HOW TO FIND HOUSING
Who is Who?
- People who own and/or manage apartments/houses are usually called “landlords” or “lessors”; they can be a rental company or an individual.
- People who rent apartments are called “tenants” or “lessees”.
- Intermediaries between landlords and tenants, who connect the two parties and assist them in renting their properties, are “housing or leasing agents”.
- When you need a repair or replacement of equipment/furniture, you may be required to contact a “maintenance provider”; depending on the lease terms, this person may or may not be your landlord/rental company.

Security Deposit
It is an amount of money required to be paid by the tenant when signing the lease. The purpose of the deposit is to protect the landlord from future damages or default on the lease. Your deposit may be applied to future charges or returned when you leave the apartment, depending on what is stated in the lease agreement. The amount may vary, common practice is that it is equal to one month’s rent.

Lease Agreement
A lease is a contract between you (the tenant) and landlord which specifies legal requirements and limitations for both parties. Each lease is unique and specific but there are some common clauses which are included in most leases, such as rent and deposit amount, lease term, utility charges, late payment policy, maintenance requests, and others.

Lease Term
It is the amount of time for apartment occupancy to which tenant and landlord agree. Usually an apartment is leased for a term of 6 months or 1 year. It is also possible to get a month-to-month lease, however the rates are likely to be higher.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Distance to Campus
Choose how far you want to live from campus and from your building on campus in particular. Use online maps and NU maps to figure out the distance and ways to commute. Check out NU University Services for the free shuttles schedules and routes.

Think about how often you will commute to campus. Do you have to go on weekends? Take into account that many shuttles do not operate on weekends.

Extreme Weather
Do not forget about snow, rain, wind, and heat. The Lake effect makes the weather in Chicago unpredictable.
Are you ready to commute to campus in difficult weather conditions?

**Neighborhood**

Decide which area or neighborhood you want to live in. Different neighborhoods will have different characteristics (Quality of medical services, number of schools, crime rate, lighting etc.). You’ll want to pick the one that is the closest fit to your lifestyle and personality, and is within your budget. For Chicago neighborhoods go to Chicago’s official visitors’ website ChooseChicago.com and for Evanston neighborhoods and news go to EvanstonEdge.com.

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**THINK ABOUT YOUR BUDGET**

__Monthly Rent__

How much are you willing to spend? To get a sense of prices, visit Places4Students.com and enter ‘Northwestern’ in the school section to view apartment and roommate listings.

__Roommates__

Sharing housing can be the start of a life-long friendship! Consider sharing the cost of the place with other Northwestern students and/or employees. Think ahead about how rooms and bathrooms will be divided, whose name will appear on the lease or will each of you have separate leases? Note that if you are all on the same lease and your roommate moves out, you may be responsible for covering the full cost of rent. Go to Roommate Checklist to learn more.

__Monthly Utilities__ (electricity, water, gas, cable, Internet)

Depending on lease terms, tenants may be required to pay for all or certain kinds of utilities.

__Safety__

Think about safety. Facts and statistics are available online through websites, forums and message boards. Do the statistics reflect the kind of neighborhood you’d feel comfortable living in?

__Children__

Do you have children? What are the school or daycare options available in the area? Think about proximity to medical services, pharmacy and leisure activities.

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**FIND YOUR PERFECT PLACE**

Go to Places4Students.com to view off-campus housing solutions for students, staff and other community members of Northwestern.

Talk to rental companies about what they have available in the location of your interest. Begin with preliminary questions (price, number of bedrooms and bathrooms, what utilities are included), then arrange a time to visit or set up a video call.

Always try to visit the actual apartment you will be renting! It is strongly recommended to tour the place before signing the lease and paying the deposit. Once you have a list of options, schedule a day for visiting the places and make appointments in advance. There are many options for places to stay while visiting apartments in Evanston and Chicago. Check online and reserve nearby hotels or temporary home rentals to get a variety of alternatives.

If you are not able to inspect the place yourself, you may ask friends and acquaintances to do it for you and send you pictures. You can also ask the landlord to do a video call from the place. Some rental companies post virtual tours, check them out.

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**ASK QUESTIONS TO LANDLORDS**

What are the measurements of your room? Is there a lot of sunlight in the apartment?

How many bathrooms are there? In some listings, you will see “1.5 bathrooms” This means that there is 1 bathroom with a toilet, sink, and bathtub/shower, and .5 means just a toilet and a sink.

If it is a shared place, can I talk to my future roommates? What are their lifestyles like?

How many parking spots are available? Does parking cost extra?

Is the place heated in winter? Can I control the heat?

Who are the neighbors? Are they undergraduate/graduate students or non-student residents?

Is the landlord generally available? Will he or she respond promptly when repairs and maintenance are needed? What maintenance am I responsible for?

Where can I do my laundry? Some places have “coin laundry”, where you share laundry machines with your neighbors, others provide separate machines for every apartment or none at all.

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**BEFORE YOU SIGN YOUR LEASE**

Understand your lease. Is it a “tenant-at-will” lease which permits both you and the landlord to terminate the lease with 30 days' notice? Is it an individual or a joint lease?

Go to Before You Sign Your Lease and download the Model Lease Agreement as a guideline for any lease you are about to sign. Remember to take pictures of the apartment together with your landlord to avoid unnecessary costs when moving out.

Record property conditions in the Property Checklist available on our website, go to Move In section on our website.

**MOVE IN AND STAY INVOLVED!**

Once you sign your lease and move in, stay in touch with the International Office and the Office of Off-Campus Life and get involved in various campus events.

Check the NU calendar for upcoming events.

Like “NU Off-Campus Life” on Facebook and sign up to our e-newsletter on our website.

Go out and meet your neighbors. For helpful neighborhood tips go to Being a Good Neighbor section on our website.

Check out the NU Off-Campus Life website and let us know if we can answer any of your questions.