



Renting a Home

Comparing Rental Units

Renting a Home: Comparing Rental Units

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This section is in reference to renting an apartment in a multifamily building or apartment complex. If you are thinking about renting a house, read the Renting a House Section.

Compare at least three places. It is important to keep a record of places as you look. Several days later it will be difficult to remember which apartment had the appliances you liked and which one had the great closets. This information is important for comparison of costs and features. Use the Comparing Rental Property Work Sheet to record the information about each unit. If you have a digital camera, you may want to photograph key features for your records.

Write down the initial and monthly expenses for each unit. Check with the utility companies for seasonal operating costs. You can compare the costs to see which unit is the most energy efficient. Make notes about the space and facilities. As you look at each unit, ask yourself if there is enough space. Does the apartment allow everyone to do what they want and need? Are there enough bedrooms and bathrooms? Can everyone get up, get ready, and get off to the day's activities without running over one another?

Take a tape measure to record important dimensions. Will your furniture and other belongings fit into the apartment? Can you get your furniture through the doors and up the stairs? Mentally decorate the apartment. How will your things fit? Does the apartment look like you

and your family? Also, if you visit an apartment that is currently occupied or one that is a model unit, be sure that you react in terms of your needs – not to the furniture or the décor.

In addition to recording information about cost, size and features, take notes about the quality of the general environment. You might not fit in where there are shift workers or late night parties.

Make additional notes on the checklist such as your first impression and the appearance of the neighborhood. If the first impression is not good, you may not want to consider the apartment. You can contact the local police or sheriff's department to check on crime statistics in the area.

A poorly maintained and unattractive building is not likely to improve. Look for signs of problems in the unit. Check for leaks (including inside cabinetry), water damage stains, presence of roaches or ants, mold or mildew and broken fixtures. For instance, peeling paint may be caused by excess moisture, which might indicate a mold problem. As you walk through a unit, check the operation of appliances, water faucets, toilets and electric switches. Living units and the buildings should be equipped with smoke detectors and sometimes carbon monoxide detectors, fire sprinklers, fire escapes and lighted exits, emergency lighting, security systems and deadbolt locks. Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they work

You may want to ask current tenants about how well they think the property is managed. Some possible questions include:

- Does the landlord/manager see that repairs are promptly and professionally made?
- Can you easily hear people in adjacent apartments?
- Are there other noises such as clanking pipes?
- Are there problems with the behavior of neighbors/children?
- Are there problems (tractor trailer rigs, RVs, overcrowding) with parking?
- Are there any security concerns?
- Are there problems with pets?

You can check with the local Better Business Bureau to learn if there is a record of complaints about a real estate rental company or an individual landlord. If there is a record, it will show what effort, if any, was made to settle complaints.

Once you find a desirable apartment, you will need to fill out an application. If nice, affordable rental units are scarce, you may have to fill out applications at several apartments.

Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet

Fill in blanks or circle answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
MONTHLY EXPENSES			
How much is the monthly rent?			
If not included in the rent, enter an estimated cost for the following :			
Additional rent for guests			
Furniture/Appliance rental			
Heating/Air conditioning			
Electricity			
Trash collection			
Water and sewer			
Renters insurance			
Transportation costs			
Telephone/Cell phone			
Cable/Satellite service			
Other			
<i>Total monthly expense</i>			
INITIAL EXPENSES			
Security deposit			
Cleaning deposit			
Damage deposit			
<i>Total initial expenses</i>			
GENERAL PLANNING			
Total square feet of living space			
Living room length & width			
Family room length & width			
Dining room length & width			
Is there an entryway closet?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there a fireplace?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does kitchen have a dining area?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is kitchen storage adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is kitchen counter space adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Range (gas or electric?)	Gas Elec	Gas Elec	Gas Elec
Refrigerator with freezer	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Dishwasher	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Disposal	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Laundry has washer & dryer	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

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Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet (Cont.)

Fill in blanks or circle answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
BED AND BATH			
Number of bedrooms			
BR #1 length & width			
Is closet space adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
BR #2 length & width			
Is closet space adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
BR #3 length & width			
Is closet space adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Number of full baths			
Number of 1/2 baths			
Is there a linen closet	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
LOCATION			
Is the apartment near schools, stores, church, work, parks and other facilities?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the property free from heavy traffic, dust, dirt, noise and other pollution?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the neighborhood desirable in appearance?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is public transportation or a car pool available to meet your needs?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are paved streets, driveways and public walkways provided?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the streets and walkways well lighted at night?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
GENERAL ENVIRONMENT			
Is the view pleasant and likely to stay unchanged?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there a private yard, patio, or deck?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there space for a garden?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is off-street parking available for two cars/SUVs?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the grounds clean and attractive?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there a safe place for children to play?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is your lifestyle similar to the neighbors?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet (Cont.)

Circle an answer	APT1	APT2	APT3
RESTRICTIONS			
Are children allowed?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are pets allowed? (Get copy of rules)	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are late and noisy parties allowed?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Can you paint or paper walls?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Can you mount pictures on walls?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there limits on vehicle size/type?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
MANAGEMENT/MAINTENANCE			
Does the owner, manager or caretaker live in or near the building?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are critical repairs made promptly such as at night and on week-ends?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are common areas (halls, stairs, etc) well-lighted, clean and in good repair?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are you responsible for care of halls?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are trash containers and removal adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
EXTERIOR			
Is the exterior attractive and in good condition?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are entryways, hallways and stairs clean and well-lighted?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Can screens be removed for window washing?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there locked outside storage for less-used and out-of-season items?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
INTERIORS			
Does the floor plan provide enough space for activities and privacy?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the interior attractive, clean and in good repair?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do the furnishings, materials and equipment promote easy maintenance?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the interior need repainting?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
If pets are allowed, have carpets been cleaned and sanitized?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet (Cont.)

