



# ***Rent Smart***

## ***Module B***

# ***Checking Out the Rental Property and the Landlord***

**Rent Smart 2017** focuses on the knowledge and skills essential for a successful renting experience. It challenges participants to know and understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant as well as know and understand the rights and responsibilities of their landlord. Emphasis is on forming a strong partnership between the tenant and landlord. **Rent Smart** was originally based on information collected through focus groups held with property managers and tenant advocates. It was piloted under its original name, **Good Neighbor-Good Tenant**, for several years, then taught as **Rent Smart** in numerous Wisconsin counties for the past 15 years.

**Rent Smart 2017** participant goals include:

- Learn new skills to build positive relationships with landlords and neighbors.
- Gain confidence in their ability to find and maintain affordable housing.
- Understand the application and screening processes used by landlords.
- Learn the responsibilities and rights of tenants and landlords.

The 2017 revised curriculum continues to emphasize an active learning approach designed to foster participant motivation and course effectiveness. Videos, case studies and internet links have been incorporated in the updated curriculum to provide additional interactive learning options. The 2017 revised curriculum consists of six modules, designed to be taught separately or in combination.

**Rent Smart 2017** Modules:

- How Much Will It Cost? And Can I Afford It?
- **Checking Out the Rental Property and the Landlord**
- Application Process
- Who's Responsible for Maintenance, Repairs and Care?
- Communications
- Rental Agreements—Moving In, Moving On

The “**Checking Out the Rental Property and the Landlord**” module was prepared by Judy Knudsen, Brown County Family Living Educator.

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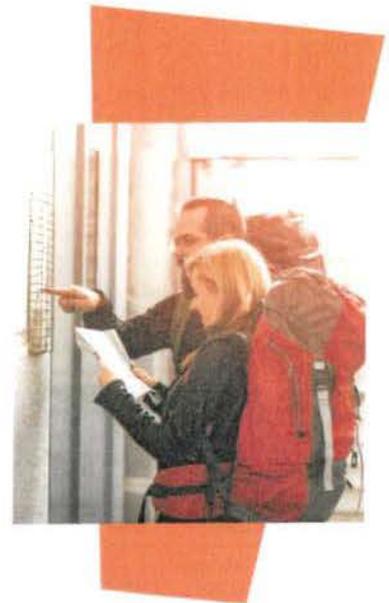
## Overview

The important task of selecting the right rental unit can be an overwhelming challenge. Unfortunately, many potential tenants make the decision to rent without thinking through what they want and need in a rental unit.

Time needs to be spent comparing various rental properties, including comparing amount of rent to be paid, associated costs and transportation issues.

The goal of this module is to encourage participants to plan ahead in their search and not waste time looking at rental properties that are not right for them and/or affordable. This module provides tools for potential tenants to use to determine the most important considerations. Tips for comparing properties will be shared along with the need to do an inspection of the property before signing any documents.

Another consideration when renting is the importance of entering a business relationship with the landlord/property manager. The quality of this relationship can impact the tenants' quality of life. Potential tenants also need to consider, if they will be comfortable establishing and maintaining a business relationship with a particular landlord or property manager.



## References

- Pine Tree Legal- <https://ptla.org/>
- Sexual Offender Registry DataBase:  
<http://sor.informe.org/cgi-bin/sor/index.pl>
- Maine Housing Search-<https://www.mainehousingsearch.org/>
- Video walk through on Rent Prep site:  
<http://www.rentprep.com/apartment-marketing/youtube-fill-rental-property-vacancies/>

## Objectives

Participants will:

1. Identify what they want and need in a rental unit.
2. Identify resources to help locate potential rental properties.
3. Learn strategies for comparing and inspecting rental units.
4. Increase readiness and confidence in securing rental property.

**Many potential tenants make the decision to rent without thinking through what they want and need in a rental unit.**



## Activities

### Activity 1: Determining Your Housing Needs

### Activity 2: How to Locate a Rental Unit

### Activity 3: Finding Affordable Housing

### Activity 4: Comparing and Inspecting Rental Units

### Activity 5: Discussion about Challenging Situations that Impact the Ability to Rent

### Activity 6: Building and Maintaining a Relationship with the Landlord/Property Manager

## Teaching Outline

Provide the *Overall Handout* before beginning the module.

## Suggested Introduction

Moving can be time consuming and expensive. In addition to rent, there is the security deposit, moving costs, utility hook-ups, and so on. During this module we will discuss what you want and need in a rental unit.

You will do a better job of comparison shopping and ultimately in choosing the right rental unit if you have identified what you want and need as well as determine how much rent you can afford. This process will help you be comfortable establishing and maintaining a business relationship with your landlord/property manager.

