

**Welcome to the Off Campus Student Resource Site for The University of Scranton. This site is designed to give tips, information, and resources about off campus living. Whether considering a move to an off campus apartment or currently living in an off campus rental property, it is important to be informed and to know your rights, responsibilities, and resources. If you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to contact the Dean of Students Office at 941-7680.**

**Subheadings:**

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## **Considerations BEFORE Signing a Lease**

- Inspect the property before signing the lease. Make sure to examine all aspects of the premises including utility closets and appliances.
- It is illegal for a landlord to rent a bedroom in a basement or an attic that is not equipped with a fire escape or proper exit. Make sure to inspect all exits and entrances.
- Before taking occupancy, take pictures or use a digital device to film every room in the premises. Make sure the film has the date and time recorded for future reference.
- Make sure to do some research. When looking for a place to live off campus, do not just ask about amenities or choose the rental property because of location. Make sure you consider safety, affordability, landlord assistance and attentiveness, etc. Do some homework, go online, ask current tenants about the rental property and the landlord.

## Lease Guidelines

A written lease is a **BINDING, LEGAL CONTRACT**.

- Read the lease thoroughly before signing.
- Do not be pressured into signing the lease or any other documents.
- Do not sign the lease until you have decided to rent that space.
- Negotiate with the landlord to obtain the best monthly rate. Do not simply take the landlord's first offer.
- Strive for a one year lease with an option to renew. Leases longer than one year may commit you to a house or apartment that may become unsuitable for you as time goes by.
- Get all changes initialed by the landlord.
- Keep a copy of the lease (fully-signed).
- Upon signing the lease be prepared to pay the deposit.
- Date check for the first month of occupancy.
- Learn your rights as a tenant. You can easily obtain this information on the Internet. Your landlord knows the law and so should you.
- Ensure that everything you and the landlord agree to is fully delineated in the lease. If you fail to do so, you shall be hard pressed to prove any agreements made outside the terms of the written lease.
- Ask that separate leases be created for each person, as this will avoid any problems that may arise should one or more of your roommates quit the leased premises.

## **Security Deposits**

- A security deposit usually equals one or two months rent.
- The landlord is required by law to place your security deposit in escrow for the length of the lease. Therefore, insist that your deposit be placed in such an interest bearing escrow account and get a copy of the deposit slip.
- The landlord is required by law to return your security deposit or give a written list of the claimed damages within 30 days of the end of the lease. After 30 days the landlord loses the right to withhold any of the deposit.
- To protect your security deposit, carefully inspect the property before you move in. Digitally record, photograph and make a written list of the condition of the unit. Date and sign the list. Send one copy to the landlord and keep a copy for your records.

## Landlords

- Make sure you have a copy of your lease and place it in a file that you can access if need be. Make sure you read all clauses thoroughly so you know what to expect throughout the terms of your lease.
- Make sure to clearly communicate with your landlord when necessary. Always give your landlord a written notice of any problems such as needed repairs, safety issues or changes in rental status. Always do this via certified mail, return receipt requested.
  - If you need to request repairs before entering the apartment or house, make sure that the request is in writing and articulate a deadline for the repairs to be completed. Do not give your landlord the lease deposit or first month's rent until you are satisfied with the repairs.
- Make sure that all agreements are in writing no matter how minor the item or issue at hand.
- Landlords cannot be intrusive and enter your premises at all times of the day and night without prior notice. Inform the landlord that except in cases of emergency (such as severe water leaks, no heat, etc.) that he/she may only enter the apartment with 24 hour prior notice.
- Ask where your landlord lives. If your landlord resides out of town determine how he/she would respond to your needs. Ask for the name, address, and telephone number of any agent of the landlord designated to make repairs and handle emergency calls.

## Local Laws and Ordinances

- It is always a good idea to familiarize yourself with local laws and ordinances. As an example some items to be aware of include but are not limited to, number of non-related residents per dwelling, local inspections, alcohol laws and ordinances, noise ordinances, etc.
- To access City of Scranton codes you may 1) go to the following link: Click on [City Ordinances](#)  
and/or  
2) Go to [www.scrantonpa.gov](http://www.scrantonpa.gov)  
Click on City Codes  
Click on the drop down box of General Code  
Find PA cities on the list and find Scranton in the alpha list as "City of Scranton"  
(this gets you to a search page)  
On the search page, click on Root Word and search the term "Rental Property"  
This will get you three hits, one of which is Chapter 373, Rental Property  
This is the landlord ordinance and goes over some of the obligations on the landlords

## **Be a Good Citizen and Neighbor**

- Respect your neighbors and realize that college students are not the only persons living near you.
- Get to know your neighbors. Introduce yourself and create a sound relationship early.
- Maintain a respectable appearance of your property, including lawn and shrub overgrowth, shoveling of sidewalks, garbage disposal, unsightly porch furniture, etc. Make sure you understand what your landlord will maintain and what you are responsible for maintaining. Even if you do not have a yard and a porch to maintain, do your part to keep the entryway and foyer of your building neat and uncluttered.
- Be considerate of your parking habits, as this is a significant concern of your neighbors. Don't take up two spaces with one car; be careful not to block sidewalks; never block driveways and always consider safety implications.
- Keep within reasonable noise levels. Watch stereo levels and be respectful of your college neighbor as well as the family across the street.

