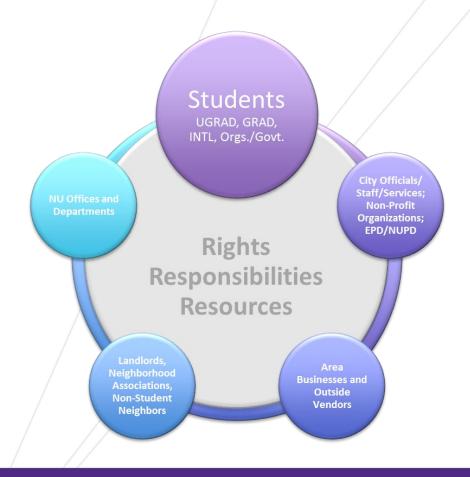
Securing Housing Off-CampusAdvice for International Students

The Off-Campus Life Office

We serve as the first point of contact for students moving and living off-campus.



When to Start Searching & Where to Live

OVERVIEW OF HOUSING

When to Start Searching

- As soon as you need a place, start looking!
- Most graduate students start looking for housing in April through July
- Most leases are signed in July through August
- After submitting an application, ask the landlord when you can expect to receive a decision

Where to Live

Graduate students taking classes in Chicago live in the Loop, but also further north (Edgewater, Lakeview, Rogers Park neighborhoods) and even into Evanston

 Learn more about Chicago neighborhoods with this <u>interactive</u> map

Popular Evanston neighborhoods for Northwestern students are west and south of campus

Students often live within a few blocks of the CTA or Metra train lines

On-Campus Housing

There are no University owned on-campus rental properties on the Chicago campus

On-campus graduate student housing options in Evanston fill up very quickly and is only available for full-time enrolled graduate students & post-doctoral candidates.

For more information regarding the application process, you can contact (847) 467-4663 or housing@northwestern.edu.

Location & Transportation

- It is important to think about location before committing to a lease
 - Things to consider: distance to classes, nearby public transportation, proximity to grocery stores/laundromat, & neighborhood safety
- Transportation Options
 - Bicycles, Walking, <u>University Shuttles</u>, <u>CTA trains</u>
 <u>and buses</u>, <u>Metra trains</u>, & Cars (may require <u>on-campus parking pass</u>)

Think About Your Budget

- Consider the following expenses:
 - Rent and deposit amount
 - Monthly utilities
 - Furnishing your apartment
 - Food expenses
 - Do you have pets? Pet fees/deposits
 - Renters insurance
- Utilize our monthly budget spreadsheet!
- Financial Aid:
 - Talk with your financial aid advisor!



Amenities and Utilities

- Amenities & Utilities will vary with each lease contract, depending on the landlord/apartment building.
- Amenities that may be included: in-unit or in-building laundry, kitchen appliances, parking, Internet, cable TV, etc.
- Utilities that may be included: water, electricity, heat, garbage pick-up, gas

Authentic Information & Reliable Housing Options

FINDING HOUSING & ROOMMATES

Places4Students

- Northwestern University partners with <u>Places4Students.com</u>. It's free to you!
 - Rental Property listings
 - Roommate Finder
 - Student Sublets
- If you need a shorter term, check the "Sublet" and "Short-Term Rental" tabs

Finding Reliable Housing (Even If You Aren't Currently in the Area)

- Before visiting, contact landlords by phone/email with any questions about properties you're considering.
- Recommendation: view housing options in-person!
 - Plan ahead to make appointments to visit potential properties as soon as you arrive.
 - If this is not possible, arrange a video call tour of the property (e.g., Zoom).

Lease Options, Amenities & Utilities, & Fees

HOUSING & LEASE DETAILS **READ YOUR LEASE!**

Understanding Your Lease

What is the *single most important thing* you can do before signing your lease?



Your Lease: How to Read It

- Leases can be challenging even for native English readers!
- Make it easier:
 - Review the <u>Chicago</u> or <u>Evanston</u> landlordtenant ordinance summaries so you know your rights, and what to watch for.
 - Compare your lease to a model lease (like this one for Evanston).

Your Lease: Key Questions

- There are lots of questions to consider!
- You can use OCL's lease review document; just email us to get a copy.
- Some sample questions:
 - What's the term?
 - Is it a joint or individual lease?
 - How can you leave the lease early? Are there penalties to do so?
 - How and when do you pay rent?
 - How do you request repairs, or pest control?
 - Whether and how can you sublet?
 - What rules govern my use of the property?

Application & Lease Fees

- Many landlords require tenants to pay application and move-in fees (or security deposit), in addition to the first month's rent, before signing the lease agreement.
- If you have to pay non-refundable fees, those are typically charged in place of a refundable security deposit.
- A security deposit can be no larger than one and a half times your rent payment

Social Security Number, Credit, Co-Signers, & Conflicts

ADDITIONAL LEASE ISSUES

Social Security Number (SSN) for International Students

- Your application may be turned down without an SSN or ITIN
- You will be able to obtain an SSN eventually if you have an on-campus job.
- Some landlords will accept a valid passport, Form I-20, or Form DS-2019 as proof of being an international student studying at Northwestern

Credit History Review

- Landlords may ask for a Social Security number in order to conduct a credit check as part of the application.
- Poor credit history?
 - Find someone (often a family member) willing to co-sign your lease, or be a guarantor on it.
- What if you don't have an SSN?
 - If you have an on-campus internship/assistantship, obtain a letter from your academic department with the terms of your position and its pay
 - Obtain a letter of sponsorship or other proof of income (e.g., bank statements) to demonstrate your ability to pay.
 - Provide contact information (email) from previous landlords

When Things Go Wrong

- Apartment living doesn't always go exactly perfect.
- Have an issue with your neighborhood/neighbors?
 - Try 3-1-1 Services to find local options and resources
 - Evanston: https://www.cityofevanston.org/how-to/311
 - Chicago: https://311.chicago.gov/s/?language=en_US
- Have a landlord conflict?
 - Metropolitan Tenants Organization
 - Law Center for Better Housing
- Have a roommate conflict?
 - University Ombudsperson

Connect With OCL

- Visit us in the lower level of Scott Hall!
- Visit <u>our website!</u>
- Contact us to schedule a meeting!
 - Email: offcampuslife@northwestern.edu
 - Phone: 847-491-8430
- Use our LinkTree to connect to our socials!





Questions?