### Activity 1: Determining Your Housing Needs

(Objective 1: Identify what they want and need in a rental unit.)

- Handout 1: *My Housing Needs*

**Suggested Introduction:** Before you start your search, you need to determine which features are must-haves and which are conveniences you can live without. Keep in mind that you may need to make some concessions to stay within your budget.

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Distribute Handout 1: *My Housing Needs*. Ask each participant to rank items by importance on the worksheet. In pairs compare responses. Each group can then share one item they identified as “Very Important” or “Moderately Important” and repeat this process until all the items on these columns are listed on a flip chart.

Following completion of this task, facilitate a group discussion. Here are some questions for starting the discussion:

- How did ranking importance of items help you focus on what is important to you?
- After listening to the other groups, which items would you move up on your list?
- How will the choices you make affect where and how you look for a rental unit?

OPTIONAL: If there is access to internet in the room where this module is being taught, ask participants to suggest the amount of rent they are willing and able to pay per month. You can google "Apartments Available in (name of community) for \$(insert amount here) per month." Many rental properties can be viewed on-line so participants can get a sense of what is available in their price range.

### **Activity 2: How to Locate a Rental Unit**

(Objective 2: Identify resources to help locate potential rental properties.)

- **No Handouts**

**Suggested Introduction:** Once you know what you are looking for and how much you can afford; you can start searching for rental units. There are many ways to locate rental housing.

**Once you know what you are looking for and how much you can afford; you can start searching for rental units.**

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Ask participants to share sources they have used when looking for rental housing. Put their ideas on a flip chart or white board. Here are some possible options:

- Friends and family
- Print sources, i.e., newspaper, rental magazines
- Bulletin boards located in businesses
- "For rent" signs
- Non-profit housing agencies
- Faith community
- Electronic bulletin boards, Facebook, websites
- Apps
- Property management company
- Maine Housing Search (<http://www.mainehousingsearch.org/>)

Discuss advantages and disadvantages of each source.



OPTIONAL: Share specific sources in your community, i.e., websites, electronic bulletin boards. If there is access to the internet in the room where this lesson is being taught, you can show these sites to participants. Many public libraries provide free computer access.

### Activity 3: Finding Affordable Housing

(Objective 2: Identify resources to help locate potential rental properties.)

- Handout 2: *Affordable Rental Unit Options & Contact Information*

Instructors should identify local resources, eligibility requirements, and contact information that can be distributed to participants. Communities may have affordable housing options that are unique.

OPTIONAL: Invite local housing authority staff to be a guest speaker and share information about available program(s).

**Suggested Introduction:** Finding a rental unit that meets your needs and your budget is not always easy. Fortunately, there are programs that can make rent more affordable.

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Provide Handout 2: *Affordable Rental Unit Options & Contact Information* to serve as a guide to sharing information about local affordable housing options.

### Activity 4: Comparing and Inspecting Rental Units

(Objective 3: Learn strategies for comparing and inspecting rental units.)

- Handout 3: *Case Study Matrix*
- Instructor Materials: *Case Study Comparison Units Completed Checklists*. Select those appropriate for class based on program participants.
- Handout 4: *Rental Property Checklist*
- Handout 5: *Don't Rent Trouble*
- Flashlight, hairdryer, light bulb, paper/pencil if you will be using pictures and props instead of video.

Provide Handout 3: *Case Study Matrix* and the *Case Study Comparison Units Completed Checklist(s)* appropriate for the class. Individually, or in groups of three to four, have participants read the assigned case study on Handout 3: *Case Study Matrix* and review the corresponding *Case Study Comparison Units Completed Checklists*. Have participants select the best rental unit for their assigned case by reading the assigned case study and determining which Unit (A, B, or C) best meets the renter's needs and budget.

Ask participants the following questions after they have read the case study in the matrix and reviewed the *Case Study Comparison Units Completed Checklists*.

- Which unit is most convenient?
- Which rental unit has more of what the tenant wants? Why?
- Which has the most features/conveniences?
- Which feature would be important to the tenant?
- If you were the tenant, which would you choose? Why?

Provide Handout 4: *Rental Property Checklist* and Handout 5: *Don't Rent Trouble*.

**Suggested Introduction:** You may use the blank *Rental Property Checklist* for comparing rental units in your own search. However, finding a decent place to live also requires a thorough tour and inspection. This is your potential home, so treat your first visit like an inspection. It is helpful to have a process for comparing units.

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Show video introducing how to inspect a rental unit from UW-Extension: <https://youtu.be/srTnJBD52Y>. Discuss the list of things to inspect on Handout 5: *Don't Rent Trouble*. If you do not have the ability to show a video, bring the listed props and discuss Handout 5: *Don't Rent Trouble*.

