

Off Campus Living Guide

Greetings from the Office of Residential Life! As you embark on living off-campus, we hope that you utilize this guide for information about renting off-campus. Additionally, you will find common guidelines to be a good neighbor.

Steps to Renting Off-Campus

- **Prior to Signing a Lease**
 - Make sure you and your potential roommates have been approved to live off-campus
 - Students must have lived in on-campus housing for 6 semesters BEFORE the start of that Fall semester or reach 22 years of age before September 1st of that academic year.
 - You and your potential roommates need to complete a Housing Cancellation Form during the Room Selection Process
 - Start researching possible rental properties
 - In addition to determining your ideal monthly rent, you'll need to know your monthly budget for utilities including water, trash, electricity/gas, internet, and cable
 - It is likely that your potential landlord will have multiple properties and will be able to show you houses and apartments that fit for you and your roommates
 - Contact landlords and set up appointments to view properties
 - Unsure where to start looking? Visit our Off-Campus Listings page
 - <http://www.valpo.edu/reslife/residential-life-information/off-campus-housing-listings/>
 - Research utility prices if utilities are not included in your monthly rent
 - Did you know you can call NIPSCO, which is responsible for your electricity/gas, and get an average cost for a property? All you have to do is call them and provide the address. This can also be done for Valparaiso City Utilities, which is responsible for your trash and water.
 - NIPSCO can be reached at 1-800-464-7726 or online at <https://www.nipsco.com/our-services/commercial-industrial/gas-electric-service>
 - Valparaiso City Utilities can be reached at 219-462-6174 or online at <http://valparaisoutilities.org/155/Start-Water-Sewer-Services>
 - Ask questions of your potential landlord
 - Frequently asked questions
 - What is covered in the monthly rent?
 - Who is responsible for maintenance and how is a maintenance request submitted?
 - What is the process if there is a maintenance emergency (ie., burst pipe)?
 - Who is responsible for lawn care or snow removal?
 - Is the property furnished in any way?
 - What is the deposit amount?
 - If your potential landlord is unresponsive to your questions as a potential tenant, think about if that's the kind of response you would want when you have a maintenance request or emergency.
 - Read your lease **COMPLETELY**. Your lease covers everything from payment due dates to when and where garbage is collected. Once you sign, you will each have a copy of the lease. Keep an extra copy in an easy to find place so you can reference it whenever needed.
 - Determine how will you and your roommates pay the bills?
 - Questions to ask one another
 - How do we want to pay our rent?
 - Who will be in charge of the bills?
 - How will we keep track of bills and payment dates?
 - What is the most effective way to pay one another back?
 - Checks? Apps such as Venmo, Paypal, Splitwise?
- **Moving In**
 - When you move in, you and your landlord should complete a walk through of your property and note any existing damages or issues for your lease file.
 - You should make sure all damages and issues are thoroughly explained. It is recommended that to take pictures as well. Pictures could be used as proof of existing damages and issues in the event your landlord charges you for them upon your departure. This could help you receive the full amount of your safety deposit back.
- **Moving out**
 - Your landlord will contact you close to your lease end date regarding if you will be signing another lease. At this time, they may ask for a deadline of your decision, which is typically at least 30 days before your lease end date.

- If you are choosing to move out at the end of your lease, you and your roommates will need to arrange a walk through of the space with your landlord.
- Discuss with your landlord what types of “damages” or other expenses could be paid for with your deposit.
 - Often carpets must be cleaned once you move out. Some residents will make arrangements and pay out of pocket to have this done. In other cases, landlords will make these arrangements and take the expense out of your deposit.
- During your final walk through, your landlord will make note of any damages, but final costs are often not known until the damage is addressed due to the prices of the item and/or labor.
- Any part of your safety deposit that can be returned after damages are assessed should be returned to you/your roommates within 45 days of moving out.
- Please note, that there may not be an opportunity to appeal your damages depending on your landlord and/or lease agreement.

How to be a Good Neighbor

Be Welcoming

- Get to know your neighbors! The better you know your neighbors, the easier it is for you to ask questions and address any issues you might be having. Neighbors who are non-students can be a great resource to you.

Ask Questions

- Make an effort to find out how things are done in your neighborhood or apartment complex. Ask your landlord or neighbors: Where is it okay to place my garbage? Where can I dispose of large items? Whose responsibility is the yard?
- Park only where it is legal, safe, and considerate—don’t park on your own or anyone else’s lawn or block anyone’s driveway
- Keep up yard and house appearances.

Be Respectful

- It is always important to be conscious of those around you, especially if your neighbors are not students. When having parties, let your neighbors know first and keep the noise level down past 11:00pm. This may also avoid an unwanted visit from the police due to noise complaints. Your neighbors, even on weekend nights, still may have many reasons for a good night’s sleep so it important that you respect their requests in planning your party.

Things to know when hosting a party

- **Common Nuisance Law**
 - **What is it?**
 - A person can have criminal charges brought against them for visiting or maintaining a place of common nuisance.
 - A place of common nuisance is defined as a building, structure, vehicle or other place that is used by any person to unlawfully use a controlled substance
 - **What does that mean?**
 - Houses become a common nuisance when there have been repeated reports of unlawful use of controlled substances. The Common Nuisance ordinance does not go away when students move out each year, as it stays with the property.
 - This means a person can be criminally charged for merely being present when a controlled substance is being used, or who allows a controlled substance to be used in their home or vehicle.
- **Know your guest list**
 - Set up an invite list with your roommates so you know who is coming. If you are serving alcohol, be sure your guests are 21 & older. Do not invite anyone who is known to cause problems while intoxicated.
- **Set a Plan**
 - It is important to determine who will be sober for the party because they will be handling the conflicts as they arise.
 - Have snacks and nonalcoholic beverages available for guests.
 - Put away all breakables and valuables
 - Know who to contact in the case of an emergency
- **Be Aware**
 - While the party is going on, make sure everything is going smoothly and that no guests are irresponsibly consuming alcohol.

Important Contacts

VUPD: (219) 464-5430

Valparaiso Police Dept. (Non-emergency): (219) 462-0717

Office of Alcohol & Drug Education: 219-464-6820

VU Transportation Services: 219-464-6040