

12 Tips

for Finding the
Right Landlord

1. Know the difference between good and bad.

A bad landlord is impatient and evasive. A good one won't rush you and will happily answer your questions.

A bad landlord pre-judges all students as untrustworthy, dirty, destructive, loud and careless. A good one treats everyone on their own merit.

A bad landlord counts on your ignorance of the law. A good one helps you to understand your rights.

2. Know what's in the lease.

Leases for students are generally 8 months, or - most often - 1 year in length. A lease is legally binding, so finding out the terms is important.

Even if you're only renting month-to-month, you legally have to give 60 days notice from the first of the month before vacating, unless you've made some other explicit agreement with the landlord.

And it goes without saying, get it in writing (*See: Section 44.2, The Ontario Residential Tenancies Act.*)

3. Ask about utilities.

Is the house heated with gas or electricity? What about the hot water? Utilities such as heat, electricity and water may not be included in the base rent. If they aren't, the landlord is supposed to provide you with the average monthly charges from the previous tenant.

Ask the landlord or current resident for a look at some old bills.

You can also contact Guelph Hydro (519-822-3010) to get a history of monthly electricity costs. You will also find water costs on your hydro bill. If the house is heated with natural gas, ask if you will be required to set up an account with Union Energy. Internet and cable are generally the residents' responsibility, but make sure to check anyway.

4. Find out about decorating.

Make sure you check with the landlord before assuming you can start painting or drilling holes in the wall. You may want your bedroom My-Little-Pony-pink tacked up with posters using duct tape, but there might be a good reason the landlord doesn't want you to do that - and they could come after you for damages.

Your landlord may be fine with your suggestions, or may want to oversee any changes personally. That's okay. It just means they care about the property and that's a good thing.

5. Ask about animals.

If you don't have a pet, go to #6. If you do, ask "Can I have a pet?"

While legally you are allowed pets as long as they don't disturb the landlord or others in the house (**Sec. 14; 76**), you'd probably rather avoid future hassles by determining if the place is pet friendly or not.

You have to take into account other people's allergies and comfort levels. You may have the world's friendliest dog, but a landlord or roommate who is allergic or afraid of dogs will never feel comfortable with little Cujo around.

6. Get it on paper.

A paper trail is always good to have for any financial transactions and a necessity if Canada Revenue Agency decides to audit you. In order to protect yourself, always ask for a receipt for your rent, especially if you are paying by cash.

Legally, a landlord must provide you with one if requested (**Sec. 109.1**). A good landlord welcomes financial transparency.

7. Ask about subletting.

Yes, legally, you may sublet your place with your landlord's consent, and they cannot unreasonably withhold consent. But you should discuss this upfront with the landlord, and agree to introduce your sublettor before entering any agreement with them.

Remember: you are legally responsible for whomever assumes your lease while you're away, so be careful what you arrange.

8. Ask what happens if your ceiling caves in.

Your landlord is likely your first contact for any maintenance issues in your house/apartment as it is legally their responsibility (**Sec. 20**). Ask them the recent maintenance history of the place and try to find out if there are any significant recurring issues.

9. Find out where your stuff can be stashed.

If you've managed to accumulate snowboards, winter tires, and boxes of old VHS movies, find out how the place you're looking into can accommodate you.

What kind of closet space is there? What about a basement or garage?

10. Ask about laundry.

First of all, please do laundry. Too many housemates have been lost due to their stank. However, you may not necessarily want to have to schedule a crosstown bus trip to do it.

Are there laundry machines at your place? Is there a charge? If they're not available, find out where the closest laundromat is, and factor that into your decision.

11. Find out about parking. And busses.

Have a vehicle? Find out if the place comes with a parking space, and if it is included in the rent. Ask where overnight visitors might park.

Planning on taking the bus? Find out where the bus stop is, and if you'll need to transfer. Is it close enough for comfort if you're coming home late at night? If the bus drops below 50mph will it explode?

These are questions you'll want answered.

12. When in doubt, go here:

The Ontario Residential Tenancies Act.

www.ontariotenants.ca/law/act.phtml

To know your rights as a tenant, this is
the document.