### **Activity 5: Discussion about Challenging Situations that Impact the Ability to Rent**

(Objective 4: Increase readiness and confidence in securing rental property.)

- No Handouts

Instructors should contact the town, village, or city hall where the participants will be seeking rental unit so that they are capable of discussing local ordinances and how criminal convictions are handled.

**Suggested Introduction:** The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and handicap (disability). The Fair Housing Act covers most housing. In some circumstances, the Act exempts owner-occupied buildings with no more than four units, single-family housing sold or rented without the use of a broker, and housing operated by organizations and private clubs that limit occupancy to members.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and handicap (disability).

Communities can regulate how closely certain sexual offenders can live in proximity to schools, parks, and day-care centers. The public can freely search for registered sex offenders online. As soon as an individual convicted of a sex offense requiring registration is registered, electronic notices can be sent to all the appropriate agencies where an individual lives, works, or goes to school. All additions, changes, and closings made in the SOR (Sex Offender Registry) are downloaded nightly to the public web site. In 2006, Maine joined the National Sex Offender Public Registry as a participant. The public can make regional, individual state, or nationwide searches for individuals. If a Maine name is returned in the results, the link then takes the requester to the State of Maine's Sex Offender web site <https://www.nsopw.gov/>

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### **Activity 6: Building and Maintaining a Relationship with the Landlord/Property Manager**

(Objective 4: Increase readiness and confidence in securing rental property.)

#### **Handout 6: *Interviewing Landlords/Property Managers***

**Suggested Introduction:** During the time spent inspecting rental units, the potential tenant can use this opportunity to decide if he/she will be comfortable establishing and maintaining a business relationship with a particular landlord/property manager. Doing so will give tenants insights into landlord/property manager customer service style, and help them choose buildings where repairs are dealt with quickly and in a professional manner.

There are many types of landlords/property managers, from professional companies managing a large number of units to homeowners renting a duplex. Each may have a different style of management that may or may not match the lifestyle of the tenant. Most, but not all, landlords/managers are professional, competent, and use good rental practices. Tenants should learn about the landlord/property manager before they rent.

When someone applies for rental housing, the landlord/property manager takes steps to verify the information provided on the application. He or she may contact your current or previous landlord/property manager for a reference, order a credit report, and run a criminal background check.

While the landlord/property manager is obtaining information about you, it is important for you to seek information about this individual.

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Provide Handout 6: Interviewing Landlords/Property Managers

OPTIONAL: Ask participants to find a partner. In partners, ask them to determine who will be the landlord/property manager and the tenant to role-play. The individual who will be the tenant can interview the landlord/property manager using the list of questions on Handout 6: *Interviewing Landlords/Property Managers*. After five minutes switch roles and ask other questions on the sheet.

Following completion of the interviews, ask participants to respond to the following questions.

- Does this individual listen to the questions you ask and provide sufficient answers?
- Were you treated respectfully?
- If probing questions were asked, did you consider them to be appropriate or were they intrusive?
- Do you feel that you could maintain a business relationship with this individual?
- How comfortable did you feel while interviewing the landlord/property manager?
- What did you learn in your conversation with this individual?
- What types of questions did you find most helpful in obtaining information from the landlord/tenant?



Discuss other sources of information that can be helpful when a prospective tenant wants to learn more about a landlord /property manager.

- Housing or building inspectors in the community where you are looking to rent may have information regarding issues of repairs not being made by the landlord/property manager.
- Local public safety departments may track number of calls made to rental properties in the community.

If you find negative information about a landlord from one source, it does not mean the person is a bad landlord. It does mean that the potential tenant should investigate further to see if the information is accurate.

Advise participants that if they find negative information about a landlord/property manager from one source, it does not mean the person is a bad landlord. It does mean that the information should be investigated further to ensure accuracy.

OPTIONAL: Ask a landlord/property manager to attend this session and be interviewed by participants.

### Learning Assessment

Have participants learned the key concepts of this Rent Smart module? The following questions or activities are recommended to assess participant understanding of the information covered in this module.

- Identify at least two features that are important to them in rental housing. Discuss how these features will affect the way in which they shop for housing.
- List resources they would be likely to use in trying to find rental housing.
- Name at least two things they would inspect prior to making a decision to rent the property.
- Share how they will prepare themselves when talking to the landlord/property manager about a prospective rental unit.



## Checking Out the Rental Property and the Landlord

### Module Notes:

Determining your housing needs.

How to locate rental housing-list resources you may use to find a rental unit.

Major items to inspect prior to making a decision to rent property.

Talking to the landlord/property manager-building a relationship.

### Remember:

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings, and in other housing-related transactions based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women, people securing custody of children under the age of 18), and handicap (disability).

