

Before Meeting the Landlord

When the time comes to meet a landlord, take care to make a good first impression. Being prepared and following these tips should help.

Be prepared with:

- A cheque to leave a deposit.
- Your references and rental history.
- Guarantor information (if applicable).
- A letter from current employer or recent pay stub.

Making a first impression:

- Go to your interview alone unless you are renting with a spouse or roommate.
- Dress neatly and arrive on time.

Shared Accommodation: Pros, Cons, and Considerations

Sharing accommodation may make your shelter cost more affordable; however, it can pose many problems. People in shared living space must communicate about how they expect to live together. Set out guidelines in advance to avoid any problems that might occur. Talk about responsibilities for household chores, personal property, keys and privacy. Discuss who will take care of paying the rent, phone bills, utilities and other shared expenses.

How do your roommates view additional roommates, overnight guests, smoking, food, drug and alcohol usage, will you share an Internet connection - what type, and quiet time? If private space (such as bedrooms) are different in some way (such as size or view), discuss who will take which one and at what, if any, additional cost.

Usually the person or persons who sign(s) the lease or make(s) a verbal agreement with the landlord become legally responsible for the actions of the other roommates. If two or more tenants are on (i.e. sign) the same lease each is responsible for the whole rent. The guarantor's liability will depend on the agreement with the landlord. Likewise the renter listed on the utility and telephone bills must ensure payment.



TIP:

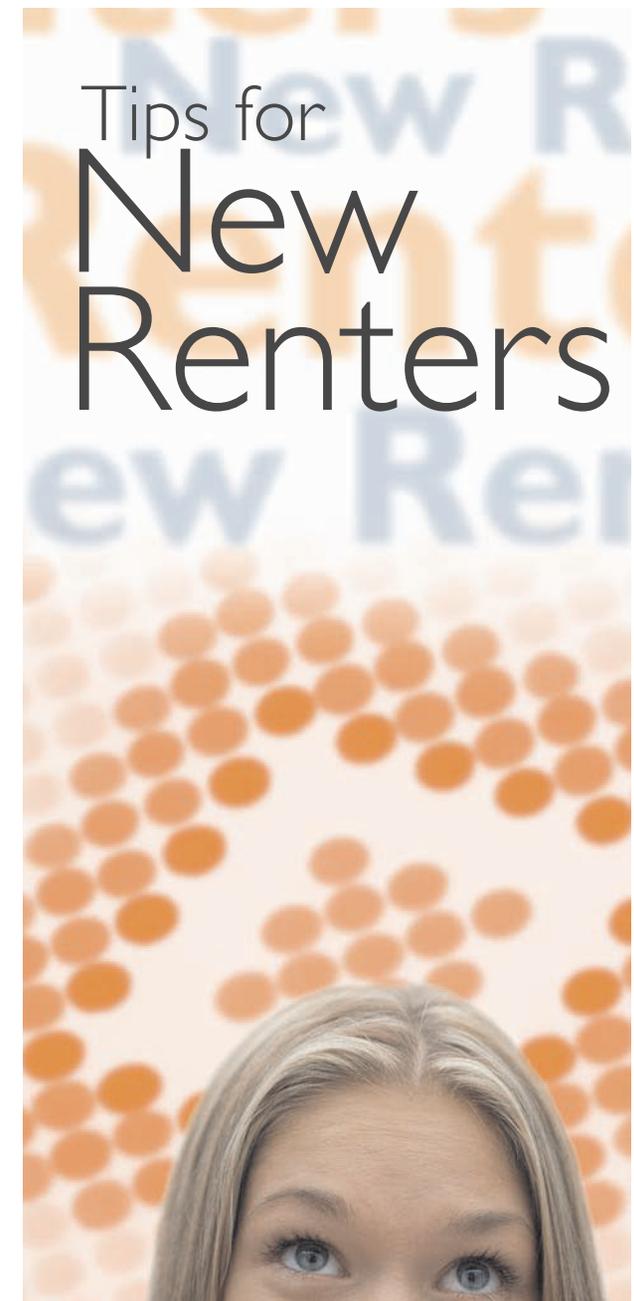
Your Name, Your Bill

Is yours the only name on the phone bill, utility bill, or lease? If it is, try to avoid letting your credit rating suffer because your roommates fail to pay their share of the rent and bills.

Remember, you will be responsible for your roommates' actions if they are not on (i.e. have not signed) the lease. If each of you holds separate leases, you are only responsible for what is in your written agreement. If you both sign the same lease, you are both equally responsible and the landlord can choose to enforce the lease terms against either, or both of you.

Detailed Information can be found at www.cmhc.ca

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Tips for New Renters

Whether you are a first-time renter or an experienced tenant, finding the right place takes effort and time. The seven parts in this section will help you prepare to look for rental accommodations.

Five Elements of Preparation:

- Identify your needs
- Where to look
- Questions to ask the landlord
- Before meeting the landlord
- Shared Accommodations: pros, cons, considerations



Identify your Needs

How flexible are you about where you will live? Generally, your rental choices are limited to whatever is available and affordable, but there may be trade-offs you will have to consider. Do you need to have public transit within a short walk of your new home? Before you start a search, drafting a list of your rental requirements may help.

Like most renters, you'll probably have to make a few compromises between what you want or need and what you can afford.

TIP:
What is Included?

The basic monthly rent is an obvious cost, but many less-visible costs add up as well. Don't forget to ask if utilities, such as heat, electricity, water, cable television and Internet connection are included?

Where to Look

Once you have identified what you're looking for, you're ready to start searching.

You can use many ways to find a place to rent:

- Campus Housing offices.
- Newspapers
 - Bulletin board postings.
 - Internet mail lists
 - Web sites of daily papers
 - Word of mouth

Questions You Should Ask the Landlord

When you look at possible places to rent, it's important to ask questions. Following are some questions you should ask and those you should expect to hear in return.

Are utilities included? If not, what types are used (e.g. natural gas, oil, or electric heating) or permitted? What are the average monthly costs?

Can you make changes to the premises? Can you paint or make other decorative changes?

If relevant, are pets or smoking allowed? If you have pets, find out if any restrictions prohibit certain types of pets.

Where can you park? Is parking an additional cost? How about additional vehicles? Is adequate space provided for guest parking?

TIP:
Get there First

In a tight rental market, you'll need to review new rental postings quickly and visit properties early before someone else snaps up a prime opportunity.

What about additional storage? Are there storage lockers included in the rent? How secure are they? Is there separate bicycle storage?

Other questions. Other points to consider may include:

- Policies on overnight guests or long-term visitors.
- Installation of additional utility cabling, telephone and television jacks, or compact satellite dishes.

A landlord can ask you:

- What is your income? Where do you work?
 - How many people will be living with you and what are their names?
 - Do you have pets? Do you smoke?
 - Could you provide written permission for a credit check?
 - May I see your references and their current contact information?
- A landlord cannot ask you:**
- What is your ethnic background, religion, or sexual preference?
 - Will your family be visiting?
 - What is your social insurance number? If you don't provide your SIN, I won't rent to you.
 - Are you married, single, or divorced?

