



# off campus housing renters checklist



*a guide for finding safe housing off campus*

**Off  
Campus**  
STUDENT RESIDENT TASK FORCE

# Off Campus

STUDENT RESIDENT TASK FORCE

**This booklet provides information, along with a checklist, designed to assist you in making an informed decision when looking at off campus housing.**

**Please visit the following websites for additional information:**

***Off Campus Housing* site helps find available housing by entering a rent price range, number of bedrooms, and location:**

<http://OffCampusHousing.buffalo.edu>

***Student First* site provides valuable information on a variety of issues related to living off campus:**

<http://livingoffcampus.buffalo.edu>

***Sub Board* site provides legal information before you sign a lease:**

[http://subboard.com/legal/information\\_packets/landlord-tenant\\_rights.asp](http://subboard.com/legal/information_packets/landlord-tenant_rights.asp)

# Deciding where to live is a critical move that should not be taken lightly.



**Y**OU ARE ABOUT TO MOVE INTO A BUILDING where you expect to enjoy the company of your friends, cook your meals, sleep, and yes, even study. This is a serious step that has potential for creating great lifetime memories, leaving deep scars, or exposing you to possible life threatening situations.



## How You Can Avoid Trouble

The **Off Campus Housing Renters Checklist** on the following pages is a quick and simple tool to aid you through an evaluation process that could save you a lot of grief. Use the off campus renters checklist as a guide for answering questions of whether the building or new apartment is a safe place to live.

One other good indicator for making the decision of whether or not to rent the apartment is asking yourself if you would recommend this apartment to a friend.

## Off Campus Housing Renters Checklist

This Renters Checklist and process is dedicated to improving the fire and life safety in off campus housing not provided by a participating college or university.

This Renters Checklist and process is intended to be used by persons evaluating a potential residence for possible living accommodations. It may be used for establishing criteria to support a final decision and as a tool by the perspective renter to measure one property against another. Landlords may use this form to evaluate their property and demonstrate that it meets these basic needs. Housing services choosing to require that a landlord submit a Renters Checklist as part of their listing process will provide a copy to students seeking housing for comparison with a Renters Checklist completed by them when considering the rental property.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Inspected: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Owner's representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Repairs needed \_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No  
 If yes, repairs to be completed by the following date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Exterior of building and yards

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
Building exterior appears to be clean and well maintained	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
All doors, stairs and fire escapes are unobstructed and in good condition	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Property around the building is clean and well maintained	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Porches are free of furniture designed for interior use	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Garbage containers with lids provided (totes if required)	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Fluids for snow blower, lawn equipment, etc. are not stored in building	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no

### Living room, common areas

All interior walls and ceilings are in good condition (no signs of leaks)	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
All wall electrical switches work easily and light fixtures work properly	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Hallways and common areas are illuminated	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Smoke detectors in each hallway leading to bedrooms	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Windows operate easily	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
All exit routes are clear, doors work freely	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Exit doors free of locking devices that may interfere with exiting (no keys required to exit)	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no
Carbon Monoxide detector present in apartment	<input type="radio"/> yes	<input type="radio"/> no

If you have checked any boxes in the "B" column you should not rent the apartment until the landlord has corrected the items of concern.

All items listed are minimum conditions required by the New York State Property Maintenance Code

## Kitchen

**A**      **B**

- |   |                           |                          |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| All interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks) | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition    | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly          | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Do appliances provided appear to be clean and in good working condition?        | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Are the appliances electrical cords in good condition?                          | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Kitchen exhaust and kitchen surfaces are free of grease                         | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Hot and Cold water turns on and off without leaks                               | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Sink drains ok (not real slow, no leaks under sink)                             | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Windows operate easily, exit route is clear, doors work freely                  | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |

## Utilities & housekeeping

- |  |                           |                          |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| All circuits marked on electrical panel <input type="radio"/> Breakers <input type="radio"/> Fuses | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Basement is not cluttered with combustible debris  | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Oil/gas burners have an identified emergency shut off switch                                       | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Laundry rooms (if provided) are neat, clean and free of lint                                       | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| The basement is dry and free of standing water and mold  | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| A 3 foot clearance is maintained around furnace, boiler and hot water tank                         | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Do all of the rooms have heat?   | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |

## Bathroom

- |   |                           |                          |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks or mold) | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Electric outlets have covers and are in good condition (GFCI preferred)             | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly              | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Hot and Cold water turns on and off without leaks at sink                           | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Hot and Cold water turns on and off without leaks at tub/ shower                    | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Window, operates easily, or exhaust vent fan (exhausted to exterior)                | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Toilet flushes completely and does not leak   | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Tub and Sink drains ok, (not real slow or plugged)                                  | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |

## Bedroom #1 (not permitted in cellars or attics)

- |  |                           |                          |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks)  | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly       | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Smoke detector is present in bedroom and tests ok (press button to test)     | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Window (1 required) operates easily, glass not broken, screens provided      | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |
| Door works freely, latches and locks (no keys required to exit)              | <input type="radio"/> yes | <input type="radio"/> no |

If you have checked any boxes in the "B" column you should not rent the apartment until the landlord has corrected the items of concern.