The Fair Housing Act covers most housing. In some circumstances, the Act exempts owner-occupied building with no more than four units, single-family housing sold or rented without the use of a broker, and housing operated by organizations and private clubs that limit occupancy to members.

### Questions to Consider:

- What features will you want/need in your rental unit? How will they affect the way in which you shop for housing?
- What resources can you use to help locate potential rental properties?
- How will you compare rental units?
- How will you prepare for talking to the landlord/property manager about a prospective rental unit?

### References and Resources:

- Pine Tree Legal-<https://ptla.org/>
- Main Housing Search-  
<https://www.mainehousingsearch.org/>
- Video walk through on Rent Prep site:  
<http://www.rentprep.com/apartment-marketing/youtube-fill-rental-property-vacancies/>
- Sexual Offender Registry Database-  
<https://www.nsopw.gov/>

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## My Housing Needs

Looking for rental property is much easier if you know what is most important to you, before you start looking. This worksheet lists features that may or may not be important to you. Read the list and decide how important each item is to you.

I prefer to live in the following type of housing:

- No preference
- Duplex
- Apartment
- House (single family)
- Boarding home
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred location (area, zip code, neighborhood, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Near bus line			
Near family/friends			
Near work			
Near child care			
Near shopping, school(s)			
Safe			
Children can play outside			
Quiet			
Other			
<b>Building</b>			
Building Condition			
On-site management			
Type of units (apartment, duplex)			
Private entrance			
Off-street parking			
Pets allowed			
Laundry facilities			
Storage space			
Yard			
Other			
<b>Unit</b>			
Affordable rent of \$___			
Utilities included			
Enough bedrooms			
Storage & closets			
Appliances included			
Air conditioned			
Internet Connection			
Other			



## **Affordable Rental Unit Options & Contact Information**

Finding a decent and affordable rental unit can feel overwhelming. Often, affordable housing is not advertised in the same way that more expensive private market housing is advertised. You may need to search out these affordable options. The Maine Rental Housing Guide is a great resource.

### **Public Housing**

There may be housing in the community that may be owned and managed by a local housing authority. These units may be located in apartment complexes or may be single-family housing or duplexes scattered throughout the community. Potential tenants must be income-eligible to apply. To find out about availability and whether you would be eligible, contact the local housing authority.

The Housing Authority staff can explain the application process. Because there is a high demand for these units, you may be placed on a waiting list once you apply. This will vary from community to community. Some housing developments may offer benefits like on-site daycare and community resource centers.

### **Rental Assistance**

The housing authority may also offer rent assistance. With this program, you would rent an apartment at a rental fee that is based on your income. You would be expected to pay about 30 percent of your income for rent. The difference between your payment and the full market rent for the unit would then be paid by the housing authority. You must be income-eligible to apply, and the property owner of the unit, you intend to rent, must be willing to participate in the program.

There are a limited number of rent assistance vouchers or certificates available. There can be waiting lists. You will need to contact the rental assistance program of the local housing authority to learn if you qualify and how to apply.

### **Private Market Subsidized Units**

Some private property owners have received funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or Rural Housing to develop housing. In exchange, these owners agree to offer units at more affordable rent and make them available to families who meet income guidelines.

MaineHousing provides information for subsidized housing in Maine on its website:

<http://mainehousing.org/programs-services/rental/subsidized-housing>

### **Non-profit Housing Developers**

Some communities have non-profit agencies which were created to make affordable housing available to the community they serve. These agencies may either renovate or build homes and make them available for sale or rental. Each agency defines its own mission. Some may offer housing in a broad geographic area, while others are restricted to particular neighborhoods. Contact the municipality or county office that administers these funds to learn which agencies may have rental housing available.



