**Rule One: Get it in writing!**

Complaints heard by the Renter's Advisory Council most often begin, “My landlord said...” If your only proof of being promised something by your landlord or manager is what you can remember being told months before, you have made a mistake.

There is an old saying among attorneys. “A verbal contract is only as good as the paper on which it is written.”

If you and the rental agent agree on something you want done, something you want to do yourself, a repair that needs to be made, or a rent or deposit reduction, get it in writing. Keep a copy of this agreement with signatures of all participating persons and make sure the rental agent also has a signed copy. These documents could be very useful if there is a problem in the future.

**Rule Two: A Contract is a Contract**

The lease or rental agreement you sign is a legal document. It binds you and the property owner/manager to certain things (rental amount, due date for rent, who can live in the property, pets, yard maintenance, etc.).

After it is signed, it states the responsibilities of both parties. There is nothing legal about an 'understanding' between you and the landlord. If you have an understanding, you should have it in writing.

A person will often sign a 10-month lease and drop out or move after one semester. If you have signed a 10-month lease, you are obligated to pay the rental amount for ten months whether you live there or not.

The same thing applies to roommates. Often two people will sign a lease and discover after two months that they can not stand to live together. If you change roommates, inform the landlord immediately and change the names on the lease.

**Rule Three: Work with your Landlord**

Landlords/Property Managers are not by nature working against you. They can be your friends or your enemies.

They are not looking for trouble. Your landlord wants to have good tenants and for their tenants to enjoy living in their properties. If tenants are happy, they speak positively of the property and the landlord. The landlord wants good referrals, and you will be guaranteed a good referral when you leave. If you are a good renter, they will be happy to tell others.