

# APARTMENT SEARCH & LIVING

AN INTERACTIVE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS: TRAINING TWO

STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING



COMMUTER AND OFF-CAMPUS **LIFE**

# About This Guide

This online interactive guide is a resource for UIC students searching for off-campus housing. This online training will provide guidance and resources related to the following topics:

- The apartment search process
- Legal responsibilities of both tenants and landlords
- Navigating landlord/tenant issues
- Being a good neighbor off-campus

# 5 Stages To Your Apartment Search

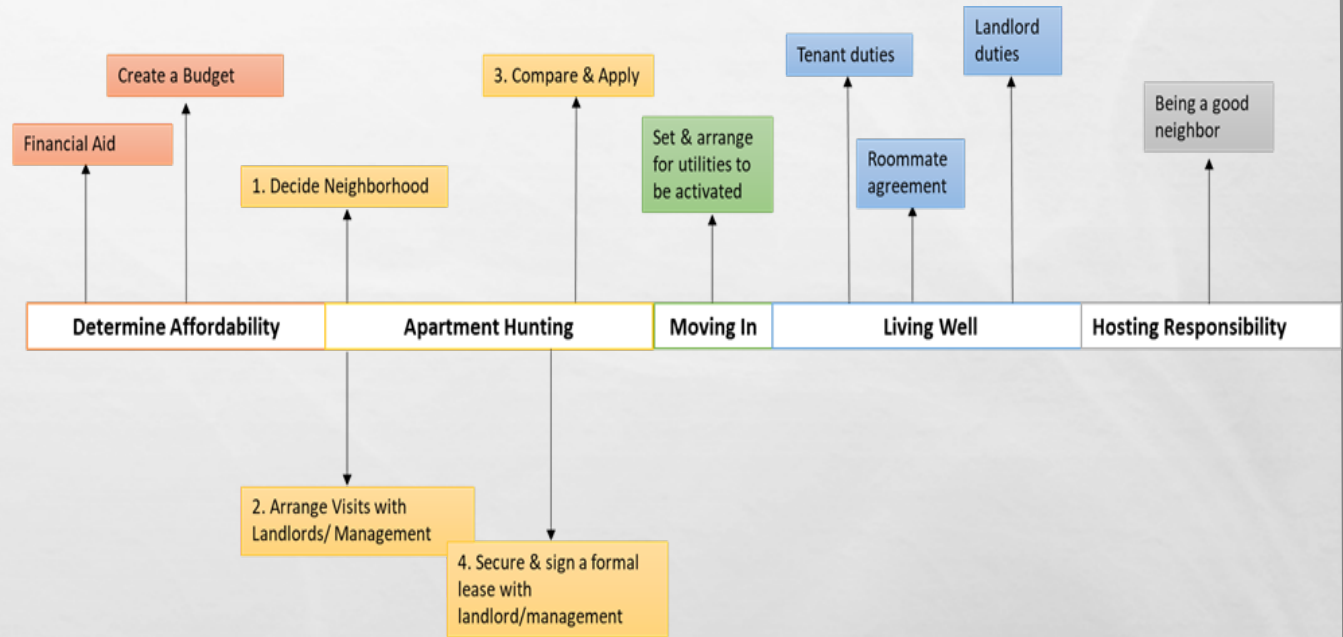
**STAGE 1:** Determine Affordability – Learning about your financial feasibility to prepare for your search.