## Case Study Matrix

Module B	Case Study 1—Teen	Case Study 2—Single Parent	Case Study 3—Individual, Formerly Incarcerated	Case Study 4—Homeless Individual	Case Study 5—Older Person
<b>Description</b>	Lena wants to move into her own apartment, now that she has graduated from high school. She works in retail. She has been talking with a friend, Jenny, who may be interested in sharing an apartment with her. Jenny works full time at a child care center.	Ellen has two sons, Isaac and Andrew ages 12 and 10. She works 30 hours a week as a receptionist. Ellen needs to find a larger rental unit as the boys currently share a bedroom and they would like to have their own space.	John was released from prison 9 months ago. He started working through a temp agency and has been hired on as a permanent employee working full time for the past 3 months. He has two children, ages 8 and 9. They live with their mother, but he hopes to occasionally have them stay overnight with him.	Richard is homeless. He is a veteran who has struggled with civilian life. He works in a restaurant. He has met someone at the homeless shelter who also has a job and they would like to share an apartment.	Elizabeth is a 72-year-old widow who plans to sell her house and move into an apartment. Due to health issues, she is no longer able to maintain the house as well as pay for necessary repairs including replacement of the roof and windows.
	<p>Lena and Jenny are looking for a rental unit. They would like to visit three units. Before their appointment, they will need to determine a budget and come to a consensus. They are looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent of \$450 - \$500 per month</li> <li>• Two bedrooms</li> <li>• Heat included</li> <li>• Appliances included</li> <li>• On-site laundry facilities</li> <li>• Adequate parking</li> <li>• Quiet neighborhood</li> </ul>	<p>Ellen is looking for a rental unit for herself and her children, ages 12 and 10. She would like to visit three available units. Before scheduling appointments, she determined her budget and needs. She is looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent of \$550 - \$600 per month</li> <li>• Two bedrooms, three bedrooms would be desirable</li> <li>• Appliances included</li> <li>• Utilities included, but would pay own heat. She prefers a single-family or duplex unit.</li> <li>• On-site laundry facilities</li> <li>• A safe neighborhood where her children can play outside</li> </ul>	<p>John is looking for a rental unit that has two bedrooms so his children can occasionally stay overnight with him. Before scheduling appointments, he determined his budget and needs. He is looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent of \$400 - \$450 per month</li> <li>• 1 bedroom apartment, but would consider 2 bedrooms, so his children could occasionally stay with him</li> <li>• Location near a bus line and/or work</li> <li>• A safe neighborhood where his children can play outside</li> <li>• Utilities included</li> <li>• On-site laundry facilities</li> <li>• Appliances included</li> <li>• Accepts felons</li> </ul>	<p>Richard and his friend are looking for a rental unit that has two bedrooms. Before scheduling appointments, he determined his budget and needs. He is looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent of no more than \$400 per month</li> <li>• 2 bedroom apartment</li> <li>• Located near a bus line and/or work.</li> <li>• Utilities included.</li> <li>• Appliances included</li> <li>• Washer and dryer in building</li> </ul>	<p>Elizabeth is looking for a rental unit that has two bedrooms, so her granddaughter can occasionally stay overnight. Before scheduling appointments, she determined her budget and needs. She is looking for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent of no more than \$650 per month.</li> <li>• 2 bedroom apartment</li> <li>• Garage or carport</li> <li>• Utilities included.</li> <li>• Appliances included.</li> <li>• Washer and dryer in building.</li> </ul>



## Case Study Matrix

Provide each participant a copy of the five questions found here for participants to have while they read the case study and are reviewing the *Case Study Comparison Units Completed Checklists*.

Which unit is most convenient?

Which rental unit has more of what the tenant wants? Why?

Which has the most features/conveniences?

Which feature would be important to the tenant?

If you were the tenant, which would you choose? Why?



## Module B: CHECKING OUT THE RENTAL PROPERTY AND THE LANDLORD

### Comparison Units Completed for Case Study I (Teen)

	Rental A	Rental B	Rental C
Address/Name of unit	694 Ross St.	308 Lilac St	207 Hoffman Rd.
<b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b>			
Date available	1-Aug	15-Aug	15-Sep
Monthly rent	\$500	\$450	\$525
Date rent is due	1 <sup>st</sup> of Month	15 <sup>th</sup> of Month	1 <sup>st</sup> of Month
Deposit	\$500	\$450	\$550
Pets allowed	No	No	Yes
Pet rules/deposit	NA	NA	27.5
Late payment charges	\$25	\$22.50	\$27.50
Length of lease	1 Year	1 Year	1 Year
Frequency of rent increases	Annually	Annually	Annually
Subletting/breaking a lease	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed
Utilities included (water/sewer/heat/garbage/recycling)	Heat is not included	Heat is not included	Heat is included
On site management	No	No	Yes
<b>Dwelling</b>			
Square footage	1,000	850	1,100
Number of bedrooms	2	1	2
Number of bathrooms	1	1	1
Dishwasher/garbage disposal/microwave included	Garbage disposal	Not Included	Garbage disposal included
Available storage	Small storage room	No	Basement
Air conditioning	Yes – wall unit	No	Yes – wall unit
Fireplace	No	No	No
Amenities (pool, gym)	No	No	No
Number of outlets per room	3-5	2-3	3-5
Blinds/curtains	Blinds	No	Blinds
Cable TV connection in each room	No – 2 total	No – 1 total	No – 2 total
Number of phone jacks	2	2	2
High speed internet	No	No	No
Decorating allowed	Hang pictures	Hang pictures	Hang pictures
Outdoor space	Small balcony	No	Small patio
Locks/security	Deadbolt	Deadbolt	Deadbolt
Laundry Facilities	Hook-up only	No	Coin operated
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Safe walking outside after dark	Yes	No	Yes
Safe for children to play outside	Yes	No	Yes
Crime rate in neighborhood	Little	Some	Little
Issues with unsupervised children	Yes	Yes	No
Neighbors loitering	No	No	No
Noise level of neighborhood	Little	Street Noise	Little
Near bus line	Yes	No	Yes
Near work	No	Yes	Yes



