

Considerations and Questions for First-Time Renters

I. Location and Accessibility

- **Noise Level:** Are there major roads, traffic noise, schools, hospitals, construction sites, bars, or restaurants nearby?
- **Safety & Lighting:** How safe does the area feel at night? (Check streetlights and exterior property lighting).
- **Commute:** Does the location work for your daily commute (distance, traffic, public transport access)?
- **Proximity to Services:** Is it near or far from grocery stores, pharmacies, and other necessities?
- **Public Transit:** Is it close to bus stops, subways, or train stations?
- **Parking:** (See Section V below).

II. Costs and Financial Obligations

- **Monthly Rent:** What is the total rental price?
 - **Utility Costs:**
 - Water & Sewage
 - Gas (Heating, hot water, stove)
 - Electricity (Lighting, A/C, appliances)
 - Trash/Recycling
 - Internet/Cable
 - *Tip: Ask for an estimate from the previous tenant, if possible.*
 - **Air-conditioning:** Is it central A/C, a window unit, or not available?
 - **Other Fees:**
 - Council/City/Local Tax Fees (Who is responsible for payment?)
 - HOA Fees (Homeowners Association – common in condos/townhouses)
 - Application Fees/Credit Check Fees (Are these non-refundable?)
 - Pet Fees/Pet Rent (Monthly fee vs. one-time deposit)
 - **Security Deposit:**
 - How much is required?
 - What are the specific conditions for its return (e.g., definition of normal wear and tear)?
 - Is it held in an escrow account (check local laws)?
 - **Renter's Insurance:**
 - Is it required by the landlord?
 - What does the policy need to cover (personal property, liability)?
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III. The Property and Unit Features

- **Contract/Lease Period:**
 - What are the available lease terms (e.g., 6-month, 12-month, fixed-term)?
 - What is the renewal process?
 - What are the penalties for breaking the lease early?
 - What is the required notice period for moving out?
- **Unit Condition:**
 - Inspect for signs of **damp, mold, or pests**.
 - **Windows:** Check their age, seal quality (affects utility costs), and presence of screens.
 - **Heating/Cooling System:** Note the type (Gas/Electric/Oil/Forced Air/Radiator) and age.
 - **Outlets:** Are there enough, and are they conveniently placed?
 - **Cell Phone Service:** Do you get good reception inside the unit?
- **Logistics:**
 - **Available Storage:** (See Section V below).
 - **Mail/Package Delivery:** Where is mail deposited, and is there a secure location for packages?
- **Appliances (Who owns/maintains them?):**
 - Stove/Oven (Gas or Electric?)
 - Refrigerator, Dishwasher, Microwave
 - Washer & Dryer (In-unit, shared laundry room, or hookups only?)
 - **Furniture:** Is the unit furnished or unfurnished? (If furnished, check condition).

IV. Safety and Maintenance

- **Emergency Equipment:**
 - Smoke detectors (Location and testing frequency).
 - Carbon Monoxide detectors (Required if gas appliances/furnace).
 - Extinguishers (Is one provided/required?).
 - Fire Alarms (If applicable to the building).
 - **Locks:**
 - Are the door and window locks secure and working?
 - Has the landlord changed the locks since the last tenant?
 - **Landlord / Property Management Responsibilities (Define clearly in the lease):**
 - **Routine Maintenance:** Furnace filters/HVAC, batteries in alarms, plumbing (Who covers blockages?), and pest control/exterminators.
 - **Building/Grounds Maintenance:** Outdoor care/Landscaping/Sidewalks.
 - **Snow/Ice Removal:** Who is responsible for the sidewalk/driveway?
 - **Emergency Repairs:** What is the process and typical response time for urgent issues (e.g., burst pipe, no heat)?
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V. Community and Logistics

- **Neighbors and Community:**
 - Ask about the general community (families, students, professionals).
 - Does the lease specify **Quiet Hours**?
- **Parking:**
 - Is it included in the rent?
 - Is it assigned, permit-only, or street parking?
 - How many spots are allocated per unit?
 - Are there guest parking options?
- **Pets:**
 - Are they allowed (note any weight/breed restrictions)?
 - Is there a pet deposit or monthly pet rent?
- **Access/Building Features:**
 - Do you need a key, fob, or code to enter the building?