

## 10 Tips for Renters in the U.S. Market

It can be challenging for renters to navigate the current market and find homes that suit both their needs and budget. However, whether a first-time renter or a seasoned tenant, there *are* ways to minimize stress and make the experience run more smoothly. Here are 10 tips for renters to consider when looking for a rental home:

- 1. Document communications:** Renters should be in the habit of documenting all communications with their landlord/property manager. This can save them from future disputes, especially around the return of deposits or necessary repairs during their lease. Renters should be advised to use email and save correspondence in a digital folder.
- 2. Be diligent:** Rental scams are on the rise. Keep an eye out for red flag indicators in rental listings such as lower than market value rental rates, landlords refusing to meet in person, owners requesting deposits “sight unseen,” and advertisements with grammatical or spelling errors.
- 3. Be mindful about mobile apps:** More private owners are requesting initial deposits and rent to be paid via apps such as PayPal, Zelle and Venmo. Although these methods are convenient, they also offer virtually no protection for renters who send money incorrectly to the wrong person. We strongly advise renters to be cautious at the initial stages, to not only avoid potential scams, but also loss of funds due to user error.
- 4. Get enough details about the new location:** It’s helpful for renters to gather as much information about their new location as possible so they can learn about attractions and things to do, and to familiarize themselves with the area before they make a move. It’s also beneficial to look into rental costs and determine how far their money will go in their new city.
- 5. Rent in the desired school district:** For renters with school-aged children who have identified a specific public school of choice, the only way to ensure enrollment at that school is to live within the identified school district. Proof of address is required for school registration and it’s best to not assume a “variance” will be granted to attend a school outside of the assigned district.
- 6. Be prepared to apply to several properties before finding a new place to call home:** Applying doesn’t mean renters will be committed to a property, but it’s the only way they’ll be considered. The average cost per rental application is \$40 and is required for all occupants over 18. Renters may want to budget for several applications as the rental market is still very competitive across the country.

7. **Plan rental finding trip(s) wisely:** Most rental leasing offices are not open 7 days a week, so it's important to keep this in mind when planning a home-finding trip. The most common property closings are Saturday and Sunday or Sunday and Monday. To maximize showings, be familiar with the office hours of the properties mobile employees are interested in.
8. **Consider renter's insurance:** Many landlords require proof of rental insurance prior to moving in. If not, it's a great idea to secure the insurance anyway; it could come in handy if there's any accidental damage or theft to the property being rented.
9. **Keep pets in mind:** Not all landlords allow pets, so be sure to search specifically for pet-friendly properties if they're a consideration. Often, a pet deposit or monthly pet rent will be required, so this should be kept in mind when budgeting for rental costs. There may be size or breed restrictions as well.
10. **Use helpful resources:** There are many resources to use to find a rental. Please be weary of scams, anything that seems "too good to be true," or any landlords asking for payment before seeing the property. Some websites to use when looking for rentals are:
  - <https://hotpads.com/>
  - <https://www.apartments.com/>
  - <https://www.realtor.com/rentals>
  - <http://www.rent.com>
  - <http://www.zumper.com>
  - [https://www.zillow.com/homes/for\\_rent/](https://www.zillow.com/homes/for_rent/)

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