## Module B: CHECKING OUT THE RENTAL PROPERTY AND THE LANDLORD

### Comparison Units Completed for Case Study 2 (Single Parent)

	Rental A	Rental B	Rental C
Address/Name of unit	123 Main St.	489 Day Street	490 Spruce St.
<b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b>			
Date available	1-May	15-May	1-Jun
Monthly rent	\$550	\$600	\$625
Date rent is due	1 <sup>st</sup> of month	1 <sup>st</sup> of month	1 <sup>st</sup> of month
Deposit	\$500	\$600	\$625
Pets allowed	No	No	Yes
Pet rules/deposit	NA	NA	\$200
Late payment charges	No clause in rental agreement	\$30	\$31.25
Length of lease	1 year	1 year	No lease
Frequency of rent increases	Annual	Annual	Annual
Subletting/breaking a lease	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed
Utilities included (water/sewer/heat/garbage/recycling)	Does not include heat	Does not include heat	Includes all utilities
Other	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Dwelling</b>			
Square footage	1,000	1,100	1,300
Number of bedrooms	2	2	3
Number of bathrooms	1	1	1
Dishwasher/garbage disposal/microwave included	Only disposal	Only disposal & dishwasher	Only disposal & dishwasher
Available storage	Basement	Basement	Small storeroom
Air conditioning	No	Yes – wall unit	Yes – wall unit
Fireplace	No	No	No
Amenities (pool, gym)	No	No	NO
Number of outlets per room	3	3-5	3-5
Blinds/curtains	Blinds	Blinds	Blinds
Cable TV connection in each room	1 total	1 total	2 total
Number of phone jacks	2	2	2
High speed internet	No	No	No
Decorating allowed	Hang pictures	Hang pictures	Hang pictures
Outdoor space	No	Limited	Some
Locks/security	Deadbolt	Deadbolt	Deadbolt
Noise level	One loud TV	Quiet	Quiet
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Safe walking outside after dark	No	Yes	Yes
Safe for children to play outside	Questionable	Yes	Yes
Crime rate in neighborhood	Some	Little	Little
Issues with unsupervised children	Yes	Little	Little
Neighbors loitering	No	No	No
Noise level of neighborhood	Street Noise	Little	Little
Near bus line	Yes	No	Yes
Near work	Yes	No	Yes



## Module B: CHECKING OUT THE RENTAL PROPERTY AND THE LANDLORD

### Comparison Units Completed for Case Study 3 (Individual, Formerly Incarcerated)

	Rental A	Rental B	Rental C
Address/Name of unit	638 Central	827 Franklin	101 New York St
<b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b>			
Date available	1-Mar	15-Mar	1-Mar
Monthly rent	\$400	\$475	\$525
Date rent is due	1-Mar	1-Mar	1-Mar
Deposit	\$400	\$475	\$525
Pets allowed	No	No	No
Pet rules/deposit	No	No	No
Late payment charges	\$20	\$20	\$26
Length of lease	1 year	1 year	1 year
Frequency of rent increases	Annual	Annual	Annual
Subletting/breaking a lease	Not allowed	Not allowed	Not allowed
Utilities included (water/sewer/heat/garbage/recycling)	No	No	Heat included
On site management	No	No	No
<b>Dwelling</b>			
Square footage	800	900	900
Number of bedrooms	1	1	1
Number of bathrooms	1	1	1
Dishwasher/garbage disposal/microwave included	No	Garbage disposal	Garbage disposal
Available storage	No	No	Basement
Air conditioning	No	No	Window unit
Fireplace	No	No	No
Amenities (pool, gym)	No	No	No
Number of outlets per room	2-3	2-3	2-3
Blinds/curtains	No	Some blinds	Some blinds
Cable TV connection in each room	No	1 in unit	1 in unit
Number of phone jacks	1	1	1
High speed internet	No	No	No
Decorating allowed	Hang pictures	Hang pictures	Hang pictures
Outdoor space	No	Small patio	Small patio
Locks/security	Dead bolt	Dead bolt	Dead bolt
Laundry facilities	No	Coin operated	Coin operated
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Safe walking outside after dark	No	Yes	Yes
Safe for children to play outside	No	Yes	Yes
Crime rate in neighborhood	Some	Little	Little
Issues with unsupervised children	Yes	No	No
Neighbors loitering	No	No	No
Noise level of neighborhood	Street noise	Little	Little
Near bus line	No	Yes	Yes
Near work	No	Yes	Yes



