

RENTING OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

WHAT
YOU NEED
TO KNOW!



WHEN SHOULD I START LOOKING FOR AN OFF-CAMPUS APARTMENT OR HOUSE?

- Grinnell is a small town, which can make finding rental housing challenging. You should start looking for a place to rent eight or nine months ahead of your anticipated move-in date.

WHAT COSTS DO I NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN LIVING OFF-CAMPUS?

- Have a price tag in mind – how much can you afford to pay for rent each month?
- Understand what is or is not included in your rent! Some landlords include utilities (gas, electric, water, garbage pickup, internet/cable) as part of your rent, others do not. The landlord or property manager will be able to tell you whether utilities are included in your monthly rent or if you are responsible for paying those separately. They may also be able to tell you the monthly cost of utilities for the property so that you can budget accordingly.
- Understand the cost of setting up utilities (if you do not have a credit history, utilities may require an initial deposit).
- Understand what you will need to pay when you sign a lease. You should be prepared to pay the first and last months' rent in advance. Some landlords may require a damage deposit.

WHAT DO I NEED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN SIGNING A LEASE?

- Read, and be sure that you understand the terms of your lease before you sign it. Before you sign, you should know:
- Whether you are personally responsible for all of the rent or just a portion
- Who pays utilities
- Whether you are allowed to have someone take over the lease or sublet the property
- Whether cleaning costs are automatically deducted from a deposit
- How much will you be expected to pay when signing the lease (first and/or last months' rent, damage deposit, application or credit check fee)



- How much notice the landlord will give you to inspect the property
- Whether a parent or guardian will be required to co-sign the lease

WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED TO SIGN A LEASE FOR A WHOLE YEAR, BUT I DON'T PLAN TO BE IN GRINNELL?

- If you are planning to do a summer internship outside of Grinnell, study off-campus, or graduate early, you are still responsible for your lease. You should understand whether your landlord allows sub-letting or will allow you to find someone to take over your lease before you sign!

WHAT CAN I DO TO ENSURE THAT I GET BACK MY DEPOSIT WHEN MY LEASE IS UP?

- Rental deposits are generally refundable, if there are no damages to the property and the property is left clean and tidy when you move out.
- Property damages can include holes in walls (even from nails or tacks used to hang posters/pictures), scratched or torn flooring, broken doors/windows, broken/dirty appliances (stove, microwave, refrigerator, washer/dryer).
- Take photos and/or video of the property before you move in and hang on to them! If something is broken or not in working order when you move in, take notes and keep photo/video evidence so that the landlord cannot come back on you for damages that you are not responsible for. It is best to share your initial observations of damages with your landlord, in writing, before you move in. Provide a copy to your landlord and keep the original.

- Specifically, you should:
 - » Check to make sure that the oven/stove, microwave, refrigerator, washer/dryer all work properly,
 - » Check to make sure that outlets and light switches work properly,
 - » Check to make sure that fire alarms are installed and work properly,
 - » Check to make sure that you have hot water,
 - » Check to make sure that the heat works (before you NEED it), and that the A/C works, if you have it.
- The less work the landlord must do to get ready for the next renter, the better! After you have removed your belongs from the property, CLEAN! Sweep, mop, and vacuum the floors, scrub the toilet(s), sinks, kitchen countertops and appliances, and clean any dirt, food, scuffs, etc. off all surfaces. Pretend that YOU are the next person moving in – what condition would you want the property to be in? Use that as your standard. If the landlord must clean up your mess, they will charge you for their time and materials to do so and it is less likely that your full deposit will be returned to you. After you have completed your final cleaning, take photos and/or videos!

HOW CAN I MAKE SURE THAT I DON'T HAVE TO PAY FOR DAMAGES?

- Make sure that you purchase renters' insurance! Iowa law does not require that you attain renters' insurance, but most landlords DO. You can get renters insurance from almost any insurance carrier, and it is very affordable (the average premium in Iowa is \$13/month). In most cases, if you accidentally cause damage to a rented property, you will be liable to cover those damages. Renters' insurance will not only help cover any damages to the property that you are renting, but also your personal belongings in many types of situations where damage might occur.
- If something breaks, report it to your landlord immediately. Do not wait.



- If/when you leave for fall, winter, or spring breaks, DO NOT TURN OFF YOUR HEAT! Even if you only plan to be gone for just one night. Iowa temperatures can fluctuate rapidly and dramatically in the Fall, Winter, and Spring seasons, and it is not uncommon for water lines to freeze and burst if the heat is not left on while you are away. Burst water pipes can cause extensive water damage to a property. It is recommended that you keep your thermostat set between 55 and 60 degrees when you are away. Open cabinet doors under sinks when temperatures fall below zero.
- CLEAN! (see above)

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM BEING TREATED UNFAIRLY?

- If you feel your rights as a renter have been infringed upon, Iowa does have a Legislative Guide regarding Landlord-Tenant Law that can be found [here](#). This document provides further information on Landlord/Tenant Obligations and Conduct, as well as Remedies either party may need to refer to in the event of conflicts between the parties.

This document is not intended as legal advice. These guidelines may not be all inclusive and, based on your individual needs, there may be other conditions that you will need to consider in making your decision to rent a property that is not owned/operated by Grinnell College. This document is also not intended to supersede the terms of any lease or rental agreement that you enter in to. Its sole purpose is to help you have the most positive experience possible with your off-campus rental experience while you are a student at Grinnell College.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Grinnell Police, Emergency: 911
- Grinnell Fire Department, Emergency: 911
- UnityPoint Health-Grinnell Regional Medical Center, Emergency Room: 641-236-2380
- Manatt Family Urgent Care Walk-In Clinic, Urgent but not an emergency: 641-236-2323
- Mental Health Hotline and Resources: 800-273-8255
- Grinnell Police Department, non-emergency: 641-236-2670, then press 1
- Grinnell Fire Department, non-emergency: 641-236-2688
- UnityPoint Health-Grinnell Regional Medical Center, non-emergency: 641-236-7511
- KGRN Local Radio for news and weather-related emergency info: AM KGRN 1410
- City Building and Planning, building inspections: 641-236-2600
- City Utilities, water/sewer/garbage/trash stickers: 641-236-2600
- City Public Services Department, trash stickers, large item/large volume trash pick-ups: 641-236-2632
- Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce, community calendar: 641-236-6555
- Grinnell Parks and Recreation: 641-236-2620
- Drake Community Library: 641-236-2661
- Grinnell Area Arts Council: 641-236-3203
- MICA: 641-236-3923
- Poweshiek County Emergency Management
Sign up for county emergency alerts
- City of Grinnell emergency alerts

GRINNELL COLLEGE RESOURCES FOR OFF-CAMPUS RESIDENTS

- Campus Safety & Security: 641-269-4600
- Residence Life: 641-269-3700
- SHAW: 641-269-3230
- Center for Careers, Life & Service: 641-269-4940