

A Guide on Interacting with Prospective Landlords

Things to be Aware of When Searching for Housing

- Even though you may not have a lot of options (high rental prices or little availability), it is helpful to view and compare different units.
- When viewing an apartment or room rental, turn appliances on and off to ensure that they are in good working condition, test the water pressure in the kitchen and bathroom. Do not be afraid to ask the landlord any questions you may have, particularly about the terms and conditions of the lease. *See [Landlord Q&A for examples of questions](#).
- Ask the landlord what type of routine maintenance is done on the apartment and how repair issues are handled.

Knowing Your Rights as a Tenant

There are certain requirements landlords can legally request when renting to an individual. However, the following list includes what a landlord cannot ask for or specify:

- A landlord cannot discriminate against you based on your ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, if you are employed or use government supports.
- Landlords cannot demand that you do not use substances or have overnight guests. They can state that a unit or building is smoke free meaning you must go outside to smoke.
- A landlord cannot legally evict you for having a pet. However, you can be evicted if your pet causes damage, or if you share a ventilation system with another tenant who has a medically diagnosed allergy to your pet.
- A key deposit can cost as much as the cost of a replacement key.
- A landlord cannot request post-dated cheques from you.

For more information on tenant rights please visit:

<https://tribunalsontario.ca/ltb/>
<https://cleoconnect.ca/yourlegalrights/>

For property standards info and reporting please visit:

Kingston: <https://www.cityofkingston.ca/resident/property-standards>
Brockville: <https://brockville.com/property-standards>
Cornwall: <https://www.cornwall.ca/en/live-here/property-standards.aspx>

For legal advice you can contact the legal clinic in your city:

Kingston: <https://kclc.ca/>

Brockville: <https://queenslawclinics.ca/queens-legal-aid/services/tenant-rights>
Cornwall: <https://www.legalclinic.ca/>
<https://www.sdglegal.com/>

For information on Tenant Insurance, this blog provides a good overview:

<https://duuo.ca/blog/what-is-tenant-insurance/> (*note: SLC does not endorse DUUO as an insurance company, but merely is providing the information in this blog post as additional information to students to understand tenant insurance and why it is necessary, you are encouraged to shop around for insurance and use any company you like.)

Making that initial call

Most landlords receive many messages regarding a rental listing. Follow these tips to make a good first impression and improve your odds of receiving a return phone call.

Chances are good that you will reach someone's voicemail. Speak slowly and clearly. Repeat your phone number at the end of the message. Frantic messages with quick speech and an unorganized speaker do not encourage landlords to return those calls.

Things to do before making the call:

- Review the rental advertisement to see if you have any questions about the rental in case the landlord answers the phone. For examples, see Landlord Q&A
- Know your schedule so that you are ready to make an appointment to view a rental.
- Decide how you would like to present yourself to the landlord and how to best show that you are a responsible individual (e.g., through your part-time job, volunteer work, research projects, past experiences as a tenant).
- Tell them where you found their ad.
- Take a deep breath and prepare yourself to speak calmly, comprehensibly, and concisely.

Here are some examples of *what TO DO* and *what NOT TO DO* when leaving a message:

- **Caller #1:** “Yeah, my name is Taylor and I’m calling about your rental. I’m at 555-5555. Thanks.”
- **Caller #2:** “Hi! My name is Taylor Swift, and my number is 555-5555. I’m very interested in your Bay Avenue unit; the location is perfect. I am a student at SLC in the Project Management program, and I am quiet and studious. I am a very responsible person and I can afford the rent because I support myself with part-time work as well as savings I have in the bank. I’d really like an appointment to see the place, so please call me. Again, this is Taylor Swift, 555-5555, and I’ll be available between 7 to 9 p.m. tonight or you can leave me a message at any time. Thank you.”

There are several reasons why Caller #2 is much more likely to get a call back from the landlord:

- Caller #2 speaks clearly and slowly and repeats the number for the return call.
- Caller #2 indicates that they are quiet, responsible, and able to pay the rent.
- Caller #2 gives an indication of how they will be able to pay the rent.
- Caller #2 speaks in greater detail, implying that they are a thinking and caring individual.

