Moving Out

What if I want to move before my lease is up?

It is a good idea to retain the right to sublet your apartment in case you are unable to live there for the length of time agreed to in the lease. (Most leases are for one year.)

Once you have decided to move, notify your landlord of the date you wish to move out. Typically, leases require tenants to give landlords a 30- to 60-day notice, but read your lease to see how much notice you are required to give. Then schedule an appointment with the landlord to inspect your apartment before moving out.

Don't forget to notify the post office and your landlord of your new address. If your landlord doesn't know where you move, he cannot forward a deposit refund check to you.

What if my landlord evicts me?

Eviction is the process by which a landlord removes a tenant from the leased premises. For a tenant to be evicted in Illinois, the landlord or his agent must follow the Illinois law requirements in the Landlord/Tenant Act.

Why can he do this?

- If a tenant does not pay the rent on the date required by the lease, the landlord can begin eviction proceedings by giving the tenant at least a five-day notice.
- If you or your guests violate any of the provisions of your lease, you can be asked to move.
- Anything specifically implied in your lease can be used to terminate your rental of the unit.

If you do get an eviction notice, go to the Housing Office for information on your options.

Roommates

Living with roommates is an important part of your college experience. A good beginning can help lead to a long-term, successful relationship with your roommates.

Roommates often disagree on paying rent or utility bills. Landlords usually require all individuals sharing the apartment to sign the lease. Each individual who signs the lease becomes personally responsible for the terms of the lease, including the total rent due. It is not the landlord's responsibility to ensure that each roommate pays his fair share.

What is each roommate responsible for?

Landlords usually require all individuals sharing the apartment to sign the lease. Each individual who signs becomes personally responsible for the terms of the lease, including the total rent due.

Roommate Agreement Form

The Housing Office has a *Roommate Agreement Form* that can be helpful in establishing each roommate's rights and responsibilities. A written agreement also can be useful in clarifying the financial arrangements and social issues such as parties or guests.

Having all roommates use the form is suggested, because even roommates who are the best of friends may have disagreements.

Property Loss and Insurance

Generally, a landlord is not legally responsible for the destruction of a tenant's property unless it can be proven that it resulted from the landlord's negligence. Damage from natural acts like tornados, aren't the landlord's responsibility.

Losses might be covered by the homeowner's insurance or renter's insurance policies of your parents. If you are not sure whether or not your possessions are covered by your parent's policy while you are living at school, call the insurance agent and ask. Many students need to protect themselves by purchasing renter's insurance.

If you can't decide whether or not you need insurance, ask yourself if you could afford to lose all of your possessions. If the answer is no, you probably need insurance.

How do I get insurance and how much do I need?

Make a list of all your valuable personal property. Once you have an idea of the value, call a number of insurance companies and ask about their renter's insurance policies. Insurance costs are based on the value of the items covered. Types of coverage are:

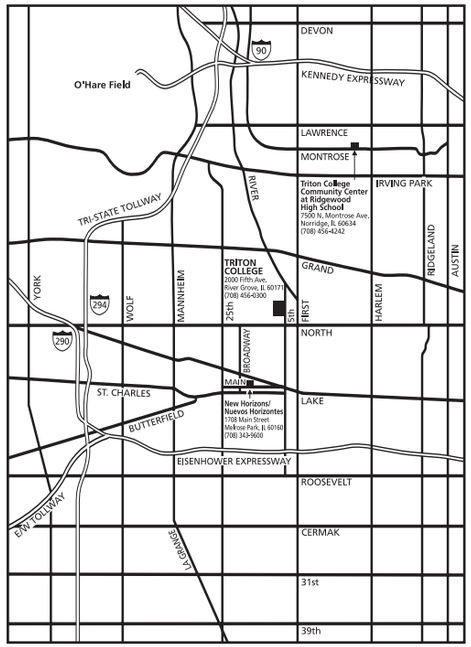
- Personal property.
- Medical.
- Liability.
- Disaster living expense.

You also need to consider what kind of deductible you want. A deductible is the amount you must pay before the insurance coverage begins. The standard deductible for renter's insurance policies is usually $100, meaning that if you suffer a $1,200 loss in a fire, you will be responsible for the first $100 and the insurance company will pay the remaining $1,100.

College Profile

Triton College, Illinois Community College District 504, encompasses 63 square miles in the western suburbs of Chicago and includes approximately 320,000 residents. Public transportation, shopping malls, theaters, restaurants and parks are just some of the amenities available to people who live near Triton. Students looking for housing near the college should review the residence policy listed in the college catalog for more details.

For answers to any questions, copies of forms or additional information, call Triton's Housing Office today at **(708) 456-0300, Ext. 3616.**



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Triton College is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution.

Living Off Campus

A survival guide

Triton COLLEGE

Housing Office

Take the confusion out of your apartment search!

Choosing a place to live is a very personal experience. Only you know what makes you comfortable and happy. We encourage you to think about this before you begin your search for housing. What are you looking for? Privacy? Independence? Your own kitchen? A place to plant a garden? Your lifestyle and your needs will indicate the type of rental unit that will satisfy you the most.

In addition to considering your lifestyle and personal needs, you must understand your responsibilities and rights as a tenant and the rights of your landlord. If you do not, you might experience some problems—perhaps even legal difficulties.

This brochure will discuss some of the personal considerations and legalities that will make living off campus more enjoyable. The Triton College Housing Office hopes that this information will save you time, effort, frustration and money. In addition, there is the hope that it will help you protect your interests and avoid legal problems.

- This brochure is not intended to provide legal advice.

Finding a place to live

Where can I find a listing of apartments for rent?

