

Finding an Off-Campus Apartment

Following is information to assist students in searching for an off-campus apartment.

If you're ready to begin your apartment search, a good starting point is the **Off-Campus Apartment Guide**, which is available on the University's GoForward [website](#). It includes apartment search websites that aggregate apartment listings, as well as a list of major campus adjacent property management firms.

Tips for Your Search:

Renters have rights. The City of Chicago has extensive rules and regulations governing the rights and responsibilities of both the landlord and you, the tenant. You may find it helpful to review these regulations before starting your search, and you should definitely review them before signing a lease. The City provides a summary of the Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance, as well as a link to the [ordinance itself](#).

[Renter's Rights](#)

Condition of the unit and the building. In person or online, check the general condition in the apartment, and also around the building (Google Maps [Streetview](#) is helpful if you can't do this in person). If anything seems to be broken or not functioning, you should ask that the maintenance be completed before your actual move-in date and that the agreement to do these repairs be included in your lease agreement. You will also have an opportunity to list these items upon move-in.

Ask about utilities. Don't forget to ask the landlord about which utilities are included in the rent and which are not. Most listings will describe this up front, but it's fine to double check.

Things to check during a tour:

Typically, you would tour potential properties in person. If not possible due to COVID-19 or if you are not near Chicago, be sure to ask what options companies have for remote tours. If you do tour in person, be sure take precautions to stay safe including wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, and washing hands or using hand sanitizer.

Whether touring in-person or via video, here are some items you may want to check:

- Turn on all the faucets to check the water pressure and how quickly it gets hot
- Turn on all the lights; not every room in an apartment will have ceiling lighting
- Check the locks on the doors and windows to make sure they work
- Check for holes or water damage on the floor, walls, and ceilings
- If provided, check to make sure the air conditioning and heating work properly (Note: most older buildings do not have central air conditioning, and heat is often provided via radiators which you will not be able to turn on or off at will)
- Take note of the number of electrical outlets and where they are located
- Ask to see the laundry room or any other amenities the building offers (storage, bike room, etc.)

Questions to Ask

Asking questions is just as critical as seeing apartments and neighborhoods. Below you will find some questions to ask when evaluating properties:

The Apartment and Lease

- How long is the lease period? Most are one year, but feel free to ask about other options.
- How much is the rent, and what was the rent of the previous term?
- How often does the rent go up, and by how much?
- Does the landlord ask for a security deposit or a move-in fee? In what circumstances can you get this deposit back?
- What would be the results of breaking the lease early?
- How old is the apartment?
- Is there central heat and/or air conditioning, or is the unit heated by radiators?
- What is the pet policy? Note that buildings may allow only certain types of pets, and may charge a fee for them.
- What is the apartment maintenance process? How are emergency repairs taken care of? Is the building supervisor or engineer located onsite?
- Does the landlord have any other special policies about which you should be aware?

Utilities

- Which utilities, if any, are included in the rent? Water is usually included; heat is often but not always included; additional amenities like electricity, cooking gas, internet, or cable television are rarely included.
- Will the utilities be handled by the manager or landlord, or do you need to re-apply? Most renters will need to establish their own electricity accounts, and often natural gas as well; you can also choose to sign up for internet or cable services.

Parking

- Does the building have parking available? How much does it cost? Is there a waiting list?
- Is any visitor parking available?

Location

- Where are the closest grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, laundromats and/or dry cleaners, and train lines or bus routes?

Furniture & Appliances

- Is the unit furnished? If so, what is provided?
- Can furniture be rented? If so, what is the cost?
- What appliances are included? Almost all units include the stove and refrigerator, but dishwashers and microwave ovens are less common.
- What condition are the appliances and furniture in?

COVID-19 Safety Precautions:

- What protocols and rules has the building implemented to prevent the spread of COVID-19?
- What additional cleaning procedures have been implemented in the common areas?

For questions beyond the information provided, or assistance in navigating available resources for off-campus housing, please email offcampushousingquestions@uchicago.edu.