**STAGE 2:** Apartment Hunting – how to search and select an apartment that best accommodates you.

**STAGE 3:** Moving In – things to consider upon moving into your new apartment.

**STAGE 4:** Living Well – navigating issues with landlords and hosting responsibly.

**STAGE 5:** Hosting Responsibility – continuing to learn about what makes a good tenant and a good neighbor.



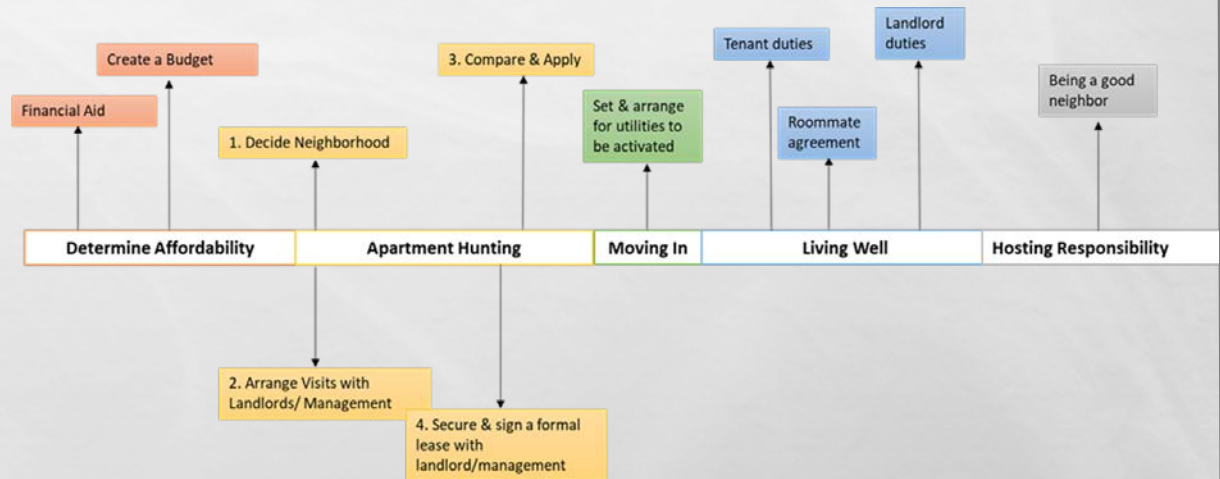


# Stage 2: Apartment Hunting

Whether you are familiar with renting or new to the apartment life, there are several points to consider when preparing for your transition to living off-campus.

In this section, we will explore the steps when apartment hunting, how to search and select an apartment that best accommodates you whether it's remotely or doing a search nearby.

1. Decide neighborhood/area
2. Arrange visits with landlords or apartment building management
  - What should I check for? What are “warning signs”?
3. Compare and apply
  - Applying to be a potential tenant
4. Secure and sign a formal lease with the landlord or management



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

The following terms are beneficial to know during your search for an apartment. Please take a moment to review each term closely.

- **Unit** – a unit is a self- contained space in a larger building that is often referred to as an “apartment.”
- **Apartment building** – a larger building where “units” are contained. The size and shape of apartment buildings can vary along with the number of units.
- **Tenant** – a person who occupies property by renting from a landlord.
- **Landlord** – the owner of the property. The landlord is paid by tenants.
- **Lease** – a contract granting a tenant property for a specified period of time for rent determined by the landlord. Landlords often look for committed tenants for a yearlong lease (although shorter term leases may be available).

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Month-to-Month & Oral Agreements

- Tenant must give 30-day notice to terminate tenancy
- Landlord can change rental conditions by giving the tenant a 30-day notice.
- 30-day notice must coincide with rental period



**\*\*Oral agreements are not encouraged because a written agreement is more enforceable and keeps record of the terms and agreement of the lease.**



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## WHAT IS SUBLETTING?

Seeking shorter term housing? Subletting may be an option.

“**Subletting**” refers to the process by which a current tenant secures another renter or “subletter” to take over the remainder of their lease.

- **Sublet/subtenant** – someone who “takes over” or replaces the leasing of a previous tenant.
- **Sublease** – the leasing of property by the tenant to a sublet or subtenant.

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Subletting

It is important to note that once a tenant **has signed** their name on a written lease agreement, they are still **responsible for the lease** until the end of the term.

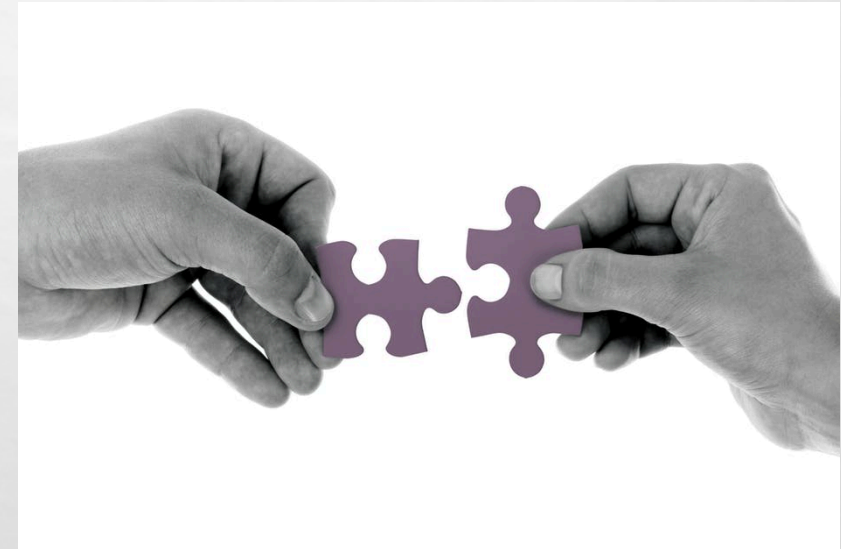
- Thus, if the sublet/subtenant fails to pay rent to the tenant, the tenant still must pay the rent to the landlord.
- The landlord doesn't have a legal bond with the sublet – only with the original tenant listed on the lease.
- It is highly recommended that a **written agreement** with the subtenant is signed, as opposed to having an oral agreement.
- According to the residential landlord tenant ordinance, landlords cannot charge an additional fee for subletting.



