

What Every Renter Should Know Before Moving In

Before signing a lease on your new home, have a look through these tips to ensure you are ready!

1. **Affordability** - Renting an apartment or house can be expensive. Before selecting a place to live, take the following expenses into consideration: monthly rent, utility bill(s), and other monthly expenses (i.e. cable, internet, groceries, and other personal necessities). Your monthly rent should not be more than 30% of your monthly income.
2. **Location, Location, Location** - Ensure the location of your unit is in close proximity to your job, school, grocery store, and accessible to public transportation, if needed.
3. **Don't Sign on the Dotted Line...Yet** - Things to remember before signing a rental agreement: lease agreement start and end dates, amount of the security deposit and additional fees, monthly rent due date, grounds for termination, and the notice period required for the termination of the lease. Do not be afraid to ask questions such as: What if this utility malfunctions? Are my roommates all on the same lease? Are all utilities included in the monthly rent
4. **Remember, You Have Neighbors** - Follow the rules as related to your signed lease, code enforcement property standards set by the city, rules set by your neighborhood civic league and/or neighborhood association.
5. **Establish a Relationship with Your Landlord** - Establishing a good relationship with your landlord will benefit you through the length of your lease and beyond. Remember, a landlord is often used as a reference for your next rental.
6. **Late Payments = Late Fees** - Know the monthly due date of your rental payment. Be sure to pay it on time and know the payment process. Always pay your rent! In the event there are unresolved issues with your unit, there is a process in place to set aside your rental payment into escrow. For more information about this process, contact the Department of Neighborhood Services at (757) 664-4080.
7. **Know Your Local Resources** - Keep up to date about the local resources that can assist you while you are renting such as the Department of Neighborhood Development's services and programs like Rent Ready Norfolk, the Landlord -Tenant Relations Officer, the Norfolk Care Center, Neighborhood Engagement and Neighborhood Quality and Code Compliance.
8. **Renters Insurance is Worth Every Penny** - Get renters' insurance to protect your personal property in case of an unexpected event or emergency such as a theft, natural disaster, or fire. Policies are generally affordable!
9. **Learn and Know Your Rights and Responsibilities** - Learn about your rights and responsibilities as a renter and learn to become a model renter through Rent Ready Norfolk's RentingSmart Academy: Good Renter Track. To schedule a workshop or get more information, contact Rent Ready Norfolk at 757-664-7368 or rentready@norfolk.gov.
10. **Contact the City Landlord and Tenant Relations Officer** - Do not wait to for a problem to persist, such as noncompliance with your rental agreement, with your landlord or property

management company, if there is an issue that needs to be address, contact the City of Norfolk's Landlord and Tenant Relations Officer, through the Norfolk Cares Center at (757) 664-6510 to see what options are available for you to resolve the issue.