## Module B: CHECKING OUT THE RENTAL PROPERTY AND THE LANDLORD

### Comparison Units Completed for Case Study 4 (Homeless Individual)

	Rental A	Rental B	Rental C
Address/Name of Unit	4890 South Street #3	861 Royal Street #6	3007 Highland Street #1
<b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b>			
Date available	Vacant	Vacant	1 month
Monthly rent	\$350.00	\$410.00	\$430.00
Date rent is due	First of month	First of month	First of month
Deposit	One month rent	One month rent	One month rent
Pets allowed	No	No	No
Pet rules/deposit	NA	NA	NA
Late payment charges	\$17.50/day	\$20.50/day	\$21.50/day
Length of lease	Month-to-month	1 year	1 year
Frequency of rent increases	Annual	Annual	Annual
Subletting/breaking a lease	No	No	No
Utilities included (water/sewer/heat/garbage/recycling)	No	No	No
Other – Bus Stop	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Dwelling</b>			
Square footage	650	750	850
Number of bedrooms	1	2	2
Number of bathrooms	1	1	1
Dishwasher/garbage disposal/microwave included	Not included	Not included	Garbage disposal included
Available storage	No	No	No
Air conditioning	No	No	No
Fireplace	No	No	No
Amenities (pool, gym)	No	No	No
Number of outlets per room	2	3	3
Blinds/curtains	No window coverings	Blinds	Blinds
Cable TV connection in each room	No	No	No
Number of phone jacks	1	1	1
High speed internet	No	No	No
Decorating allowed	No	No	Hanging pictures
Outdoor space	No	No	Yes
Locks/security	Locks only	Locks only	Locks only
Noise level in Building	Some noise	Some noise	Noisy
On-site laundry	No	No	Yes
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Safe walking outside after dark	No	Yes	Yes
Safe for children to play outside	No	Yes	Yes
Crime rate in neighborhood	Occasional	Minimal	Minimal
Issues with unsupervised children	Occasional	Minimal	Minimal
Neighbors loitering	Yes	No	No
Noise level of neighborhood	Some	Little	Little



## Module B: CHECKING OUT THE RENTAL PROPERTY AND THE LANDLORD

### Comparison Units Completed for Case Study 5 (Older Person)

	Rental A	Rental B	Rental C
Address/Name of Unit	1749 Williams Avenue #7	4499 Flower Street #23	3976 McCormick Street #8
<b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b>			
Date available	Currently vacant	2 weeks	1 month
Monthly rent	\$660.00	\$585.00	\$700.00
Date rent is due	First of month	First of month	Fifth of month
Deposit	One month rent	One month rent	One month rent
Pets allowed	Yes	No	No
Pet rules/deposit	Deposit Required	NA	NA
Late payment charges	\$33.00/day	\$29.25/day	\$35.00/day
Length of lease	1 year	1 year	1 year
Frequency of rent increases	Annual	Annual	Annual
Subletting/breaking a lease	No	No	No
Utilities included (water/sewer/heat/garbage/recycling)	Yes except electricity	Yes except electricity	Yes except electricity
Other			
<b>Dwelling</b>			
Square footage	1,000	950	1,200
Number of bedrooms	2	2	2
Number of bathrooms	1	1	1.5
Dishwasher/garbage disposal/microwave included	Yes	Only garbage disposal	Dishwasher and garbage disposal
Available storage	Yes	Yes	Yes
Air conditioning	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fireplace	No	No	Yes
Amenities (pool, gym)	No	No	No
Number of outlets per room	3	3	3
Blinds/curtains	Blinds	Blinds	Blinds
Cable TV connection in each room	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of phone jacks	2	2	2
High speed internet	No	No	No
Decorating allowed	Hanging pictures only	Hanging pictures only	Hanging pictures only
Outdoor space	Yes	Minimal	Yes
Locks/security	Locks	Locks	Locks
Noise level in Building	Some noise	Quiet	Quiet
On-site laundry	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Safe walking outside after dark	Yes	Yes	Yes
Safe for children to play outside	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crime rate in neighborhood	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Issues with unsupervised children	No	No	No
Neighbors loitering	No	No	No
Noise level of neighborhood	Some street noise	Quiet	Quiet



## Rental Property Checklist

Once you have completed the search, you will need to visit each rental property to make sure it meets your needs and expectations. Use this form to compare different rentals so you don't forget important features of the different places you visited.