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Landlord/tenant relationship

- The landlord-tenant relationship is established through both a contract and property law. It starts with a tenant expressing an interest in renting a unit.
- Then, a verbal or written rental agreement such as a lease is created.
- The landlord-tenant relationship occurs once a contract or lease is signed.
- A tenant receives legal possession of the property through a lease.



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Overview Of Tenant/ Landlord Relationship In The U.S And Chicago

- A landlord is responsible for adhering to the terms of the lease agreement. They are responsible for maintaining a safe and functional property in accordance with the Chicago building code.
- Tenants are also accountable for following the terms and agreements of the lease. For instance paying the landlord monthly rent by the provided due date and using the units' appliances in a responsible manner.
- Sometimes conflicts or issues arise when tenants' rights are violated. There are many federal, state, and local laws available to protect tenants.

**Keep in mind that tenant-landlord relationships and rights varies depending on the state and city – the tenant –landlord relationship and rights presented throughout this guide only pertain to the city of Chicago.**

*More information on these rights will be explored later in this guide.*

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Conducting a search remotely? Here are some suggestions...

- You should begin your search at least **3 months prior** to selecting an apartment and moving in.
- Explore listings online **prior** to arriving to the Chicago area. Arriving before will give you insight on prices, the neighborhood, and other amenities.
- It is highly suggested that you wait to **view the apartment** unit in person **before** signing an official lease agreement.
- Have at least **2-3 alternative potential units** prior to your visit to the Chicago area.
- Hire a broker or agent to conduct the apartment search for you.
  - Brokers however, are allowed to charge a fee.





# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Conducting a search remotely? Here are some suggestions...



It may be challenging for some students who reside outside Chicago or the U.S. To conduct apartment visits. However, there are resources to help assist you.

- Students can attain temporary student housing in Chicago while conducting their apartment search.
- Some temporary student housing options can include:

### Chicago summer housing

- i. Has meal plan and housekeeping options)

### Hostels.Com

- i. Check out affordable hostels in Chicago

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

**Conducting a search remotely? Here are some suggestions...**

**There are resources available, utilize them!!**

**Contact the commuter student resource center for additional guidance and tips on how to conduct your apartment search.**

- UIC Commuter and Off-campus Life

**Email:** [commuter@uic.edu](mailto:commuter@uic.edu)

**Phone:** (312) 413-7440

**Attending UIC as an international student?**

**International Students** should contact UIC's **Office of International Services** for more guidance and assistance.

**Phone:** (312) 996-3121

**Email:** [ois@uic.edu](mailto:ois@uic.edu)

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## Office Of International Services – Programs and Resources

- First friends
  - Incoming students are connected with current students via email prior to their arrival in Chicago and encouraged to ask questions about life as an international student to help them adjust to UIC and Chicago.
- Employment Workshops And Events
- International Education Week
- International Career Week
- And many more.

**\*\* As you continue throughout this guide it is important to remember all these tips if conducting a search remotely**



**Office of  
International Services**



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *DECIDE NEIGHBORHOOD/AREA*

Chicago and Chicagoland are incredibly large spaces and offer a variety of different neighborhoods. When deciding where to plant your roots, we recommend the following:

- You should begin this apartment hunting process **at least 2-3 months prior** to selecting an apartment and moving in.
- Pick a neighborhood or area that best suits you and/or your roommate.
- Some main factors to consider when picking an area or neighborhood is commute time, access to transportation, and proximity to resources.