Circle an answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
STORAGE			
Is there a closet close to front door?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there four feet of hanger rod space per family member in closets?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there linen storage?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there kitchen storage for food, utensils and equipment?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Will your possessions fit into the apartment?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
FURNITURE (Furnished Units)			
If furnished, will the landlord remove furnishings you do not want?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the furnishings well constructed?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are all joints firm, closely fitted, reinforced and strongly glued?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are wood finishes neat, smooth and attractive?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do drawers operate smoothly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the upholstered furniture comfortable, clean and in good condition?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
APPLIANCES			
Are the kitchen appliances the type, size and quality needed?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the appliances relatively new?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the appliances clean and do they operate properly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the refrigerator located away from No sunlight, hot air vents and other heat-producing appliances?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
NOISE			
Are the walls and floors soundproofed so the apartment will be quiet?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the living habits of the neighbors similar to yours (shift workers or late-night party givers)?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the apartment near a stairway or elevator where there may be noise late at night?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the stairs carpeted to reduce noise?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet (Cont.)

Circle an answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
OTHER			
Does the apartment have a fire extinguisher?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in bedrooms?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is it convenient to carry in groceries and carry out garbage?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Can the windows be used as emergency fire exits?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the ceiling have water marks where there could be a roof leak?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there any bad odors in the apartment?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there any signs of rodents or roaches?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there any indication of moisture condensation or mildew on the walls?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Can you see or smell mold anywhere?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there any bad or unpleasant odors?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
LIGHTING/VENTILATION			
Are the halls well lighted?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do the windows provide adequate natural illumination?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is fluorescent lighting used?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the home have good artificial lighting, especially in the kitchen and bathroom?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the window arrangement provide good cross ventilation?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do windows open and close smoothly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the air conditioner operate properly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there vented exhaust fans in the bathroom and kitchen?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
PLUMBING			
Are the plumbing fixtures attractive and easy to clean?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there any leaky faucets or toilets that continuously run water?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do the toilet, dishwasher and other plumbing facilities operate quietly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there an adequate supply of hot water?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet (Cont.)

Circle an answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
HEATING/INSULATION			
Are the past utility bills high?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do you pay your own heating/cooling fuel bills?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the heating system work properly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the supply of heat adequate?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the thermostat located on an inside wall, away from drafts, windows, heat sources and exterior doors?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there a thermostat in your unit so you can control heat without asking the caretaker?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are fuel filters changed at least twice a year?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is heat distribution adequate? Look for outlets or elements at the base of walls and under windows in each room?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the attic well insulated?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are floors over unheated spaces well insulated?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are doors leading to unheated attics and cellars tightly closed and insulated?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are floors sufficiently warm and free of drafts?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
ELECTRICAL			
Are adequate electrical outlets provided? Do they operate properly?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are outlets near sinks and other wet areas safety grounded?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there enough switches to light your way through the apartment?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do you pay your own electrical bills?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
AIR CONDITIONING			
Are the filters and cooling coils kept clean on a regular basis?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is it possible to use cross ventilation and/or electric fans as a substitute for air conditioning?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the air-conditioner thermostat located away from sources of heat?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Comparing Rental Units Work Sheet (Cont.)

Circle an answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
WINDOWS/DOORS			
Are windows in the apartment protected by storm windows or plastic film?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the windows in good condition (unbroken, well sealed, and free of drafts)?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the windows double pane?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are all exterior doors (those leading outside) protected by storm doors or airlock entries?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are exterior doors weather-stripped and free of drafts?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there at least two exterior doors for convenience and safety?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is the threshold of the exterior door in good condition?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do the windows open easily?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the apartment receive maximum sunlight and protection from wind, rain, and snow?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the windows sealed, caulked, and free from drafts?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Can you securely lock the doors? Deadbolt locks are recommended.	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are there windows facing the south for best heat gain in the winter?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are the windows covered with heavy draperies, window quilts, insulating shutters, or other thermal window treatments to minimize heat loss?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
LAUNDRY			
Are laundry facilities located in the apartment or in the apartment complex?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are you able to line dry your laundry when weather permits?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Are laundry-equipment controls adaptable to washing and drying large, medium, and small loads?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do the washers allow you to use cold-water rinse?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Is there a laundry room with sufficient equipment for the number of tenants in the building?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

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Circle an answer	APT 1	APT 2	APT 3
LEASE			
Does the landlord have a written lease for you to sign?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Does the written and dated lease contain all of the following: names, addresses, and telephone numbers of landlord, manager, and tenant; length of tenancy; how and when the lease can be terminated or renewed; subletting privileges and accompanying re-rental fee; total monthly rent and service charges; restrictions and regulations; and guarantees and oral promises of the landlord or his representatives?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Have you asked the landlord to delete any unfavorable provisions or waivers on the lease?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No
Do you fully understand all terms of the lease? Clarify anything you do not understand before you sign.	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Adapted from: Leona K. Hawks, Apartments, Utah State University, Logan UT.

This resource is one in a series on Renting a Home which include:

Deciding to Rent

Advantages and Disadvantages of Renting
Who Will Live There? More About Roommates
What Can You Afford?
What Do You Want?

Finding a Home to Rent

Finding a Rental Unit
Comparing Rental Units
Renting a House
Renting With an Option to Buy

The Rental Process

The Rental Application
Your Right to Fair Housing
Rental Contracts

Legal Aspects of Renting in New Mexico

Regulation of Rental Contracts
New Mexico Rental Law
Military Personnel

Moving Into Your Rented Home

Renters Insurance
Verifying the Condition of the Rental Unit

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