## University Expectations

The University of Scranton, as a community of scholars seeking to sustain a culture of excellence, requires that its students conduct themselves in ways that allow for their personal growth and development and for that of others in the most positive ways possible.

Freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of the individual must be preserved. These personal freedoms must be constantly balanced against our mutual responsibility for supporting and nurturing a community whose ministry of education is informed by the vision of life contained in both the Gospel and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and which holds as its major purpose the education of young people as leaders. Students are expected to be respectful, truthful and fair in their dealings with others and to act in ways that are truly supportive of the ideals on which the University is founded.

### *Jurisdiction*

The University's jurisdiction in disciplinary matters extends to conduct that occurs on the premises of the University and to any conduct that adversely affects the University community, the University's reputation and/or the pursuit of its mission and objectives regardless of where it occurs.

Students who reside off campus must understand that their behavior is a reflection of themselves and The University of Scranton. The Community Standards Code further outlines the expectations for all students. To view the full code visit:  
[http://matrix.scranton.edu/student\\_handbook/2008-2009\\_student\\_handbook.pdf](http://matrix.scranton.edu/student_handbook/2008-2009_student_handbook.pdf)

## Safety and Security

- Call 911 if there is an emergency. Keep other important numbers at a central and reachable location as well as having them programmed in your cell phone.
- Know the location of smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, and how to maintain them. Do not rent any apartment that is not equipped with smoke detectors or has proper exits and entrances.
- Lock doors and windows (even when leaving your apartment for a short period of time) and leave an outside light on.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Do not travel alone, especially at night.
- Never use a basement or attic as a bedroom without a proper fire exit/escape.
- Do not open your door to strangers, including door-to-door sales persons, security officers, or salespersons.
- For safety tips about your rental property, utilize the [Renter's Checklist](#) and talk with your landlord about these issues before signing your lease.

## **Subletting**

Subletting allows someone else to temporarily take over the lease. However if it is not handled properly it can cause problems for both the original tenant and the sublessee.

- When signing a lease make sure that subletting is permitted.
- Be aware that the original tenant is still bound to the terms of the lease.
- Use a subletting contract; do not rely on a verbal agreement.
- Inspect the premises carefully and document in writing the condition of the apartment.
- Make sure the utility accounts and the telephone account do not remain in your name.
- If in an apartment/house share situation, be aware that you are jointly and severally responsible for the total rental payment.

## **Moving In/Moving Out**

### **BEFORE YOU MOVE IN:**

- Ensure that agreed upon repairs have been completed before you occupy the rental property.
- Ensure that you understand what utilities you are responsible for as the tenant and that appropriate arrangements have been made so that all are properly functioning on the day of occupancy. Other items such as Cable TV are not as critical but are also an additional cost to you per month. Make sure to make a budget plan early and that all roommates are on board with taking responsibility for payment.

### **AFTER YOU MOVE IN:**

- Keep organized records.
- File all receipts, notices, changes, repair requests and landlord correspondence.
- Put all correspondence between you and the landlord in writing.

### **MOVING OUT:**

- Read your lease to see what it requires for notice.
- Put your notice to leave in **WRITING** and leave a forwarding address with the landlord for deposit return.
- Clean the premises fully and completely.
- Inspect your rental with the landlord before handing in keys.
- Take a digital camcorder and again film the entire premises.
- Make sure your landlord has your forwarding address.
- Any deductions must be itemized and sent to you within 30 days after the end of the lease.
- Should the landlord complain that you have caused damage to the premises, show him/her the two films (before and after). Demand the return of your full deposit plus earned interest. If your landlord refuses to return your lease deposit and the premises are in good shape, you may bring a civil action against the landlord in your local Magistrate's Court.

## **Insurance**

- It is recommended that you seriously consider obtaining renter's insurance for the protection of your personal property. Renter's insurance is typically very reasonable. Check with several insurance agents and make sure you have adequate coverage for items such as computers, smart phones, and other expensive equipment.

## **Legal Assistance Program**

- Legal Assistance Program  
If you are in a situation that requires some further assistance from a third party, you may use the Legal Assistance Program resource on campus by calling for a consultative appointment with an attorney. This service can be reached by contacting the Student Affairs Office at 570-941-7680.

## **Additional Resources**

- Dean of Students Office - Suite 201 DeNaples (570) 941-7680
- Scranton Police Department (570) 348-4141
- University of Scranton Public Safety (570) 941-7888
- EMERGENCY CALL 911

Some of the information from this site was compiled by reviewing other institutions and agency information about Off Campus Living. Thank you to the University of Buffalo, Penn State University, and SafeCampusesNow.