

Housing Vocabulary Terms

The following are some general terms you may want to know when searching for an apartment or room for rent.

Apartment Types and Sizes

"Bachelor": a small apartment without a kitchen. Sometimes a hot plate or microwave are provided.

"Single" or "Studio": a single room apartment with a small kitchen and a bathroom.

"One Bedroom": a one-bedroom apartment that can be for one person or shared. Some students choose to use the living area as a second bedroom.

"One Bedroom Efficiency": a large single that has been converted into a one bedroom by dividing the room with doors. An efficiency should be smaller and cheaper than a normal one bedroom.

"Room in a Private Home": a homeowner will rent a bedroom in their home to a student. Sometimes a private bath is available, sometimes a private entrance. Kitchen privileges, parking, and other issues are arranged between the homeowner and the student.

"Guest House": a homeowner sometimes has a smaller structure behind or next to their property that can be used as a private living space. Size and features vary. Sometimes the guesthouse is a converted garage or pool house.

"Townhouse": a private home or very spacious and luxurious apartment that sometimes has it's own laundry, pool and recreational facilities.

Apartment Features

"Kitchenette": a term used for kitchen accessories in bachelor apartments. Usually includes a hot plate, a small refrigerator, and sometimes a microwave.

"Utilities": the term used for the extra charges for gas, electricity, cable television, and water. Hot water is often included with the rent. Plan on spending an extra \$25-\$100 per month depending on your lifestyle.

Some students are careful about finding "gas stoves" and "non-halogen lamps" as they use less energy. Remember that heaters and air conditioners can use a lot of energy too.

Rental Agreement Terms

"Lease": a legal contract regarding the length of stay, price, and conditions of a rental agreement. It is important to not sign a lease for more than the amount of time you will stay. You are responsible for rent the entire length of the lease.

IMPORTANT: Read through your lease for any conditions that you were not aware of when asking about the apartment. It is better to politely ask a manager to explain something in your lease than to sign it without knowing all the information.

"Sublet": a special arrangement where you live in someone's apartment in their place. Sublets are attractive because they are often short-term opportunities with furnished rooms and no deposit. However, it is usually best to ask the person renting if their manager or landlord knows about your agreement, in case the lease prohibits you from taking his / her place.

"Deposit": an additional amount required for security purposes when moving into an apartment (usually no more than one month's rent). The deposit is returned in full to you if there is no damage to your apartment at the end of your stay.

Make sure to have a written agreement to receive the deposit within 3-4 weeks after you have moved out. The deposit will often be sent in the form of a check.

Some people inspect their apartment carefully when moving in and record any damages, so that they will not be charged for it when moving out. Managers will sometimes charge a small fee

for "cleaning" after you have moved out. You can sometimes avoid this charge if you leave your apartment in perfect condition, but it is best to speak to the manager before you try this.

"Credit Check": a process in which the landlord verifies your credit history and confirms your bank information. International students who do not have a credit history in this country should not need to pay for a credit check, but it may be necessary to negotiate an agreement with the landlord in this case (extra deposit, higher rent, or other documentation / financial support) because they will not have this means of knowing your reliability.