Triton College's Housing Office publishes a monthly list of rental units in the area; it is usually available on the 15th of the month. It is mailed to all students who have completed and returned a Housing Interest Form to Triton. Bulletins also are available in the Housing Office. If you have any questions, call the Housing Office at (708) 456-0300, Ext. 3616.

During your search you should consider other sources of housing vacancies. These include local neighborhood papers like Pioneer Press newspapers and *Lerner Times*, which are available each Wednesday. The major daily papers in the Chicago area are *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*.

In addition, many rental agencies and real estate offices are located in the area. Some of these are listed in our *Housing Opportunities Bulletin*; others can be found in the local phone directories.

Deciding what you want in an apartment and how much you can afford to pay will help you narrow the search and avoid looking at places that don't meet your needs or suit your budget. The Housing Office has a handout called *Average Cost of Housing* that can give you an idea of what you should be able to afford.

Don't rent anything without looking at it first. If possible, check with former tenants to see if the prospective landlord has a history of problems. A little time spent before you rent may save you frustration later on!

How soon should I look for housing?

Generally, one to two months before you need to move into the apartment. Be sure to consider when the semester starts, how long it will take you to settle into an apartment and when people will be available to help you move in.

You should view at least three to four apartments before making your choice. Contact any landlords or agencies to set up appointments three to four days before you are in the area.

Agencies usually have someone available during the day. Individual landlords may only be available at night. If you leave a message, make sure you indicate when you will be home to receive the return call. Don't forget to leave your return number.

Have a list of questions ready to ask the landlord about the apartment. Some helpful questions can be found on the inside cover of the *Housing Opportunities Bulletin*.

I think I found the right place—what next?

Landlords need to have apartments rented to maintain their cash flow. Therefore, they often show several individuals an apartment in the same day. If you find an apartment you like, you should immediately discuss the possibility of renting it.

This process may include a preliminary application and then formalizing the rental process by signing a lease. A sample of the type of information requested on the application can be found in the Housing Office. There is usually a charge to cover the cost of processing your application.

Note: When looking at a unit available for rental, landlords may judge you by the first impression you give them. A good appearance will help convince your landlord that you are a responsible, serious student he will want as a tenant.

Leases

What is a lease?

A lease is a legally binding contract between tenant and landlord specifying the rights and responsibilities of each regarding the rental property. If there is anything in the lease you don't understand, have it clarified. Add all additional agreements between you and the landlord to the lease before it is signed.

Should I sign right away?

No. Read the lease carefully. Don't sign a lease until you understand what it says and feel that you can comply with its stipulations. Remember, once signed, a lease is a legal contract that cannot be broken without justification. If you are planning on finding a roommate, you should include this in your lease. Moving an extra person into an apartment without justification can be a violation of your lease.

Sometimes oral leases are used and are legally binding if they can be substantiated; but written leases are preferable.

Why are leases important?

The primary value of a lease is its guarantee that as long as the tenant does not violate the terms of the lease, he or she may occupy the rental property for the period of time and for the amount of money specified.

The lease guarantees that the tenant will be responsible for the property and the amount of money agreed upon for a specific period of time.

If either party violates the terms of the lease, legal action can be taken. Leases, however, generally favor landlords. They own the property and usually stipulate the terms of the lease.

Are security and damage deposits required?

Security and damage deposits cover a landlord's losses when a tenant damages the rental property, does not pay utility bills or rent, or does not fulfill other terms of the lease. Although deposits are not required by law, most landlords in the Triton College district require them. Deposits are usually combined in a single payment with the first month's rent prior to moving in.

It is important that the tenant and landlord inspect the rental property and agree on existing conditions before the lease is signed.

Be aware that you are responsible for damages caused to the landlord's property either by your actions or those of your roommates and guests. You are not responsible for normal wear and tear. What constitutes damage beyond normal wear and tear, though, is arbitrary.

Moving In

What do I do first?

You and the landlord should use a checklist to inspect the rental unit before you move in and before you move out. A copy of the form is available in the Housing Office. This checklist enables you to record any apartment repairs needed. A copy of the completed checklist, including the tenant's and landlord's signatures, should be attached to each party's copy of the lease.

What about utilities?

Utilities are an important part of your housing costs. The landlord and former tenants can give you an idea of the cost of monthly utilities.

When you have chosen an apartment, contact the utility companies before moving in. Most utility companies require a three- to five-day notice to begin or end service. Some utilities require someone to be present in the apartment when they arrive to turn on service and may require a deposit before they begin service. A deposit is usually required when a person has no credit history, is new to the area or has a history of paying bills late.

What about furniture?

Once you have an apartment, make a list of things you will need immediately. These might include bed and mattress, alarm clock, desk or kitchen table.

If you can't afford to buy a lot of furniture, here are some alternatives:

- Ask your family members if anyone has extra furniture they would like to give or loan you.
- Check out ads in the local papers and grocery stores for garage and moving sales.
- Read listings under "furniture" and "resale shops" in the yellow pages. Don't forget Goodwill and the Salvation Army.
- Rent furniture. The Housing Office has information on some companies. You also can look in the local yellow pages.

What if something in my apartment breaks?

Usually you will need to contact your landlord about repairs. Your landlord is responsible for repairing anything that goes wrong with your apartment that is not your fault. So he may be responsible for fixing loose tiles in the bathroom, but he may not be responsible for fixing a window your friend broke. (Note: The cost of fixing the window might be deducted from your security deposit.)

If you need repairs, ask the landlord or his agent to make them. Keep a written record of the problem(s) and how your landlord dealt with them.

If you have problems getting repairs taken care of, the Housing Office can supply you with other options.