	Rental A	Rental B	Rental C
Address/Name of unit			
<b>Terms &amp; Conditions</b>			
Date available			
Monthly Rent			
Date Rent Is Due			
Deposit			
Pets allowed			
Pet rules/deposit			
Late payment charges			
Length of lease			
Frequency of rent increases			
Subletting/breaking a lease			
Utilities included (water/sewer/heat/garbage/recycling)			
Other			
<b>Dwelling</b>			
Square footage			
Number of bedrooms			
Number of bathrooms			
Dishwasher/garbage disposal/microwave included			
Available storage			
Air conditioning			
Fireplace			
Amenities (pool, gym)			
Number of outlets per room			
Blinds/curtains			
Cable TV connection in each room			
Number of phone jacks			
High speed internet			
Decorating allowed			
Outdoor space			
Locks/security			
Noise level			
<b>Neighborhood</b>			
Safe walking outside after dark			
Safe for children to play outside			
Crime rate in neighborhood			
Issues with unsupervised children			
Neighbors loitering			
Noise level of neighborhood			
Near bus line			
Near work			



## **Don't Rent Trouble**

It is recommended that you bring the following items for the first unit inspection and use them to check for problems.

- Flashlight
- Light bulb
- Hair dryer
- Pen/pencil and paper – to take notes of the property

### **Electrical**

- Turn on each switch to see if it works. If there is no light bulb in the socket, use the one you brought.
- Check every outlet by plugging in your hair dryer and turning it on. There are problems, if a fuse blows out or the dryer won't turn on.
- If outlets or sockets don't work, there could be dangerous defects in the electrical system that could cause a fire.

### **Plumbing**

- Turn on the sink and bathtub faucets to see if they work or leak.
- How long does it take to get hot water?
- Flush the toilet to see if it operates properly or leaks.
- Do drains operate properly?
- Are ceilings and/or walls stained or cracked? These may indicate a leaking roof, defective rain gutters, or defective plumbing upstairs. Water damage could cause the ceiling or walls to collapse.
- Look at the water heater to see if it is leaking.

### **Safety**

- Does the rental unit have smoke detectors?
- Does the rental unit have carbon monoxide detectors?
- Are there deadbolt locks on the rental unit doors and building's exterior doors?

### **Windows**

- Are there storm windows and screens?
- Very gently push on the windows to see if they are secure or loose in the frame.
- Do windows open and close?

### **Rodents and Other Pests**

- Open cabinets and immediately shine in flashlight to detect roaches. Look for roaches.
- Look for rat and mouse holes and droppings in the back of cabinets and closets.

### **Heating and Cooling**

- Even in summer, push the thermostat up to see if the furnace works.
- Even in the winter, turn on the air conditioner to make sure it works.



## Interviewing Landlords/Property Managers

Here is a list of things to ask regarding the landlord/property manager and current tenants.

### I. General Information

- How long have you been a landlord/property manager?
- What are you looking for in a prospective tenant?
- How soon are you looking to fill the unit?
- What payment methods do you accept for rent?
- Is crime an issue in this neighborhood? Has this property experienced any break-ins, thefts or assaults?

### 2. Rules and Policies

#### Rental agreement Applications

- Must prospective tenants submit an application for a rental agreement?
- Is a fee required with my application? If so, what happens to that money?
- Does the act of giving you an application commit me to signing a rental agreement?

#### Security Deposits

- How much is the security deposit? When must it be paid? When is it returned? What must I do to have my security deposit returned in full?
- Which financial institution will hold my security deposit?

#### Rental Agreement

- Will the rental agreement be written or oral? What rules and regulations must I follow upon signing the rental agreement? How much notice is needed to renew or terminate the rental agreement?
- What is the rental agreement duration?

#### Rental agreement Termination

- Is notice required to terminate or renew the rental agreement, or will it automatically renew for another year? When must notice be given and in what form? If the rental agreement automatically ends (terminates), will I have the first right to renew it?
- Is it possible to end, terminate the rental agreement before the stated date? What fee, if any, is charged for early termination? How much notice is required for early termination? In what form?
- If the rental premises are destroyed, does the rental agreement affirm my right to move elsewhere and cease paying rent?

### 3. Neighborhood

- Is the landlord/property manager familiar with the neighborhood?
- Does the landlord/property manager mention membership in any neighborhood group concerned about crime prevention or neighborhood improvement?



#### **4. Property Management On-Site**

- Is there property management on-site?
- What is the process for dealing with emergencies or maintenance issues?
- Are there regular inspections?
- What is the policy for maintenance personnel entering the rental unit? Your landlord should follow a procedure for notifying you about entering the rental unit.
- How much notice is given prior to entering a property?

#### **5. Unit Inspection**

- Is the unit clean and in good repair?
- Does the landlord/property manager agree to make repairs? Does he/she sound sincere?
- Does the landlord/property manager listen to what you say?
- Does the landlord/property manager speak respectfully to and about other tenants?
- Does the landlord/property manager try to rush you into a decision?