

## Get It In Writing

- ◆ Landlords in Virginia must offer tenants a written lease agreement. This is required by the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, § 55.1-1204.
- ◆ The lease should include the beginning and ending date of the tenancy, amount of rent, and all other costs such as utilities, cable or Internet.
- ◆ This agreement should include all the rights and responsibilities of the tenant and landlord.
- ◆ Read the lease and make sure you agree with all of the terms before you pay rent to the landlord or move into the room.

## Need More Information

Contact Consumer Affairs at 703-222-8435 for details about:

- ◆ [Lease agreements](#)
- ◆ [Security deposits](#)
- ◆ [Repair and maintenance issues](#)
- ◆ [Tenant-landlord laws](#)
- ◆ [Renter's Insurance](#)
- ◆ [The Informed Tenant-Landlord Newsletter](#)
- ◆ [Fair housing laws](#)
- ◆ [Mediation services](#)
- ◆ [Renting a room](#)
- ◆ [Eviction](#)
- ◆ [Request a presentation](#)

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**Coordinated Services Planning  
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8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs/csp](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ncs/csp)**

*This document is available in an  
alternative format upon request.  
703-222-8435, TTY 711*

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Consumer Affairs Branch  
Department of Cable and Consumer Services  
703-222-8435, TTY 711  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd/tenant-landlord](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cableconsumer/csd/tenant-landlord)

**Before you rent a room, consider the following information to help you select a room that best meets your needs, and get tips to help you recognize and avoid rental scams:**

**Determine How Much Rent You Can Afford**

- ◆ List all your income and expenses.
- ◆ To find out what you can afford to rent visit: [www.socialserve.com/pdfs/budgetWorksheet\\_new.pdf](http://www.socialserve.com/pdfs/budgetWorksheet_new.pdf)
- ◆ Call Coordinated Services Planning at 703-222-0880 and ask a specialist to help you assess your income needs for renting a room.
- ◆ Use tools and guidance from Virginia Housing at <https://www.vhda.com/Renters>.

**Identify and Research Neighborhoods**

- ◆ Look for neighborhoods convenient to places you go to regularly such as work, visiting family, friends, shopping, or medical appointments.
- ◆ To calculate the trip time for your favorite destinations, contact the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority at 202-637-7000, for information about public transportation options.
- ◆ Visit prospective neighborhoods at different times of the day and night to get an idea of how it might feel coming in late at night or leaving early in the morning.
- ◆ Contact the police district station in the neighborhood you are considering for crime and safety information.
- ◆ Review Police Department Incident Reports or call 703-246-2253.
- ◆ The Fairfax County Police Department provides Weekly Crime Data so you can get insight about where crime is happening, and track trends.

**Search for a Room**

- ◆ Ask friends, family, and your support networks for leads about available housing.
- ◆ Search legitimate websites for rental listings and only deal with landlords who are willing to meet with you in person.
- ◆ Contact [virginiahousingsearch.com](http://virginiahousingsearch.com) or call 1-877-428-8844.
- ◆ Affordable housing publications are available from the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development or call 703-246-5010.

**Hold on to Your Money**

- ◆ Not all rental advertisements or offers to rent a room actually provide housing. Some are scams. The Federal Trade Commission provide guidance on how rental scams work and signs to be alert for to avoid becoming a victim of a scam.
- ◆ When responding to an advertisement, don't give out personal information, such as social security, bank account, or credit card numbers.
- ◆ Never wire money and don't pay with cash or a money order unless you get a receipt.
- ◆ Be sure the person renting the room is who they say they are. If they don't own the property, make sure they have permission to rent the room to you.
- ◆ To find out who owns a property, contact Real Estate Assessments at 703-222-8234.
- ◆ Ask the landlord for contact information of previous tenants so you can talk to them to find out about their rental experience, if possible.
- ◆ Visit Consumer Affairs to search our complaint history information to find out if there are rental complaints on file about a prospective landlord.

**Inspect Properties Offering Rooms for Rent**

- ◆ Take a look at several rooms.
- ◆ Visit the property before you commit to renting to make sure it meets your expectations and the room is what you really need and want.
- ◆ Meet and talk to potential roommates. Can you see yourself living with them?
- ◆ Does the lifestyle of those you will be living with meet your requirements for cleanliness, noise levels, house rules, room temperatures, smoking, pets, guest rules, shared bathroom, kitchen privileges, laundry facilities, parking, cable, Internet, and other things that matter to you?
- ◆ Is the property well maintained?
- ◆ Are appliances, electrical sources, and plumbing in good working order?
- ◆ Are common areas free of trash and in good condition?
- ◆ Are there signs of rodents, insects, or other pests?
- ◆ Who is responsible for cleaning shared areas and how will repairs and maintenance of the dwelling be provided?
- ◆ Will you have privacy and a way to protect your belongings? Can you lock your door?
- ◆ Who else has keys to your room? When can the landlord come into your room?
- ◆ Never rent a room that has no safe and quick exit, such as a basement with no door or window to the outside.
- ◆ The Zoning Ordinance (Article 2, Part 5) limits how many people can live in a single residence. In general, no more than four unrelated people may live in one house.
- ◆ Report overcrowding to the Department of Code Compliance at 703-324-1300.
- ◆ For more information about property maintenance, and fire and health codes, contact:

Department of Code Compliance

703-324-1300

DCCCCodeComplianceE-mail@fairfaxcounty.gov