**Bedroom #2 (not permitted in cellars or attics)**

**A** **B**

- Interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks)  yes  no
- Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition  yes  no
- All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly  yes  no
- Smoke detector is present in bedroom and tests ok (press button to test)  yes  no
- Window (1 required) operates easily, glass not broken, screens provided  yes  no
- Door works freely, latches and locks (no keys required to exit)  yes  no

**Bedroom #3 (not permitted in cellars or attics)**

- Interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks)  yes  no
- Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition  yes  no
- All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly  yes  no
- Smoke detector is present in bedroom and tests ok (press button to test)  yes  no
- Window (1 required) operates easily, glass not broken, screens provided  yes  no
- Door works freely, latches and locks (no keys required to exit)  yes  no

**Bedroom #4 (not permitted in cellars or attics)**

- Interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks)  yes  no
- Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition  yes  no
- All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly  yes  no
- Smoke detector is present in bedroom and tests ok (press button to test)  yes  no
- Window (1 required) operates easily, glass not broken, screens provided  yes  no
- Door works freely, latches and locks (no keys required to exit)  yes  no

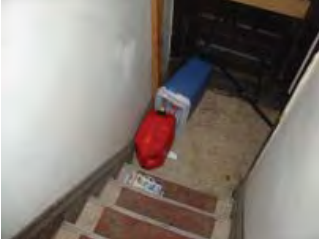
**Bedroom #5 (not permitted in cellars or attics)**

- Interior walls, ceiling and floor are in good condition (no signs of leaks)  yes  no
- Electric outlets on each wall, outlets have covers and are in good condition  yes  no
- All wall electrical switches work easily; Light fixtures work properly  yes  no
- Smoke detector is present in bedroom and tests ok (press button to test)  yes  no
- Window (1 required) operates easily, glass not broken, screens provided  yes  no
- Door works freely, latches and locks (no keys required to exit)  yes  no

If you have checked any boxes in the "B" column you should not rent the apartment until the landlord has corrected the items of concern.

**Other item(s) noted during evaluation:**

## Some things you may want to keep in mind when looking.



**Means of Exit:** Whenever you go into a building it is important to know that you can get out of that building in an emergency. Beware of obstacles that may restrict your ability to escape. Bedrooms located in basements and attics are not permitted by the Fire Code and should not be considered for occupancy.



**Fire Protection Equipment:** Smoke detectors are basic life safety devices that are required by the Fire Code to be on every level, in hallways leading to bedrooms and in every bedroom of a residence. Make sure that they are present and that they work. Some buildings may have a full fire alarm system, and or a sprinkler system, if so, an annual report indicating that it is operational should be available for your review.



**Electrical Safety:** Fires caused by faulty electrical wiring or electrical equipment is a leading source of residential fires and therefore needs to be part of any fire safety evaluation. Starting at the power panel; screw in fuses indicates that the system has not been updated. Switch type circuit breakers are a sign that some system improvements have been made in an older building or that circuit breakers were originally installed. If appliances, i.e. dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer, stove, refrigerator make sure that they work and that they clean. Where possible look at the power cords. Are they soft and supple or are they stiff and cracked? Are the plug ends broken with wires and insulation showing? Something that most people don't know is that the ground pin on a three prong plug is important and should not be removed because

the outlet will only take a two prong plug. This is absolutely necessary to avoid an electrical shock. Unplug the appliance and take a look. Flickering lights, sparks, electrical wall switches that work intermittently may all be a sign of danger. You will need to have power for your computer, stereo, chargers, etc. and outlets on each wall will lessen the need for extension cords.



**Housekeeping:** Does the place look clean and is it well maintained inside and out? This should be simple to evaluate and is an indication of how responsive the landlord will be when things need to be repaired. Mold is a common problem wherever moisture is allowed to persist and it can be a serious health risk. Look for mold on the basement walls and wherever water may collect. Do not permit furniture designed for interior use to be on outside porches. This is a serious fire safety risk.



**Heating and Air Conditioning:** Does the furnace or hot water boiler look dirty and un-kept? If the answer is yes, it likely is not being maintained and is in need of service. Black soot at the bottom of the hot water tank is a good indication of a problem with the tank or a blocked vent pipe, a condition that can cause you to be overcome by carbon monoxide gas.



**Building Maintenance:** Does the exterior of the building look well kept? Can you see peeling paint, rotten wood, broken windows, loose gutters, broken concrete, uncut vegetation? These things are easy to spot and will tell you a lot about the quality of the building and the landlord.

# Off Campus

## TASK FORCE

### **University at Buffalo**

UB Greek Affairs  
Community Relations  
Judicial Affairs  
Off Campus Student Services  
Environment Health & Safety  
International Education Services  
University Police

### **City of Buffalo**

Department of Economic Development,  
Permits and Inspections  
Mayor's Anti-Flip Task Force

### **City of Buffalo Fire Department**

Fire Department Fire Prevention  
Fire Department Fire Investigation

### **Buffalo Community**

Saint Joseph University  
Problem Properties Task Force

### **Canisius College**

Office of Residence Life  
Facilities Department

### **Buffalo State College**

Environmental Health & Safety

### **SUNY Geneseo**

Environmental Health & Safety

### **Town of Amherst**

Building Department

### **Town of Tonawanda**

Building Department  
Environmental Health & Safety

### **Design Consultant**

Robert Hochberg



**University at Buffalo**  
*The State University of New York*