

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

when moving off-campus



Don't wait until you're involved in a dispute with your landlord or roommates. Know your rights before issues arise. The Students' Attorney and Leadership and Community Connections units of the Dean of Students Office, provide answers to these frequently asked questions to help guide you with common landlord-tenant concerns.

Q. What questions should I ask before signing a lease?

A. Four of the most common issues students should consider when signing a lease include: handling late rent payments, parking, basic care of the premises, such as mowing or snow removal, and signing joint or individual leases.

Handling Late Rent Payments - When signing a lease, be sure you know how your landlord handles late rent payments. If you have a roommate, be clear about your responsibilities in the event your roommate fails to pay the rent. Also know when your first rent payment is due.

Parking - Be sure that you have appropriate parking for your vehicle and that it is included in your lease. For example if you have roommates and each has their own vehicle, be sure you have enough parking for all three.

Joint or individual leases - You can be held responsible for your roommate's delinquent rent if you have signed a joint lease. If your roommate abandons you or fails to pay the rent, continue to pay your share. If you sign an individual lease, you will be responsible for missed payments and will need to work out a payment plan with your landlord.

Q. What are my landlord's obligations to me as a renter and what do I do if he doesn't deliver?

A. Your landlord's responsibilities should be outlined in your lease. Any other commitments should be put into writing. If obligations are written, they are easier to uphold. If a promise is verbal, it is much more difficult to enforce. If your landlord does not uphold a commitment, contact the Students' Attorney for support and assistance.

If a matter directly threatens your health or safety, notify your landlord right away. If your landlord does not respond in a timely manner, contact The Town of Normal Inspections Department at (309) 454-9581.

Q. What should I do if I can't make my rent payments every month?

A. If you're unable to make your rent payment on the due date, contact your landlord right away to work out a payment plan. Most rent dates are outlined in the lease and are thereby legally binding. By contacting your landlord, you are making a "good faith" effort. Without it, if your landlord takes legal action, you may be forced to not only pay the rent, but also to incur legal expenses and court costs. In addition, be prepared to pay late fees.

If you're consistently having trouble paying rent, you may want to consider alternative housing arrangements and subletting your apartment.

Q. Do I need to sign a lease on the re-sign date?

A. You do not need to feel pressured into renting an apartment on the re-sign date. Bloomington/Normal does not have a shortage of apartments, and you will have plenty of choices and time to decide where you want to live.

Q. What contracts and other materials should I keep on file?

A. As a tenant, you should keep any documents pertaining to your lease on file, including bills and rent payment records (i.e., check stubs, check record books, bank statements, etc...). In addition, any verbal agreements or promises should be put into writing and maintained as well. Keep records in one easily accessible place so they are easily located if needed. It is also necessary to accurately inventory and document the condition of the apartment both at move-in and upon moving out.

Q. If something in my apartment is broken, can I repair it?

A. If there is a problem with your apartment, it is always best to notify the landlord first. If you attempt to repair, you may be held liable for any problems in the future. If your repair request is not given immediate attention, be persistent. If the repair involves a health or safety issue, or is not handled in a timely manner, contact Town of Normal Inspections. Keep a log of your repair requests.

Q. What should I do if I decide to sublease my apartment?

A. If you decide to sublease your apartment, the sublease should consist of a written agreement with all details and expectations included. For example, if your apartment allows animals, but you do not want pets in your apartment, state this in the sublease. If you have roommates, it is a good idea for them to be involved in writing the sublet as well. For a sublease form, contact your landlord or the Students' Attorney. You can look for a sublessee by posting on the Off-Campus Housing Database: OffCampusHousing.IllinoisState.edu.

Q. What can my landlord expect from me?

A. As a tenant, you have legally binding expectations that you must fulfill, such as paying your rent. Other expectations should be outlined in your lease. However, as a renter, you should be careful not to damage your apartment beyond normal wear and tear, practice law-abiding behavior, and keep your apartment in a clean and safe condition.

For more information contact the Students' Attorney or Leadership and Community Connections units of the Dean of Students Office.

DeanofStudents.IllinoisState.edu

Students' Attorney

144 Bone Student Center

(309) 438-2008

Leadership and Community Connections

206 Bone Student Center

(309) 438-7346



DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE
Illinois State University