



# John Carroll University Guide to Searching For Off-Campus Housing

## Where to Rent/Lease

John Carroll maintains a housing registry for those looking to rent in the area at [bit.ly/10ER9V2](http://bit.ly/10ER9V2). Students can search available listings in the area.

Students can also contact the following companies that are known to work with and rent to JCU students in the area:

- **Fairmount Circle Apartments**
  - (216) 321-9340
- **Howard Hanna Property Management**
  - (216) 901-4500
  - <http://www.howardhanna.com/propertymanagement/>
- **Brockway Properties LLC**
  - (330) 388-7798
  - <http://brockwayproperties.com/brockway-properties-llc/>
- **AZ Management**
  - (216) 831-9110
  - <http://www.azmanagement.com/Student-Housing.aspx>

*John Carroll University and the Office of Residence Life do not endorse or recommend any of the above companies; they are only offered as suggestions to students looking to rent.*

## Things to Consider When Looking to Rent/Lease

1. **Size** – First, determine what size of apartment or house you require. Generally, you want one bedroom per person, but this is up to you and the rules/laws where you are renting. Also consider the size of the other rooms. Is the bathroom tiny? Is there room for the furniture you have? Another consideration is the type of building the apartment is in. Is it a house divided into several apartments? A two-story complex surrounding a pool? A skyscraper? A duplex or townhouse? A loft? These factors will affect the noise level, sense of community, and ease of access, among other issues.
2. **Price** is another concern. Look at local listings, including Craigslist, to discover what normal rent prices are for your area. It could be significantly less or more where you live. Also, some parts of town may be more expensive than others. Decide on a price range that you can afford, and don't forget to consider the cost of utilities and gas to get to work/classes. Remember that you will probably have to pay the first (and sometimes last) month's rent and security deposit, along with start-up fees for utilities, shortly before or shortly after moving in.

3. **Location** - You're going to be living in this apartment for a while, so consider the location. Is it easy to get in and out? How close is it to John Carroll? Is the neighborhood safe? Will there be a problem with noise/light? (No one ever considers whether a street light will be shining in their window, but it is suggested that you take a look around.) Even if the immediate street looks safe, take a drive around. Try visiting the place during the day, during the evening, and on the weekend. Your street may look quiet on Tuesday morning but turn into party central on Friday nights. Also consider your apartment's location in the larger building. Is it on the second floor? Around back? Near the entryway, where other tenants will be tromping past, or over your head, at all times of day and night?
4. **Utilities** - Find out if you will be responsible for utilities, and which ones. Ask how much the utilities usually are per month. Also find out if you have gas or electric heat. Electric heat can get very expensive in the winter, and many rental homes may be poorly insulated.
5. **Smoking rules** – Most landlords no longer allow smoking in their properties. If you're a smoker, find out the rules. Even if you're not a smoker, you should ask, because other people in your building may be smokers, and you may have to deal with their smoke and cigarette butts.
6. **Parking** – Find out where you can park. Is there free off-street parking? This is best. If you do have to park on the street, find out if you need a permit or if you will have to move your car for street cleaning. Ask how many cars you are allowed per apartment and if there is an extra fee for additional cars.
7. **Amenities** – Do you want/need a dishwasher? A washer and dryer? A furnished apartment? A pool? Find out if they are available in your apartment or complex.
8. **Length of lease** – Find out how long the lease runs. If you're a student and want a 9 month lease, make sure that that's what you get. Don't plan on breaking the lease after nine months, as this can be expensive or impossible, and don't count on subletting, either, as most landlords do not allow this. Most leases are for a year, though some landlords have apartments with shorter leases. Find out if you can move in on the first day of the lease (some landlords, especially those with multiple properties, take several days to clean each apartment, so it make take up to a week after your lease starts before you can move in). Also, find out when you will be expected to move out.
9. **Closets, cabinet space, power outlets, etc** – In the rush to see the place, and in your initial excitement, you might not remember to take a look at the closets or to see if there is enough cabinet space for your dishes. You might also not consider how many power outlets there are per room. These can be very important factors later.
10. **The lease** – Read it carefully, and ask questions. If you can, bring someone along who will understand the lingo better than you do. If a part of the lease doesn't apply, seems like a deal-breaker, or if it really seems ridiculous, talk to the landlord about it. You may be able to negotiate small changes, such as having a second pet or a grill with an additional deposit. Check to see what you are responsible for paying for and what the landlord will repair. Find out about guests. Ask if you are allowed to paint or

hang things with nails. If the landlord tells you something that isn't in the lease or is different from what the lease says, get it in writing. Check below for more information about leases.

