

finding a place



Beginning Your Search

LOOKING FOR AN APARTMENT is hard work and represents a major financial commitment. As you prepare to start your search, determine your personal needs and make sure that prospective roommates participate in the process to be sure your choices match everyone's needs. Be sure to consider such fundamentals as how much you can afford, roommate reliability, transportation, the location and so on.

Use Checklists

It is extremely helpful to use a checklist or a small notebook to keep track of your listings. Also, keep a file folder in which you can store all of your important documents.

Make an Appointment and Look Good

It is important to make an appointment to get the undivided attention of the property provider. If you're going to be late or have to cancel, be sure to call ahead of time. Be clean and neat in your appearance. Property providers will often judge the care you will take of the unit by your personal hygiene.

Application Fees

Many property providers will charge an application fee to cover the cost of obtaining and evaluating information about prospective residents such as credit reports and reference checks. This fee may not legally exceed \$30. You should receive a receipt as well as a copy of any credit report they may have obtained.

Prepare a Tenant Resume

Many property providers, especially outside of Isla Vista, are hesitant to rent to students due to frequent turnover, partying and the lack of a steady income. While the law forbids discrimination based on student status, you may have to show that you will be a responsible tenant by overcoming these preconceptions. Having a Tenant's Resume is one way both to demonstrate your seriousness and to provide information about your financial resources and personal background. A sample Tenant's Resume is included in the appendix. Be sure to make it obvious how you will pay the rent; stress your employment



ROOMS IN PRIVATE HOMES

Renting a room in a private household has become increasingly popular as rental rates have risen in recent years. In most cases, these are private rooms, sometimes furnished, offered with a month-to-month rental agreement. If you're considering renting a room in a private home, it's important to establish up front what your rights and responsibilities are.

CHO strongly recommends drawing up a set of House Rules regarding issues such as overnight guests, quiet hours and use of common spaces. A written agreement that specifies expected contributions toward utility bills is also a very good idea. In some rented homes, you will add your name to the rental agreement and take on the same rights and responsibilities as everyone else named as tenants on the agreement. In other cases, you may have restricted rights to the kitchen, laundry facilities and common areas.

When interviewing for a room in a private home, try to get a sense of the household's dynamics and consider whether or not you would fit into the daily living patterns. If you decide to sign on, be sure to have a conversation with the primary property provider or renter regarding your rights to privacy. Some householders may assume that their status entitles them to enter a tenant's room at any time. Again, a written agreement is recommended.

record (if any) and any other aspect of your financial history which shows you can pay the bills. Most property providers will require you to have a co-signer. Co-signers could be a parent or anyone who is willing to take responsibility for the lease. Make sure that everyone on the lease has a co-signer so that your co-signer is not left wholly responsible.

Thoroughly Inspect Each Unit

Allow ample time to really check the unit. Carry a flashlight with you to check behind and under things. Check the water pressure, all plumbing, appliances, closet space, light fixtures and cupboards. Check the doors and windows for their security. If the unit is furnished, find out if it will be the same furniture when you move in and make sure it is covered in the rental agreement.

Walk Around the Neighborhood

Walk, rather than drive, to units you're interested in. Walking gives you a much better opportunity to explore the neighborhood. Before agreeing to a lease, return to the neighborhood in the evening or weekend for a better picture of the area.

Consider Transportation Options

Take into account the unit's proximity to campus; parking on campus is extremely limited. Rental units in Isla Vista are within easy walking distance to campus, but residents outside of Isla Vista will need to consider other transportation options. There is an efficient network of bike paths in the Santa Barbara area that is accessible from most neighborhoods. Bus service is run by the Metropolitan Transit District and is free to current UCSB students (schedules are online at www.sbmtd.gov.) Bike racks on many MTD buses make it possible for students to live in almost any neighborhood.

- Visit UCSB Parking Services website at www.park.ucsb.edu to learn about the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) available to all UCSB students, staff and faculty.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Looking for Housing

My roommate and I had been really excited about living in the dorms freshman year and even more excited when we decided we would live off-campus for our sophomore year. However, our biggest problem was that we didn't know where to start looking or who to talk to. During winter quarter of freshman year, our RA mentioned to us that there would be a workshop coming up, hosted by CHO, concerning renting and living in Isla Vista. This sounded like the perfect opportunity to get all of our housing questions answered. Unfortunately, we both found ourselves not making it to the different workshop times and missed out on a very important opportunity. We decided to just go into Isla Vista and start going street by street to see if we could find anything we liked. We found it hard to find the time to bike into Isla Vista with no sense of direction (Isla Vista was still like a foreign country to us at that point) and with no knowledge of any of the landowners or management companies. Everytime we found an apartment we liked there was either no vacancy or the monthly rent was too high. We finally remembered that one of our friends was working at the CHO as a student intern. She gave us some helpful websites to look for housing such as craigslist and the CHO housing website. We were able to view places that were vacant, the rent prices, and who the management companies were. This was the easy part. The hard part was getting into contact with the different students and property providers that had posted their listings. After various phone calls and emails, we were able to secure housing for the following school year. It was definitely way better to look for a place online and then contact the person instead of blindly biking around Isla Vista. We saved time and energy by utilizing the different websites that CHO provided and realized how much easier it was to find what we were looking for online. My roommate and I only wish that we hadn't missed that workshop where we would have gotten all this information sooner—it would have saved us so much time and stress, especially during finals week!