

# First Apartment Checklist

By Nicole Nichols-West

## Safety

- Check doors and locks** Make sure the door shuts securely and that all the locks work. You should have a deadbolt lock on each entrance to the apartment.
- Check windows and locks** Each window should also fit securely and have it's own lock as well.
- Look for smoke detectors** There should be a smoke detector on each level of the apartment and they all must be in good working order.
- Look for fire extinguishers** If you're moving into a multi-story building make sure there are fire extinguishers in the halls.
- Get renter's insurance** Most automobile insurance companies also offer renter's insurance that can be added to your policy for a very low fee.
- Contact a rental service** To save time and make sure you're getting the apartment you really want you should contact an apartment rental service to find quality rentals available in your area.

## The Neighborhood

- Look at the condition of the neighborhood.** What condition is the neighborhood in? Will you feel safe living there?
- Is the location convenient?.** Is the apartment close to work or school, shopping, your family and friends? If you don't have a car, is public transportation available nearby?

## The Kitchen

- What appliances come with the apartment?.** Does the apartment have a refrigerator and stove? Is there a microwave? Or will you have to provide your own appliances?
- Test the plumbing** Turn on the water at the kitchen sink and check for leaks under the sink. Also make sure the garbage disposal works.
- Look for infestations** Check the cupboards and around baseboards and appliances for signs of rodents or insects.

## The Bathroom

- Check the shower/tub** Turn on the water in the shower or tub to check the pressure and make sure the drain is working properly.
- Flush the toilets** Flush the toilet to make sure it works. Previous tenants have been known to intentionally clog up toilets if they're evicted and it's not noticeable until it's used.

## In General

- Look at your budget** Look at your budget and make sure you can afford the monthly rent plus the security deposit. You're probably going to have to sign a lease and if you don't make your rent payment every month, even if you move out in the middle of the lease, you may still be legally required to continue paying the rent.

- Read the lease** Make sure that you can live in that apartment for the length of the lease. Not just whether you can afford it or not. But will you feel comfortable living there until the lease expires?
- Ask for a renters checklist** Ask for an apartment checklist so that you can list any damages you see to the apartment when you rent it. That way you won't be held liable for those already existing damages when you move out.
- Are pets allowed?** If you've always dreamed of getting a puppy as soon as you get your first apartment, make sure they allow pets before you sign the lease.
- Look for signs of rodents** Check the entire apartment for signs of rodents and insects. Ants or an occasional mouse are one thing but if you have a whole family of rats in the closet or a nest of cockroaches under the tub, that's a whole different story.
- Check the heating and air conditioning** Make sure you know who is responsible for paying all utility bills and make sure they work before you move in.
- Where will you park?** If you have a car you're going to want to know that it's safe, too And you'll also want to know how far away you're going to have to park it.
- Where are the laundry facilities?** Are there laundry facilities on site or will you have to go to the laundromat every week? Remember, mom isn't going to be around to do you laundry every day.
- What Floor Is It On?** That fifth floor apartment might have a really nice view but how are you going to get your furniture up there? Is there an elevator? Are you going to like climbing those stairs every day for the year or two until your lease expires? What about your visitors? Will they be able to climb the stairs, too? And what about that puppy?! Seven flights of stairs is a long way to go when you're trying to housebreak a new puppy! Maybe your first apartment should be on the ground floor.