11. **The landlord** – You will be relying on this person to complete maintenance on time, return your security deposit, and not enter your apartment unauthorized. While you're taking the tour of the apartment, get a feel for whether your landlord is trustworthy. Also, take a look at the lease. One lease may include a whole page that states what the landlord will and will not do. Another lease may only have two items that the landlord cites as their responsibility. Which lease makes you feel more comfortable? You can also ask current renters if they like the landlord. In the end, if the place is amazing and the rent is low, a bad landlord may be worth it, but most of the time you should make sure you like your landlord.
12. **Roommates** – Most of you will probably be moving into an apartment with roommates. Find out how many roommates you will have and what their budgets are. Know how many roommates city code allows, in University Heights it is three unrelated. Find out how you will divide utility bills, groceries, etc. Determine who has what furniture. Make sure your roommates are reliable, and that you'll all get along. Sit down and discuss what you will do if something goes wrong.
13. **Safety** – Although location is a primary factor when it comes to safety, there are other things that you should consider. Do the doors have deadbolts? Is the apartment on the first floor, with easy access to burglars? Does each sleeping room have at least two exits in case of fire? (It should, according to most fire regulations.) Is there street lighting nearby? Does the apartment have a working/non-working fireplace, which might result in fires or animals gaining access to the house? How does the electrical situation look? (This may be difficult to determine, but bad wiring is a main cause of fires.) Jump up and down and see if the floor shakes. Take a look at the ceiling and make sure that there are no old leaks (Old leaks will leak again, and water in the ceiling can cause mold to grow.) Is the apartment near a busy street or intersection? Most of these things are out of your control, and it is unlikely that something bad will happen, but it's important to be observant.
14. **Renter's Insurance** – Your landlord probably has insurance on the building itself, but this does not cover your possessions, nor does it cover the damages when you accidentally break a window. Don't assume you are still covered under your parents' home policy. Some landlords even require that you have insurance, so ask.
15. **Appliances and Bathroom Facilities** - Take a look at the stove, fridge, toilet, and shower. Make sure that they are clean and in working order. You might try the hot water to see how long it takes to get hot and how hot it gets. Also flush the toilet and ask if you can turn on the shower so that you get an idea of water pressure.
16. **Mice and other pests** – Ask if you can open the cabinet under the sink, and see if there are any mouse droppings or bugs. This will not automatically tell you if there are any mice or bugs in the apartment, but the cabinet under the sink is not often disturbed, and you may be able to tell right away that there are mice. You can also see if the sink leaks while you're at it.

17. **Smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and fire extinguishers** – All apartments should have working smoke alarms. Some will also have carbon monoxide detectors or fire extinguishers. If so, make sure that you know where they are and how to use them. If they don't and you want the extra safety, see if the landlord would be willing to provide these devices.
18. **Windows and lighting** – Open and close the windows, if possible, to make sure that you can easily do so in case of fire or heat wave. Also check and see if there are screens. Take a look at the overhead lighting situation, as well as the number of windows in a room. You're probably looking at the apartment in broad daylight and so lighting won't be a primary concern, but you'll want to know if there is no overhead lighting, as you'll have to purchase lamps.
19. **Make a list of these concerns, as well as your priorities**, and carry it with you when you look at apartments. Never feel pressured into making a decision on the spot. You may need to decide quickly if there are other people looking at the property, but you should always go home, look at your notes, and think it over.
20. **Fill out a Move-In Checklist** - The day you move in you may want to walk through the rental property with your landlord. Take pictures and report any and all damages/problems that you see. To help you keep track of the condition of the apartment when you move in, print-off a **Move-In Checklist** from the Residence Life Off-Campus website, complete as you walk through with the landlord, provide a copy to the landlord, and keep a copy for yourself to compare to when you move out.
21. **Roommate Contracts** - Though you will most likely be living with the friends and individuals of your choosing, it is still important that you and your roommates set clear expectations. Make sure that everyone agrees on rules regarding visitation, noise, cleaning, food in the refrigerator, and anything else that you and your roommates may agree is important. To help with this, use the **Roommate Agreement** found on the Residence Life Off-Campus website.
22. **Off Campus Behavior Policy and the Community Standards Manual** - The University reserves the right to review student misconduct that occurs off campus when such behavior reflects upon the integrity of the University. Students are reminded that they serve as representatives of John Carroll University and both positive and inappropriate behavior affect the University's image and reputation. Students are encouraged to be involved in their community in positive ways, such as community service and local government. The University desires to have students act as both responsible and mature representatives. In the cases of inappropriate behavior off campus, the Dean of Students or designee investigates these charges and may make referrals to the Student Conduct System. (Students or organizations found responsible for violating these regulations will be subject to the same sanctions imposed for violations that occur on campus.)

Find the Move-In Checklist at – <http://bit.ly/YPohVI>

Find the Roommate Agreement at – <http://bit.ly/11CKV6V>

# Things to Consider Before Signing a Lease

- Has the landlord provided contact information on the lease?
- What are the move-in and move-out dates?
- Is there a lease renewal date/clause?
- How much is the rent and when is it due?
  - What is the penalty for late payments?
- Is a deposit required? If so, how much is the deposit?
- Can the tenants sublease the apartment or house?
- Are there guest restrictions?
- Does the lease explicitly address conduct rules for the rental property (i.e. parties, outside furniture, fire pits etc.)?

## What is a Security Deposit?

A security deposit is a deposit of money to be paid by the tenant and held by the landlord during the length of the lease agreement. The deposit can be used to cover any unpaid rent or damages you might cause during your tenancy. The security deposit does not give the tenant permission to damage the property and depending on how it is stated in the lease agreement, damage to the property could result in an eviction from the property. Be sure the lease is clear about the terms of when and how you will receive your deposit back. Be sure you understand how damages could affect your lease. To help increase the amount you receive back, complete a walk-through with the landlord before you move in, take pictures, and complete a [Move-In Checklist](#) found on the Residence Life Off-Campus website.

## Tenants' Rights

While living off-campus you may find yourself in a situation you may not know how to handle. The Cleveland Tenant's Organization can assist you and your roommates in addressing concerns about and to your landlord. Please visit their website or call them for any and all questions concerning your rights as a tenant. As always it is of the utmost importance that you read your lease agreement before signing.

Phone – (216) 432-0617

E-mail - [tao@clevelandtenants.org](mailto:tao@clevelandtenants.org)

<https://sites.google.com/a/clevelandtenants.org/cleveland-tenants-organization/>

For Questions about **rights and responsibilities under local, state or federal landlord tenant laws** call:

- (216) 432-0609 or (216) 432-0610

For Questions about **evictions** you can call:

- (216) 432-0614 or (216) 432-0615

To contact **tenant organizing staff** and for **all questions**, call:

- (216) 432-0617 or (216) 432-0618