

University Housing & Dining Services

Guide to Living Off-Campus

Things to Consider

- Living off campus can offer more independence, but increased responsibility comes with increased independence. As you make the decision, consider how you will manage:
 - Transportation
 - Meals
 - Grocery Shopping
 - Bills and Budget Management
- Corvallis has a remarkably low vacancy rate, approximately 1%. Begin looking early and expect challenges.
- When considering your off campus living expenses, remember that you will need to plan for more than just rent. Laundry, utilities, internet, and television are all expenses you may need to add to your budget. Also, when you sign a contract, you will likely need to provide the first and last month's rent, plus deposits and fees. In some cases you will need to pay an application fee in order to be considered for a rental

Decide What You're Looking For

Would you prefer to live in a house or apartment?

| House | Apartment |
|---|--|
| Typically more expensive | Typically less expensive |
| May or may not include utilities | Typically includes some utilities, water, sewer, and garbage |
| Typically Quieter | Typically Louder |
| May have a yard and yard work | Does not have a yard or yard work |
| Typically more private | Typically less Private |
| Less likely to be close to bus lines | More likely to be close to bus lines |
| Less likely to be close to laundry facilities | More likely to be close to laundry facilities |

What other factors are important in your living environment?

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Roommates | Do you want roommates? How many? Keep in mind that by law, no more than 5 unrelated adults may occupy a living unit. Are you comfortable talking about financial issues with them and working through conflict? Work out how tasks will be split up and bills will be paid for before you agree to sign a rental agreement together. When you sign a rental agreement, everyone agrees to fulfill the contract which means that if a roommate moves out, the remaining roommates are liable for the expenses for those who leave during the contract period. |
| Location | How close is the location to campus, shopping, laundry facilities, bus lines, and work? What is the neighborhood like? |
| Bedrooms | How many do you want? What is the bedroom size? Will any roommates share a room? Who? |
| Bathrooms | How many bathrooms do you need? Do you prefer a bathtub or shower? |
| Heat type | The heat type will impact your energy bills. Gas-forced air is typically the most affordable while electric heat is often the most expensive. The power or gas provider for the property can tell you what the utility bills have typically been for a specific property. Contact Pacific Power at 1-888-221-7070, NW Natural Gas at 541-926-9243, Consumers Power at 541-929-3124. |
| Unit Age | Newer buildings are often better insulated and often further from campus. Are the windows single or double paned? Double panes are designed to hold more heat. |
| Storage Space | Do you need storage space? How big is the available space? Where is it located? |
| Added features | Do you require features like a dishwasher, disposal, deck, patio, or in unit laundry? |

Know Before You Search

Familiarize yourself with the City of Corvallis Housing Division Minimum Housing Standards before you start to search.



City of Corvallis Housing Division

500 SW Madison, Suite 10
 PO Box 1083
 Corvallis, OR 97339
 541-766-6944

REFERRAL RESOURCES

- City of Corvallis:**
Rental Housing Program 766-6944
 (all rental housing issues)
Development Services..... 766-6929
 (dangerous buildings)
Fire Department 766-6973
 (weed abatement)
Police Department..... 766-6924
 (Fair Housing issues)

All City offices may also be reached on the Internet at
www.ci.corvallis.or.us

- Legal Aid** 926-8678
 (low-income tenants)
ASOSU Attorney, Audrey Bach 737-4165
 (OSU students)
State of Oregon 1-800-453-5511
 Manufactured Dwelling Park Ombudsperson
 (www.hcs.state.or.us)

Corvallis —

A Community that Honors Diversity

MINIMUM HOUSING STANDARDS

- Structural Integrity:** Roofs, floors, walls, foundations, and all other structural components shall be capable of resisting any reasonable stresses and loads to which these components may be subjected. Structural components shall be of materials allowed or approved by the Building Code.
- Plumbing:** Plumbing systems shall be installed and maintained in a safe and sanitary condition and shall be free of defects, leaks, and obstructions. Plumbing components shall be of materials allowed or approved by the Plumbing Code.
- Heating:** There shall be a permanently installed heat source with the ability to provide a room temperature of 68 degrees three feet above the floor, measured in the approximate center of the room, in all habitable rooms. All heating devices or appliances shall be of an approved type. Ventilation for fuel-burning heating appliances shall be as required by the Mechanical Code.
- Weatherproofing:** Roof, exterior walls, windows and doors shall be maintained to prevent water leakage into living areas which may cause damage to the structure or its contents or may adversely affect the health of an occupant. Repairs must be permanent rather than temporary and shall be through generally accepted construction methods.

CORVALLIS RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAM

The Corvallis Rental Housing Program was enacted by the City Council in 1999 to be a resource for people with rental housing issues or concerns. A City Housing Programs Specialist is available to all citizens who have questions or concerns about rental housing in the City, including property owners, property managers, tenants, neighboring property owners, and any other interested parties.

The Specialist listens to a caller's issues and concerns, and then addresses the situation in one of several ways.

Most likely, he or she will refer you to the appropriate agency that can assist you in the best manner (this may be the City's Development Services or Fire Department, Legal Aid, or another agency appropriate to your situation).

