

TOP TEN THINGS STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW BEFORE RENTING

10 Legal & Illegal Fees: When you move into an apartment, a landlord can charge you the first month's rent, the last month's rent, a security deposit, a lock fee and a portion of a re-inspection fee. A landlord can't charge you any other fees such as a holding fee or a pet fee. A landlord also can't charge you a broker's/finder's fee, unless he is a licensed realtor.

9 Roommates: If one of your roommates moves out, you may still be responsible for paying his portion of the rent until you find a new one.

8 Leases & Tenancies-at-Will: If a landlord offers you a lease, read it carefully before signing it. Leases, which typically run for one year, are binding legal contracts. Tenancies-at-will run from month to month, but offer you less security against rent increases and evictions.

7 Renter's Insurance: You have probably invested more in personal property than you realize. Computers, stereos, TVs, clothing, jewelry and furniture would be expensive to replace in case of fire or theft. Renter's insurance is a good idea and can be surprisingly affordable. Don't assume that your landlord's or your parents' insurance will cover your belongings.

6 Re-Inspection of Rental Unit: In most cases, a landlord is required to arrange to have your apartment inspected for compliance with the State Sanitary Code soon after you moving in. To check that this is being done, you can ask your landlord or call the city's Inspectional Services Department.

5 Code Violations: You are entitled to an apartment that is in compliance with local and state sanitary and building codes. Violations should be reported to your landlord in writing. If he doesn't make the necessary repairs call the city's Inspectional Services Department at (617) 635-5322.

4 Condition of Apartment: Before entering into a rental agreement, check out the condition of the apartment. If you can't, have a friend do it for you. You do not want to be charged for damages that existed when you moved in!

3 Security Deposits & Last Month's Rent: Your landlord can legally require you to pay a security deposit and the last month's rent in amounts equivalent to one month's rent for each. If your landlord collects them, he must, among other things, give proper receipts, pay interest on an annual basis, and in the case of the security deposit, put the money in a separate account in a bank located in Massachusetts.

2 Noise: Be considerate of your neighbors. Having loud parties late at night or cranking up the music may lead to complaints and eventually to eviction.

1 Mediation: If you and your landlord have a dispute that you can't resolve between yourselves, you should consider mediation. Mediation is an informal process in which you and your landlord can try to reach a resolution with the help of an impartial mediator. For information about the free mediation service offered by the City of Boston's Rental Housing Resource Center, call (617) 635-RENT.