Neighborhoods near UIC East and West Campus (Chicago):

- South Loop
- West Loop
- University Village/Little Village
- Medical District
- Pilsen
- Bridgeport
- Chinatown

We've also found that some students like to reside in:

- Forest Park
- Oak Park



**\*\*You can live in whatever area or neighborhood that suits you. The above are just mere suggestions.**

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *DECIDE NEIGHBORHOOD/AREA*



There are factors to consider when choosing your ideal neighborhood – transportation and safety.

- **Transportation:** When considering prospective units, you can explore where your new address may be in proximity to public transportation.
  - **Chicago Transit Authority** train and Bus lines:  
<https://www.transitchicago.com/maps/>
- **Safety:** Additionally, to explore the type of crime that has been recorded near your prospective address, visit Neighborhood Scout:
  - <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/il/chicago/crime>



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *DECIDE NEIGHBORHOOD/AREA*

### **Other things to keep in mind during your search:**

- Some Chicago neighborhoods may have higher rent than others.
- Some neighborhoods may have more local attractions or resources for residents.
- Nearby grocery store, restaurants, supply stores, etc.
- Parking spaces may be available at additional cost in some locations.

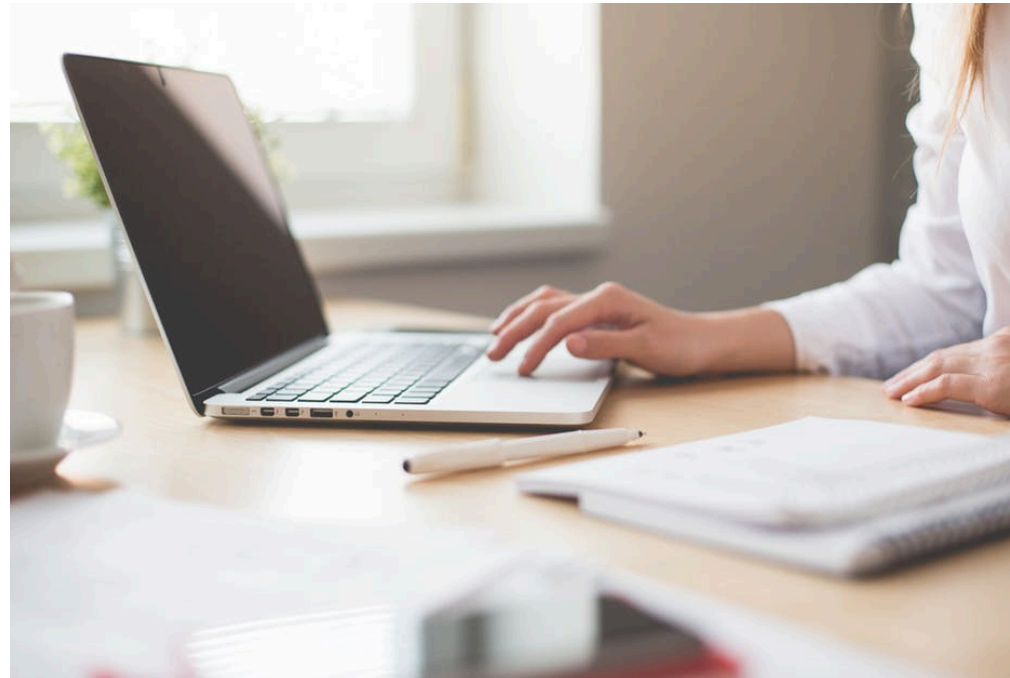




# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

*DECIDE NEIGHBORHOOD/AREA*

## **Conducting Your Apartment Search**



## **STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING**

### ***ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT***

When viewing an apartment there are a few things you should look for or ask about:

- **Properly Working Locks**
- **Power Outlets** (briefly test using phone charger or night light)
- **Locking or Secure Windows**
- **Two Exits** (Typically front and back)
- **Properly Lit Areas/ Working Lights**
- **State and Cleanliness of Common Areas**
- **Basic Apartment/ Building Rules or Expectations from Landlords** (Are parties allowed? Are pets allowed? etc.)
- **Resources** (Is there laundry in the apartment building or unit? Are there any utilities included with the rent)



**\*\*\*Water is not individually metered by an apartment unit so it is normally included in the rent.**

## STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

### *ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT*

#### **A note about heat:**

In the city of Chicago, your unit may receive heat in a number of ways. Knowing how your unit or apartment building provides your unit heat is important.

