



Questions to Ask Before You Sign a Lease

Signing a lease is a big decision—make sure you have all the facts first. Use this guide as a checklist of important questions to ask properties as you evaluate your options!

Before Applying

Start here—know the process before you hand over money or information.

- How much is the application fee?
- What does the application process involve?
- What screening criteria do I need to meet?
- What happens if I need a co-signer?
- When would I be able to move in?

Lease Details

Understand what you're signing and what happens after.

- How long is the lease term?
- Can I renew for another year?
- Is month-to-month leasing an option at the end?
- Will rent increase if I renew? If so, by how much?
- Is subletting allowed?
- Do you require renters insurance?
- Are any utilities included in rent?
- What's the early lease termination policy?
- How much notice is required to move out?

Roommates

Even if you don't have one now, ask ahead of time.

- What's the process if I decide to add a roommate?
- How long can a guest stay before they need to be on the lease?
- Will a new lease be required if I add a roommate?

Fees & Deposits

Rent isn't the only cost—clarify the extras.

- How much is the security deposit?
- What are the move-in fees?
- Are there late payment fees?
- What fees apply if I break the lease?
- What are the pet fees?
- Is there a parking fee?
- Are there any other required or optional fees?

Rent & Payments

Don't just ask "how much"—dig deeper.

- When is rent due each month?
- Is there a grace period before late fees?
- Can I pay rent online?
- Know what happens when something breaks.
- How do I submit maintenance requests?
- Do you offer 24-hour emergency maintenance?
- How long does it usually take to complete repairs?
- What happens if I accidentally damage something?
- How much notice do you give before entering the apartment?

Utilities

Utilities can really change the monthly cost.

- Which utilities are included in rent?
- What set-up costs should I expect?
- What's the average monthly cost for utilities not included?

Parking

If you'll have a car, ask these upfront.

- Is parking included in rent, or is there a separate fee?
- Will I have an assigned spot?
- Where can guests park?
- Where is the parking located?

Amenities

Perks are great—know the details.

- Is there a pool or clubhouse? What are the rules for using them?
- Where are the laundry facilities if there's no washer/dryer in the unit, and what's the cost?
- Who provides Wi-Fi and cable service?
- Is storage available? What's the fee?

Maintenance

Know what happens when something breaks.

- How do I submit maintenance requests?
- Do you offer 24-hour emergency maintenance?
- How long does it usually take to complete repairs?
- What happens if I accidentally damage something?
- How much notice do you give before entering the apartment?

Safety

Peace of mind is just as important as the rent price.

- Are parking areas well lit?
- Are there cameras in common areas?
- Is the community gated or otherwise secured?
- Do you have on-site security staff?
- Are apartments equipped with smart locks, alarms, or keyless entry?
- How often are smoke detectors tested?
- Is there a sprinkler system?

Pets

Plan ahead—even if you don't have a pet now.

- Are pets allowed?
- How many pets can I have?
- What's the process if I adopt a pet later?
- Do you have a dog park or pet washing station?
- Are there weight or breed restrictions?