If the landlord answers the phone:

- Speak clearly.
- Know what you want to say to the landlord and what questions you would like to ask.
- Be prepared to take notes on the landlord's answers so that you can reference them later. This is especially important if you are calling on behalf of a group of people.
- Set a date and time to see the rental. Inform the landlord that you will be ready to turn in an application if you like the rental.

The first phone call to the landlord

- Be prepared to take notes around details.
- Be prepared for an answering machine and write a script of what to say ahead of time before leaving a message.
- Know the date you can move and what amount of rent you can afford.
- Write down the name of the person you talked to, their phone number, and the date you called in case you need to ask more questions or schedule/reschedule an appointment.
- Ask the landlord what date you can follow up with them by.
- Make note of all the landlords you have contacted. This will help you remember when scheduled viewings, which apartments you have applied for, and who you need to follow up with.
- See attachment [Landlord Contact Chart](#)

Confirming the viewing

- Ask for a time and date to view the unit.

- Always view the unit before agreeing to rent.
- Remember to thank the landlord for their time and let them know you are looking forward to seeing the unit. This is your first impression with the landlord.

Preparing for the viewing

Here's a list of what you should bring:

- Copies of your documentation.
- Something to write notes in and something to take pictures with.
- Do not share past problems with other landlords or engage in a negative conversation about your personal situation.

Tips on Responding to Questions from a Potential Landlord

Common Landlord Questions

Some landlords may ask why you are looking for housing or for information about your rental history. Below are some tips to help you answer these questions:

- Do not share past problems with other landlords or engage in a negative conversation about your personal situation. This information is private to you and your situation.
- The landlord may ask you about your credit and rental history. What information you share is up to you. Generally, it is best to be truthful (without giving too many details). If you are an international student reach out to the Housing Officer at housing@sl.on.ca to receive support in meeting any credit or employment history requirement.
- If a question feels inappropriate or too personal, think about why the landlord is asking it and respond in a way that speaks to that concern.

Some sample responses to help you practice:

Landlord: “Are you on social assistance”? What is your income?

Potential renter: “At this time I am looking for work, but I have the funds to pay for my rent.”

Landlord: “Do you have employment”?

Potential renter: “I am able to pay the rent you are charging, and I can give you a reference to show that I am a reliable tenant.”

Making a Rental Inquiry via Email

Many landlords prefer to receive rental inquiries via email rather than by phone. Or, perhaps, a particular listing that has caught your attention is lacking ample information and you would like to learn more before submitting your rental application.

This is your opportunity to make a good first impression. It is important to note that **landlords will use your email inquiry as a method of pre-screening.**

Follow these tips to present yourself as an ideal potential tenant and to optimize your chances of receiving a response from the landlord.

Example email

Hello Mr./Ms Landlord,

My name is Taylor Swift and I'm interested in your rental at 55 Bath Road. My roommate and I are searching for a peaceful place to live near campus. We are quiet and studious, and capable of paying rent through jobs and savings. Our application packet is ready for review; I would love to set up an appointment to see the property. My phone number is [555-555-5555](tel:555-555-5555).

*Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.
Taylor*

Do:

- State who you are and why you need a rental
- Mention where you found their ad and how you can afford the rental
- Offer to provide references (work/volunteer/housing office)
- Include some highlighting feature from the original ad so that when you receive a response you can remember which rental you are talking about (ex. 4-bedroom 2.5-bath townhome in Seabright, address if provided).
- Ask for pictures of the rental if the ad posted has indicated that pictures are available upon request
- Ask questions about pertinent facts that may not be included in the ad. For examples see [Landlord Q&A](#)

Don't:

- Mention your age
- Include a link to your social media
- Show that you haven't fully read the ad by asking questions already answered in the ad.

Landlord Contact Chart

Initial Telephone and Email Contacts	Apartment 1	Apartment 2	Apartment 3
Did you fill out an assessment of the apartment/unit?			
Did you fill out an application? If yes, when will the landlord be contacting you with a decision?			
Did your application get approved? If yes is there any additional steps needed (e.g., lease signing)? Do you have a move-in date?			
Name and Contact Information for Landlord (Phone and/or Email)			
Apartment/Unit address			
Date and time of appointment			
Key Features of the Apartment/Unit: Rent and utility costs, size and/or number of rooms, etc.			