spot and remove valuables.**
This will help to deter thieves from breaking into your car. Remove valuables to further decrease the likelihood of theft.

Moving out:

- ▶ **Check your lease agreement and provide proper notice of your intent to vacate the rental.**
The property manager may provide a reminder notice to you, but you should reference your lease for the agreed upon method of giving notice.
- ▶ **Provide a forwarding address to your property manager so he/she can return your security deposit.**
Property managers have up to 30 days to return your security deposit to you and need an accurate forwarding address. Communicate your forwarding address either via email or U.S. postal service.
- ▶ **Clean up the rental.**
If the property manager has excessive cleaning in the rental after you move out, he/she can retain part of the security deposit to cover cleaning costs. Be sure to remove all personal belongings.
- ▶ **Forward personal mail.**
You can do this online – <http://moversguide.usps.com/?referral=USPS>
- ▶ **Disconnect utilities. Return keys to property manager.**
Contact utility companies to disconnect utilities associated with your name. Remember to inquire about the return of a deposit if paid to set up the utility at the beginning of your tenancy. Turn in your keys to the property manager to avoid deductions from your security deposit.



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