**Forced-Air Central Heating:** Heat is provided via vents to multiple rooms of unit. It is typically run by a furnace; the heating source.



**Radiant Heating:** Heat is produced by electricity and transmitted throughout the room. It is allergy friendly.



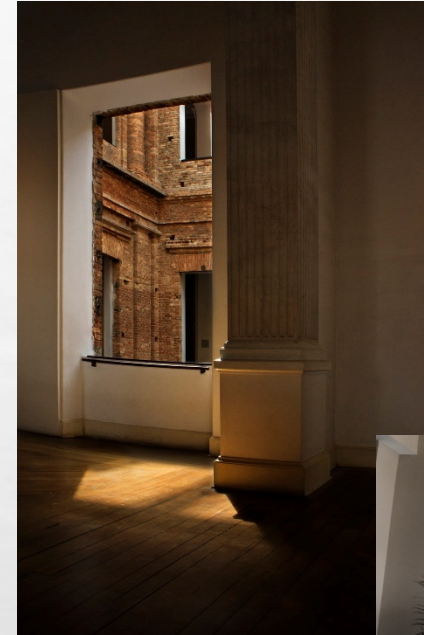


# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT*

When viewing an apartment there are a few terms you may encounter or ask about:

- **Pre-existing damages** – Should you notice any necessary repairs that must be completed before moving in, be sure to secure written documentation saying that the landlord will complete those repairs.
- **Furbished or Refurbished**
  - Furbished – is an apartment that has been recently renovated or reconditioned.
  - Refurbished – Newly or recently renovated; or reconditioned (New or replaced floor tiles, new toilet, new sink, etc.)
- **Furnished or Unfurnished**
  - Furnished – A furnished apartment comes with furniture.
  - Unfurnished – comes with no furniture (or partly could be partly furnished with carpets, curtains, etc.). Tenants would need to bring their own furniture.



**\*Don't be afraid** to ask lots of questions. It is recommended that you come up with a list of questions or concerns prior to meeting the landlord/management to view an apartment.

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT*

### Find an apartment unfurnished?

- Don't panic. There's student furniture rentals.  
**CORT** Furniture Rental offers support for students in need of furniture for their apartment.
- For more information, visit:  
<https://www.cort.com/studyusa>





# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT*

### ***WARNING SIGNS...***

The following are “**warning signs**” you should look out for during your apartment search. They indicate that the landlord or apartment unit may not be a potential good choice.

- Unmaintained unit or property (overgrown lawn, excessive trash around unit/apartment, etc.)
- Significant repairs must be made to make the unit habitable.
- Poor cellular reception in all parts of the unit.
- Landlord does not wish to sign a lease or communicate in writing
- Landlord requests you to provide a deposit before signing a lease.
- There are not two exits/entrances to your unit and or building (typically front and back)

**\*\*Don't feel threatened or pressured to commit or sign a lease to an apartment. Most of the time it is a tactic for landlords.**



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT*

### *WARNING SIGNS...*

#### **Discrimination**

**It is illegal for landlords to discriminate against people because of:**

- Race or Ethnicity
  - Citizenship status
  - Religion
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation and/or gender identity
  - Disability
- Tenants cannot be charged or discriminated against because of service animals
  - Tenants are not liable to disclose their disability (or disabilities) to the land lord
    - And more.



## **STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING**

### ***ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT***

#### ***WARNING SIGNS...***

##### **How to determine discrimination?**

- Refuse to rent to you;
- Make an apartment harder to get;
- Discriminate in advertising for the apartment;
- Mislead you about the availability of a rental unit;
- Have terms in the lease on renting that they do not have for other renters.



Should you believe you are experiencing discrimination with regard to housing, there is support. You may contact the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance (CAFHA), a non-profit consortium of fair housing and advocacy organizations.

## STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

### *ARRANGE VISITS WITH LANDLORDS/MANAGEMENT*

**WARNING SIGNS...**



#### **Landlord review**

- Just as important as finding a great apartment, it is also important to find a professional, responsible landlord.
- See what others have to say about your potential landlord by visiting a landlord review site.
  - <https://www.reviewmylandlord.com/>
  - <https://www.apartmentratings.com/>



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *COMPARE AND APPLY*

### Rental Application

- Once you determine what apartment(s) fit you some landlords or management may ask you to fill out a **rental application**.
- A rental application requires your personal information (including work and education) and may be accompanied by a processing fee. This fee may sometimes cover background and credit checks (to be completed by the landlord). Thus, it may be non-refundable.
- Ask your prospective landlord **exactly** what the fee will cover.

Note: A rental application is **not** a contract or confirmation that you accept the terms of living in the apartment.

# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *COMPARE AND APPLY*

The following information may be requested from students when applying or being screened for an apartment:

- Identification (ID, Driver's License)
- Social Security Number (SSN)
- Rental history (if you have rented before)
- Work history; Proof of employment
- A “Co-signer” or “Guarantor”
- Some landlords or companies may require that someone living in the United States will “guarantee” that your rent is paid if you fail to do so.



# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *COMPARE AND APPLY*

Possible information may be requested from **international students** when applying or being screened for an apartment:

- A copy of Passport
- Copy of I-20 or Student Visa
- Acceptance letter from University of Illinois at Chicago
- Proof of employment or income
- Bank Statements
- A “Co-signer” or “Guarantor”
- Some landlords or companies may require that someone living in the United States will “guarantee” that your rent is paid if you fail to do so.





# STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

## *SECURE AND SIGN A FORMAL LEASE WITH THE LANDLORD/MANAGEMENT*

After being approved for the apartment you've selected the landlord/management should present you with a **lease or rental agreement**. A **lease or rental agreement** is a legal contract that stipulates the conditions of renting an apartment.

A lease documents who will be residing in the unit as well as outlines additional terms, including:

- **Rent** (Amount, grace periods, etc.)
- **Fees** (Late payments, security deposit, etc.)
- **Sublease Process** (How and when to notify landlord)
- **Pet Policy** (What kind if any)
- **Building Rules** (if any)



**\*\*\*Please note:** Once a lease is **signed** it is a **binding contract agreement**. However, the contract can only be **breached** if it **does not** follow the guidelines of the Chicago Landlord Tenant Ordinance.

## STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING

### *SECURE AND SIGN A FORMAL LEASE WITH THE LANDLORD/MANAGEMENT* *DEPOSITS AND FEES*

- After agreeing to the terms of your lease, you may be required to pay your landlord a security deposit.
- A **security deposit** is a sum of money designated by a landlord (typically 1.5x the amount of rent due). The landlord must give the tenant a receipt for the security deposit.
  - This deposit will be maintained by the landlord in an interest bearing account and will be **returned** to the tenant at the end of their lease.
  - In the event that the tenant is responsible for all damages in their unit or apartment (beyond normal “wear and tear”) all or part of this deposit will be used to remedy damages.
- In lieu of a deposit, some landlords may request a **move-in fee**.
  - A **move-in fee** is a non-refundable sum of money designated by the landlord. This practice has become more common in Chicago over the past few years.
- To find out more about security deposits and interest rates visit:  
<https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/dcd/Housing%20Programs/secdep2018.pdf>

## STAGE 2: APARTMENT HUNTING: *SECURE AND SIGN A FORMAL LEASE WITH THE LANDLORD/MANAGEMENT BEFORE SIGNING*

### **Read the fine print.**

- Be aware of community or apartment building rules.
- Review any lease or termination policies.
- Make sure everything is in writing. Is the lease missing something?

### **Legal Ramifications**

- It is important to remember that a lease or legal agreement is a binding legal contract.
- The lease states who is legally permitted to occupy the unit.
- Should one or more of the tenants choose not to pay rent or adhere to the terms of the lease, all tenants listed on the lease could be held liable.
- This varies if you are independently renting **a room**.





## You Have Completed Training Two

Living in an off-campus apartment offers a variety of new experiences and challenges. As you navigate your search, transition, and tenancy, know that Commuter and Off-Campus Life is available to guide and refer you to key resources, programs, and services here at UIC.

We can be contacted at:

**Commuter Student Resource Center**

750 South Halsted St.

Suite 245, SCE Chicago, IL

**Phone:** (312) 413-7440

**Email:** [commuter@uic.edu](mailto:commuter@uic.edu)

**Office hours for general apartment inquiry:**

Monday and Thursday from 3-5 p.m.



To proceed to the next Training please revisit our site.