In July of 2002 the City Council expanded the Rental Housing Program by adding a Rental Housing Code. The Rental Housing Code addresses four areas of habitability that were identified most frequently over a period of two years as issues of concern to people living in Corvallis: structural integrity, plumbing, heating, and weatherproofing. Specific housing standards were created and a City Ordinance implemented in order to provide the City with an enforcement mechanism for the Rental Housing Code.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

A primary goal of the complaint procedure is to bring about resolution without the need for City enforcement action. A complaint to the City must be in writing and may be filed in person or by mail, e-mail or fax. A complaint may be filed with the City only after the tenant has sent written notice to the landlord/ property manager detailing the alleged habitability violation, and given them 10 days to respond to the complaint. A complaint must include the following:

- name of person filing the complaint
- name of the landlord/manager
- address of the alleged violation
- a complete description of the alleged violation
- a copy of the written notice of the alleged habitability violation that has been sent by the tenant to the landlord.

A person who files a complaint must be a party to the current rental agreement or an agent of this party. Complaint investigations will be processed by Housing Division staff only after the above process has been followed.

Corvallis Rental Housing Program

A Service of the City of Corvallis Housing Division

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Conduct Your Search

As you begin your search, you will find many abbreviations. Here's what they generally mean.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Bedrooms | Br., Bed, Bdrm. |
| Bathroom | Bath |
| Square Feet | Sq Ft, s/f, sf |
| Washer and Dryer | w/d |
| Washer and dryer hookups | w/d hookups |
| Dishwasher | DW |
| Air Conditioning | AC |

Here are a few places to begin your search

- Peruse The Gazette Times **Classified Section**. Use the paper or visit <http://www.gazettetimes.com/admarket/> click "rentals."
- Search "Corvallis Property Management Companies" in your Web browser.
- **The Corvallis Area Renter's Guide** can be found at <http://www.dailybarometer.com/>.
- Take a peek at **The Memorial Union Housing Board** in the stairwell between Bites and Buenos Burritos.
- Check **Craigslist** for listings at <http://Corvallis.craigslist.org>, but first visit their page on safety <http://www.craigslist.org/about/safety>.

Avoid Scams

Never send sensitive information or documents through email.

Never send or wire money to anyone. It's better to do it in person.

Always go see the apartment or house before giving any money or personal information.

Before You Sign Your Contract

Once you've found a place you like, take a closer look before you sign an agreement or put down a deposit.

- Turn on all the lights; plug a radio or lamp into all sockets. Do they work? Check for scorch marks around sockets and light switches.
- Turn on all faucets, sinks and tub/shower. Is there enough water pressure? Are there any leaks? Run the shower and flush the toilet at the same time. Is there still enough water pressure, or is the shower down to a trickle? How is the water temperature? How long does it take the toilet to refill?
- Turn the heat on. Don't accept, "I've turned the gas off; I'll turn it back on when it gets cold." When it's cold, you will also be cold! Find out now if the heat works.
- Turn on every burner on the stove and check the oven. Does everything work?
- Check the refrigerator and the freezer. Are they cold?
- Check each door to make sure it closes, and locks/unlocks properly.
- Do the smoke detectors work? The landlord must provide a working smoke detector upon move-in. After that, it is the tenant's responsibility. Make sure it works before you sign a rental agreement.

International Students

Landlords may not treat you differently from other student renters. Just because you are from another country does not necessarily mean you have to pay higher rent, larger deposits or anything else that is different from what other renters are paying to live in the same apartment complex.

If you feel you are being treated differently, please call:

Fair Housing Council of Oregon
1-800-424-3247

Or

Bob Loewen, City of Corvallis
541-766-6944

You will not be deported for complaining. It is your right to be treated equally.

- If you will be living in a basement, are there 2 exits in which you could get out if necessary? Is there a working smoke detector in the basement?
- Remember all bedrooms must have a window.

After you're satisfied with the condition of the place, and it's time to sign the rental agreement. Read the agreement entirely before you sign and write the check. Do you understand it? Do you agree with it? Do you understand the lease terms and what happens if you need to break the lease. If not, ask questions. No matter how good the intentions of your new landlord are, once you've signed the agreement, you are legally bound to follow through. If the landlord has promised to make repairs or do further cleaning, write that into the agreement.

Once all is agreed upon and signed, write the check. Expect the check(s) to be for the first and last month's rent and a security deposit. The only up-front fee a landlord can charge is an application fee. No other fees or nonrefundable deposits are allowed in Oregon. Deposits that are potentially refundable are allowed.

If you have roommates, remember that when you sign a rental agreement, everyone agrees to fulfill the contract which means that if a roommate moves out, the remaining roommates are liable for the expenses for those who leave during the contract period.

Getting Settled

Some landlords will provide you with a check-in condition sheet. If one is not provided for you, write one up yourself, and give a copy to the landlord. This is to protect you and the landlord. Be thorough, noting the smallest nail holes, chipped paint, discolored ceiling, broken screens, damaged or missing molding or trim, and anything else you see that isn't perfect or working properly. Take a video or photographs of the rental. This will show the condition of the unit when you moved in. Do the same when you move out.

Navigating Problems

If you have problems, you do have support. Read through the Landlord Tenant Laws and call one of the many supports listed below.

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|--|--|
| Landlord Tenant Law in Oregon (1999) | www.leg.state.or.us/ors/090.html |
| Audrey Bach, ASOSU Attorney | (541) 737-4165 |
| City of Corvallis Rental Housing Program, Bob Loewen | (541) 766-6944 |
| Legal Aid | (541) 926-8678 |
| Fair Housing Council of Oregon | 1-800-424-3247 |

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