

Frequently Asked Questions

ABOUT LIVING OFF CAMPUS

1

Why should I visit the Community Rentals Office? Aren't listings available on the web?

Yes, listings and most of the forms and materials are available on-line. It's a good idea to visit Community Rentals to familiarize yourself with all of the resources available to you. Knowledgeable staff can provide you with guidance and advice.

2

What is the difference between a UNIT and a ROOM?

A **unit** is a self-contained space, be it a house, apartment, studio, or even a room connected to a house. In order for it to be classified as a unit it must have a private bath, entrance, and a full, private, kitchen area. A **room** is in shared housing. The room is (usually) private, but the kitchen, living room, bathrooms, and other common areas are shared. We also have listings called "Efficiencies" which are typically spaces that have all the characteristics of a unit, usually a studio, but only have limited cooking facilities.

3

What are the most important things to remember in looking for a place to live?

Document the condition of the dwelling when you move in—keep a copy! Get all agreements in writing and keep receipts for all financial transactions.

4

When should I look for fall housing?

It is a good idea to start looking three to four weeks in advance of your move-in date, earlier if you have special requirements, such as a pet. Most landlords don't know if their rental will be available until their tenant gives 30-day notice. However, the Community Rentals Office solicits "Advance Fall Listings" in April, whereby landlords list their rentals during spring quarter for students to contract for fall housing. Based on prior years statistics, we may receive about 100 listings. If you don't locate your housing before the school year ends, start looking again in August.

5

How long will it take to find housing?

High demand exists for housing in our beautiful county, so locating suitable housing can take from one to three weeks, depending upon your specific needs - where you want to live, how much you can pay, etc. It is important to personally view rental properties in Santa Cruz. Do not rent a place sight unseen.

6

If we are renting with other people, do we prepare an application packet on each person?

Yes, and put all the individual packets together with one cover letter. Be sure to include your photos.

7

What should we say in the cover letter?

Try to tie the household together with common interests, how you all met, that you get along well, perhaps you have lived together on campus. Reiterate highlights from your resume e.g. You are responsible, conscientious individuals who are science majors and need a quiet household for serious studying—only if you are, of course!



8

Many applications refer to credit history. What if I don't have any credit?

Go ahead and get a credit report on yourself. You might be surprised at the information there. No credit is much better than bad credit.

9

Is it safe to put account numbers and social security numbers on the applications?

Landlords need to have social security numbers to run a credit check but actual account numbers are usually not necessary. Some students do not have income but do have special college accounts. You can make a copy of the statement and black out the actual account number for the application packet.

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If my parents are paying the rent and co-signing for me, should I get a credit report on myself as well as my parents?

It's best to get a credit report on you and your parents. Providing as much information as possible will increase your chance of acquiring a rental.

11

In a month to month agreement, can the landlord raise the rent?

Yes, with a 30-day written notice. We still recommend a month-to-month agreement for students because of its flexibility. Leases can be expensive to break.

12

If a landlord sells a house, can they make me leave?

If you are on a month to month agreement, yes, with a 30 day written notice. If you are on a lease, no. The new owner becomes your new landlord with the same terms and conditions of the original lease.

13

I did not complete an inventory checklist when I moved in and now I am getting ready to move out. What should I do?

Clean the unit thoroughly and fix anything you damaged before the pre-move out inspection. Familiarize yourself with the updated Security Deposit law. This inspection gives you the opportunity to correct any areas that the landlord feels are not up to expectations before you vacate. It is much less expensive for you to take care of it than for them to hire professional cleaners and charge you. Expect that your idea of clean and their idea of clean will most likely be different. Taking photos is also a great idea. It is too late to document the condition when you moved in but you can document the condition when you vacate.

Remember for the next rental that it is to your benefit to complete the inventory checklist (available at Community Rentals office and web site). This is the most important thing you can do to protect your deposit. Be sure to keep copies of all documents pertaining to your rental.

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What if I run into problems with my housing situation?

Your first step is to speak with the advisor at the Community Rentals Office. Depending upon the type of issue, the advisor will guide you through steps for you to take to attempt a resolution or refer you to other appropriate community resources, if needed.

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PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS.