OFF-CAMPUS LIVING GUIDE

BUDGETING
SIMPLE TIPS TO STAY ON BUDGET

SAMPLE ROOMMATE CONTRACTS
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS; AVOID LEASING PITFALLS

2016-2017
Off-Campus Message Boards
Free online message boards are available to help you find roommates and subleasing information. Visit www.sa.sc.edu/ocss.

Housing Listing Service
Looking to explore housing options for next year? The Daily Gamecock has a listing service with local rental properties at housing.dailygamecock.com.

Off-Campus Living Guide
This guide is an excellent starting place for your upcoming housing search. It is packed with leasing terminology, leasing tips and budgeting techniques.

Housing Fairs
Housing fairs are offered each semester on Greene Street in front of the Russell House to provide students the opportunity to explore housing options and speak with property management companies and apartment complex representatives.

Community Ambassadors
Community ambassadors are a group of Carolina students who live off campus and can provide guidance, support and education for off-campus students in an effort to improve their living experience.
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STEPS TO FIND YOUR IDEAL OFF-CAMPUS HOME

1. **Be aware of important dates:**
   - Stop by the Fall and Spring Off-Campus Housing Fairs on Greene Street (visit www.sa.sc.edu/ocss for upcoming dates).
   - Mid-Fall: On-campus housing application available online for current undergraduate students.
   - Late Fall: Students are notified of on-campus housing approval.

2. **Review this Off-Campus Living Guide.** It is filled with information about leases, roommates and more. Use the apartment community map and amenities chart to find the complexes that most closely align with what you are looking for in an off-campus residence.

3. **Stop by the West Wing of the Russell House,** to speak with a current USC student serving as a Community Ambassador about your off-campus housing search. Open Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m to 5 p.m.

4. **Use the online message boards** to find a roommate or sublease.
   - Visit our website: sa.sc.edu/ocss.
   - Click message boards.
   - Log in with your USC network username and password.
   - View Search Listings or Message Boards tabs on the left-hand toolbar.

5. **Explore local apartments and houses** available for rent on housing.dailygamecock.com and sa.sc.edu/ocss/piocl.

6. **Find the right roommate(s)** by using the Off-Campus Student Services roommate message boards or apartment complex roommate matching services. Ask potential roommates questions about cleanliness, apartment/house preferences, price range and personal habits before agreeing to live together.

7. **Visit properties and complexes** you are considering before signing a lease. The best way to make a good choice about where to live is to see it firsthand. Our Partners in Off-Campus Living Program (page 27 - 42) highlights many student-centered apartment communities in the area.

8. **Visit Student Legal Services** if you have questions BEFORE signing your lease. Meet with an attorney for a FREE consultation on a variety of issues including landlord-tenant and housing laws. Call 803-777-6611 to schedule an appointment.

9. **Be a good neighbor.** Wherever you chose to live, you will be a representative of the University of South Carolina. Plan to get to know your neighbors by introducing yourself when you move in and educate yourself about community expectations before you sign a lease to make sure the atmosphere is the right fit for you.
NARROWING DOWN YOUR SEARCH

Columbia is a great city that offers a wide variety of off-campus housing options for students. We highly recommend that you answer these important questions to narrow your off-campus housing search.

How will I determine how much I can pay to live off-campus each month?
- Talk to a parent/guardian/guarantor.
- Meet with a financial literacy consultant in the Student Success Center about moving off-campus.
- Talk to your roommates.
- Set a budget (see the example on pg. 11 in the Off-Campus Living Guide).
- Meet with USC’s Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships.

What atmosphere is right for me?
- Students as neighbors (most likely at student apartment complexes)
- Families, working professionals and/or retirees as neighbors (most likely in local neighborhoods)

What will be your primary mode of transportation?
- Non-motorized vehicle (bike, walking, skateboard)
- Moped/Scooter
- Car

Do I need matching assistance to find a roommate (available at some apartments)?
- Yes
- No

I would prefer the following type of lease:
- Group: You can be held responsible for the entire rent.
- Individual: You are only responsible for your share of the rent (available at most apartment complexes that cater to students).

How many roommates would I like to have?
- No roommates
- 1 roommate
- 2 roommates
- 3 or more roommates
- 4 or more (only at apartment complexes due to city occupancy rules)

Distance preference:
- I have a vehicle and don’t mind driving to campus.
- I want to be able to walk to campus.
- I will take the shuttle back and forth to campus.

What amenities do I value most?
- Pool
- Furnished
- Hardwood floors
- Workout room
- Shuttle to campus
- Walking distance to campus
- Washer and dryer in unit
- Pets allowed
- Private bathroom
- Trash removal
- Movie theater
- Near the baseball stadium
- Near the football stadium
- TV included
- Tanning bed on-site
- Computer lab on-site
- Visitor parking
- Grilling stations
- All utilities included (water, electricity, cable/Internet)
- Within walking distance of a downtown district
- Outdoor recreation facilities
It’s never too early to start preparing for your move! Whether you are new to living off-campus or you are a repeat renter, these tips can help you make moving in and out as painless as possible.

8 WEEKS

• Create a folder for important documents.
• Purchase renter’s insurance.
• Make arrangements with a moving service/truck, if necessary.

4 WEEKS

• Get packing supplies (boxes, tape, labels, etc.).
• Schedule utility connections.
• Fill out a change of address form online (usps.com) or at a local post office.

2 WEEKS

• Make a checklist of all of the items you are moving to ensure you don’t forget anything.
• Secure friends to help you move.
• Update your local address with USC on Self Service Carolina.

1 WEEK

• Pack your essential items in an easily accessible bag.
• Confirm the exact time and date of your move with your landlord/apartment manager.
• Consider purchasing cleaning supplies to thoroughly clean your unit before unpacking everything.

0 WEEK

• Meet your landlord to get your keys.
• Take time-stamped pictures of the unit before you move anything into the unit.
• Introduce yourself to your neighbors.
• Follow the move in smart tips on the next page.
THINGS TO REMEMBER
WHEN MOVING IN AND OUT

Move In Smart
Before moving your belongings into your new apartment or house, make sure that your new place is safe to live in by inspecting your rental and recording (with photos and in writing) anything that is damaged, hazardous or in need of repair. Columbia has minimum standards that properties are required to meet. Keep these requirements in mind and personally check for the following before moving in:

☐ Make sure there is at least one window that opens per room and that no panes are broken.
☐ Make sure all electrical fixtures and smoke detectors are working.
☐ Inspect for rodents and bugs.
☐ Make sure all appliances and heat systems work correctly.
☐ Make sure all plumbing fixtures are free of leaks and in sanitary and safe working condition.
☐ Open and close all doors and check that all locks work.
☐ Check for holes in ceilings and walls.
☐ See that the unit is clean.
☐ Inspect for mold and water damage.
☐ Find out who is responsible for the upkeep of the yard.

If you have any questions or concerns, take pictures and address them immediately by:

1. Providing your landlord with a detailed description and pictures of the problems (also keep a copy for yourself).
2. Contacting the City of Columbia Housing Inspection Office at 803-545-3430 (if you live in the City of Columbia) to request an inspection. If you live outside the City of Columbia, please email Off-Campus Student Services at saocss@mailbox.sc.edu to find out who you should contact.
3. If you sense that your landlord is unwilling to fix the problems, set up an appointment with Student Legal Services to discuss your rights as a renter.

Following these steps will protect you from unsafe living conditions, and it will help you avoid being held responsible for pre-existing damages.

Move Out Smart
Follow these suggestions for a smooth move-out experience:

☐ Remove all your belongings and clean the property thoroughly.
☐ Take photos of the condition you are leaving it in.
☐ Donate gently used furniture and household items. Place all trash and recycling on the curb for pickup.
☐ Call and have utilities (water, electricity, gas, cable, Internet) taken out of your name.
☐ Return your keys to your landlord.
☐ Provide your landlord with an address to send the returned security deposit.

Security deposits must be returned within 30 days of you moving out or you asking for your deposit back, whichever is later. If you do not receive any or a portion of your deposit back, the landlord must provide you with a written list explaining the damages. If you believe that your deposit has been unjustly withheld, set up an appointment with Student Legal Services to discuss your rights.
**Vehicles**

All vehicles using University of South Carolina reserved spaces and lots should be registered with Vehicle Management and Parking Services. However, students also may choose to buy a garage parking pass. Garage and reserved spaces are reserved 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information, visit the Vehicle Management and Parking Services website at [www.sc.edu/vmps/](http://www.sc.edu/vmps/).

**USC Shuttle Services**

Students are encouraged to park in lots outside of central campus and use the shuttle to ride into central campus. Some exceptions to this operation are during summer, reading days and holidays. Learn more about the various shuttle schedules and lines at [www.sc.edu/vmps/shuttle.html](http://www.sc.edu/vmps/shuttle.html).

**Other Forms of Transportation**

**Bicycle**

All bicycles must be registered with Parking Services at [www.sc.edu/vmps](http://www.sc.edu/vmps). Cyclists should always ride with the flow of traffic in the street. Bicycle racks can be found across all of campus.

**Moped**

All mopeds must be registered with Parking Services at [www.sc.edu/vmps](http://www.sc.edu/vmps). Please note that mopeds have designated spaces in which they must park. Anyone under the age of 21 is required to wear a helmet. It is also illegal for more than one person to ride a moped, unless it is designated for two people. Parking on the sidewalk or securing your moped to a bicycle rack is never allowed.

**Motorcycles/Scooters**

All motorcycles and scooters must be registered with Parking Services at [www.sc.edu/vmps](http://www.sc.edu/vmps). These vehicles have designated spaces in which they must be parked. Parking on the sidewalk, or securing your motorcycle or scooter to a bicycle rack is never allowed. Anyone under the age of 21 is required to wear a helmet.

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**CATCH THE COMET**

The COMET is Columbia’s public transportation system, and is an affordable way to get around the Midlands Area.

The COMET’s fixed route system provides quick and easy access to campus and the city, offering stops at the university, downtown, Five Points, the Vista area, Cayce and West Columbia.

For more information and route schedules, visit [catchthecomet.org](http://catchthecomet.org).
Cost of Living Off Campus

Off-campus rental amounts vary greatly and depend on the number of roommates, proximity to campus and amenities provided. Living off campus can be very affordable, especially if you share costs with roommates. You should contact properties and landlords for the costs because Off-Campus Student Services does not quote prices for specific properties.

When researching housing options, you need to consider not only the rent amount but also what is included and what additional costs you will incur each month. Keep in mind that rent might not be the only thing you have to pay. You may have to make separate payments for utilities and amenities (electricity, water, cable, yard work, parking and Internet).

Cost of Living Off Campus

- **On-Campus**
  - Quad - 4BR/2BA
  - $3,985 per semester
  - Includes all utilities
  - Furnished
  - 9-month lease
  - Community laundry
  - $150 application fee

- **Off-Campus**
  - 4BR/2BA apartment
  - $590.75/month
  - Includes utilities w/cap
  - Furnished (with television)
  - Washer and dryer in unit
  - 12-month lease
  - $125 administration fee

Annual total: $7,970 + parking + groceries/meal plan + laundry

Annual Total: $6,425.75 + gas + parking + groceries

*Please note this is one estimated example as of Fall 2015. More and less expensive apartments and residence halls are available.

Student Loans and Financial Aid

Students are allowed to use some financial aid to pay rent, bills and other expenses associated with living off campus. We recommend that you contact the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships to find out if your aid package allows this. If you have financial aid remaining after tuition is paid, you will receive an overage check. This money can be used to cover living costs. Be prepared to cover the first month’s expenses out of pocket as there is no guarantee that overage checks will be available in time. Keep in mind that some scholarships may only allow you to use them toward tuition. For more information, call Student Financial Aid and Scholarships at 803-777-8134.
WHAT DOES IT COST TO LIVE OFF-CAMPUS?

When you move off-campus, budgeting your money becomes crucial because you will have bills to pay. Making sure you set enough money aside to pay rent, utilities, cable and Internet is vital for a successful off-campus living experience. Here are some things you should take into consideration before determining where you will live:

- Will you be able to afford rent for the duration of your lease?
- What is included in your rent? Are cable and Internet included, or do you have to pay extra?
- Does your rent include a utilities cap? If so, can you afford to pay for utilities if you exceed your cap?
- How long is your commute to campus from your desired place of residency? Can you afford to pay for gas? Does your off-campus community provide a shuttle to and from campus?
- What will food, school supplies and books cost? And how do those factor into your other living costs?
- Will your residence be furnished, or will you have to purchase furniture? If the apartment/house is furnished, is there a fee associated with it?

WHAT SHOULD MY BUDGET LOOK LIKE?

Your budget should reflect your values and will be personal and unique to you. No one else can tell you how to spend your money - those decisions are yours alone. A budget helps you be intentional about where you spend your funds, and this ensures you do not accidentally spend too much money on less important items.

COMMON TERMS:

**INCOME**

Income includes any source of money you have coming in. This can be pay from work, an allowance, gifts or loans. Your income is not just a paycheck — think outside the box!

**EXPENSES**

- **Monthly Fixed** - necessary monthly expenses that do not change in amount
- **Monthly Variable** - necessary monthly expenses that vary in amount
- **Periodic** - necessary expenses that occur on an irregular basis with varying amounts
- **Discretionary** - expenses that are wants, not needs; “fun” or “extra” expenses

**BUDGET**

The actual budget is the combination of the total income and total expenses. It is usually categorized and balanced. It details the monthly spending patterns and is used to configure future spending plans.
### Current Spending/Projected Budget

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<tr>
<th>Income</th>
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<td>Job Earnings #2</td>
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<td>Financial Aid</td>
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<td>Allowance</td>
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<td>Gifts</td>
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<th>Variable Expenses</th>
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<td>Gas/Transportation</td>
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<td>Phone Bill</td>
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<td>Misc.</td>
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<td>Total Variable Expenses:</td>
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<td>Internet/Cable Bill</td>
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<td>Car Repair</td>
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<td>Moving Expenses</td>
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<td>Total Periodic Expenses:</td>
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<td>Shopping</td>
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<td>Gifts</td>
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<td>Charity</td>
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<td>Total Expenses:</td>
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For more information on budgeting and finances or to review this budget with a professional, contact the Financial Literacy Program, located on the Mezzanine Level of Thomas Cooper Library, for a private consultation, or visit www.sc.edu/success for more information.
Finding a Roommate

When picking a roommate, it is important to find someone you can see yourself getting along with and someone you feel comfortable sharing close space with. You should ask your prospective roommate questions about his/her cleanliness, apartment and house preferences, price range, desire to have pets (or not) and personal habits prior to agreeing to live together. Ideally, your future roommate will be someone who has similar preferences and interests as you do.

Roommate Matching

Many apartment complexes offer roommate matching, although it is not guaranteed. See our amenities chart on page 46 to see which apartments offer roommate matching, and contact them for more information about their roommate matching process. Most of the complexes that offer individual leases will provide roommate matching.

Message Boards

Off-Campus Student Services does not have a roommate matching system. However, our website (sa.sc.edu/ocss) has message boards where students post information about roommate searches. You may post there if you have an apartment/house and need a roommate or if you need an apartment/house and a roommate.

Quick Tips for Roommate Success

1. Sign a roommate contract. An informal verbal agreement related to expectations might seem adequate, but creating a written agreement can prevent unnecessary problems and conflicts.

2. Cleanliness. Make sure to talk to your roommate about both of your cleaning habits (i.e. cleanliness expectations), tidiness of common space and kitchen responsibilities.

3. Splitting living costs. You should discuss who will take the responsibility of paying utility bills and also how you and your roommates will split unit cleaning supplies, joint groceries and furnishings.

4. Study and sleeping habits. Are you a morning person living with a night owl? Talk about sleeping patterns with your roommate to ensure a balanced lifestyle among all roommates.

5. Guest policy. Perhaps one of the biggest issues between roommates is due to a lack of a guest policy. You and your roommate(s) should find common ground regarding guests and should always be considerate when having guests at your residence.

6. Be honest and upfront with conflicts. One of the most important things when living with a roommate is that you should talk about your conflicts in a respectful and honest way.

*If you are moving into an unfurnished apartment, consider who will be responsible for bringing furniture and appliances that are not provided in the property.

Roommate Success

Relationships with roommates are just like any other relationship — they have their ups and downs. Some relationships fit perfectly and others need extra attention. Take the time to establish clear expectations and maintain open lines of communication to ensure roommate harmony.
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STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q&A with Adam Protheroe

This is general information. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney/client relationship. Most rules have exceptions, and your case may be one. When in doubt, contact Student Legal Services.

Adam Protheroe
Student Legal Services
Russell House West Wing, 044A
(803) 777-6611

Q: What is Student Legal Services (SLS)?
A: SLS is a partnership between USC and South Carolina Legal Services that makes legal assistance available to USC students in certain kinds of cases. We provide legal advice and assistance resolving conflicts, and we are able to accept a limited number of cases for representation in court where this is needed. This service is paid for using student activity fees, and there is no additional fee for the attorney’s time. We can help with landlord-tenant disputes and other housing issues, consumer issues (like debt collection, consumer contracts, car sales, etc.), probate law (wills, powers of attorney, etc.), domestic relations (divorce, child custody, etc.) and employment law. There are some issues we can’t assist with including criminal cases, disputes with USC, student conduct issues and disputes between students.

Q: Why should a lawyer look at my lease?
A: A lease is a binding contract, and once you sign it, is very difficult, if not impossible, to get out of it. There are some basic concepts in landlord/tenant law that every tenant should know, but every lease is slightly different and there are some things about your lease that you may want to pay more attention to based on your specific situation. A lawyer can help answer your questions (both those you know you have and those you may not have thought of). Knowing what you’re getting into before you sign or knowing what your rights are before you take action can make quite a bit of difference in your experience.

Q: Who is typically a guarantor?
A: A guarantor agrees to be “on the hook” for any rent or other charges that come due during your lease. Usually this is a parent or guardian, though it doesn’t necessarily have to be. It is common for landlords to require that the guarantor have monthly income equal to at least three times your monthly rent.

Q: How do I get a security deposit back?
A: You should ask for it in writing at the end of your lease and give a forwarding address where you want it to be sent. You are entitled to have your deposit back after 1) your lease ends, 2) you move out, and 3) you ask your landlord for it and tell him/her where it should be sent. Once these three things happen, your landlord has 30 days to return your deposit minus any deductions they are allowed to take. They can deduct for things like unpaid rent, damage to the property, cleaning charges, etc. They should not charge more than the actual and reasonable cost for these things. If your landlord does deduct anything from your deposit, he/she should give you an itemized list of these deductions and return any money that is left over after these deductions. If a landlord doesn’t do these things, there can be some significant legal penalties.
Q: Where can I obtain renter’s insurance? What should it cover?
A: Most major insurance companies offer renter’s insurance. One thing to consider is that you might get a “multi-policy” discount if you get your renter’s insurance from an insurance company that you already have another kind of policy with (e.g., car insurance). Renter’s insurance usually covers things like the cost of replacing your personal property if it is lost or damaged due to theft, fire, etc. Your landlord may have insurance, but it probably only covers the building and won’t reimburse you if your property is damaged or lost. Renter’s insurance also may cover liability you may have if someone is accidentally injured in your home. Policies vary and you should read yours carefully to understand what it does and does not cover.

Q: What do I do if my landlord is not making repairs to my unit?
A: Don’t stop paying rent (at least not without talking to a lawyer first)! If the problems with the unit are serious and are a danger to health and safety, then you may have the right to terminate your lease. But, you have to give your landlord a 14-day written notice first. This notice has to tell the landlord what’s wrong, give him/her 14 days to fix it and tell him/her that if it’s not fixed in that time then you will terminate your lease. You also can file a lawsuit in magistrate’s court asking the judge to require your landlord to make repairs.

Q: Help! I need to get out of my lease!
A: Call us. Sometimes this can be done but only under specific circumstances and in a certain way.
UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEASE

Furnished Unit: A furnished unit means the apartment or landlord provides furniture for the tenants, but the type of furniture provided may vary. An additional cost may be associated with furnished units. Please be sure to check with specific complexes for details. Furnished apartments are convenient for students who may be moving often throughout their time in college.

Unfurnished Unit: An unfurnished unit does not provide furniture for tenants. Purchasing furniture may create a higher cost when moving in, but it may be a good investment for students.

Utility Cap: An apartment community may offer a bill limit that is included in the rental amount on some of their utility services. Students are strongly encouraged to research how often they may exceed the utility cap and what the policy is for exceeding the cap.

Shuttle: Some apartment communities provide shuttles that travel to and from campus for students. Keep in mind that shuttles are not guaranteed and could have maintenance issues that put them out of commission.

Roommate Matching: Some apartment communities provide roommate matching to fill units. This is a process that matches tenants together based on surveyed similarities.

Lease: A lease is a contract and legally-binding document. Once a tenant (the person renting) signs a lease, he/she is committed to all the terms of that lease, including being responsible for all finances and money owed for the entire term of the lease, even if there are extenuating circumstances beyond his/her control. Be sure to understand what you are signing. Even if the apartment complex requires a guarantor, the lease is binding with only the student’s signature. Lease terms vary, but most leases will come with a full year (12 months) term. It is very rare to find a lease in Columbia for the academic year only.

Security Deposit: A security deposit is a variable amount of money paid to the landlord to ensure that rent will be paid and all terms of the lease will be met. Security deposit amounts vary and may be as much as a full month’s rent. Usually a portion, if not all, of the deposit is refundable after you fulfill the terms of your lease. At the end of your lease, the landlord cannot withhold your security deposit for normal wear and tear. This typically includes minor painting and carpet cleaning. If the landlord does withhold any or all of your security deposit, he/she is required to provide you with an itemized list of charges.

Renter’s Insurance: Renter’s insurance is a policy that protects your apartment and property from theft and damage. Students are encouraged to obtain renter’s insurance when renting a property, because typically a landlord’s insurance policy will not pay for losses of your own personal property. Because property losses are usually unexpected, the insurance serves as a means of protection. Students, if they choose, may be covered under their parents’ homeowner or renter’s insurance policy.

Utilities: Utilities include payment for the services of water, sewage, trash, electricity, cable and Internet. Some utilities are included in the rent while others must be purchased separately. Check with your landlord to understand what utilities, if any, are included in your rental agreement.
**Individual Lease:** An individual lease is when each tenant has a separate lease and pays individual rent payments. In most cases, each tenant needs his/her own guarantor on his/her lease. Tenants are responsible for their assigned individual bedroom, so there is a limit to one person per bedroom. However, each tenant has shared joint responsibility for the common spaces.

**Group Lease:** All tenants are on one lease and make one payment. All tenants are equally responsible and liable for the property. Multiple tenants may choose to share a bedroom to reduce costs. At least one guarantor is responsible for the entire property including payment and damages. Typically, utilities are not included, and therefore, it is up to the tenants to obtain the services and put them in their names. Landlords cannot assign roommates in a group lease.

**Sublease:** If you are considering studying abroad or living elsewhere for the summer months, you are still responsible for your lease. Many students find a living arrangement that allows subleasing or the ability to transfer a lease. In a sublease, you'll find another tenant to rent your room or apartment for the period of time you'll be absent. During your absence, you are still held responsible for the money associated with the lease. Students can use message boards (sa.sc.edu/ocss) to find students to take over their leases.

**Guarantor:** A guarantor is someone who signs the lease along with the tenant. Typically full-time students are required to have a guarantor (also referred to as a co-signer). In most cases, a guarantor must earn three times the monthly rent to be approved. As the guarantor, this means the co-signer agrees to have the landlord check his/her credit and guarantee the tenant complies with the rental agreement and rental payment. The tenants’ failure to pay rent may impact the guarantor’s credit score.

**Pet Policy:** Most landlords have some type of pet policy in place for the unit. Check with your landlord to see if pets are allowed on the premises. A fee is typically associated with a pet, and most of the time, it is a one-time fee. If you are considering getting a pet, please be sure that you have the resources necessary to take care of it. Make sure to ask your landlord about weight limits and breed restrictions.

**Application Fee:** Some complexes ask for an application fee before leasing the property. This is typically a one-time nonrefundable fee.

**Eviction:** Eviction is when the landlord forces the tenant to move out of the property and decides to terminate the lease agreement. The landlord has the right to terminate the lease if a tenant damages property, fails to pay rent, violates terms of the lease or commits a crime.
GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

- Keep windows and doors locked at all times.
- Make sure smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and alarm systems are in good working order.
- Ensure that you have and use a peephole in your front door to identify visitors.
- Only let maintenance workers in when your landlord or property manager has notified you that they will be coming.
- Remove valuables from your vehicle and keep your car doors locked at all times. In addition, attempt to park in well-lit areas.
- Register your personal items and possessions with the USC Police Department. If they are stolen, this will make them easier to identify.
- Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood and/or apartment complex. Make note of entrances and exits.
- Don’t walk alone after dark.
- If attacked or approached by someone suspicious, contact the police immediately by calling 911.
- Register for Carolina Alert. During an emergency, the university may send text messages to students who have registered their mobile devices and email addresses to keep you informed about the situation. To sign up for this service, please visit my.sc.edu/emergency.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

City of Columbia ............ 803-545-3500 (general)
                        803-252-2911 (dispatch)

Richland County............ 803-576-3000

Lexington County......... 803-785-8320

West Columbia............. 803-794-0721

Cayce Public Safety...... 803-794-0456

USC Police................. 803-777-8400 (general)
                        803-777-4215 (dispatch)

If an emergency, dial ..... 911
SEXUAL ASSAULT
If you or someone you know has been the victim of sexual assault or relationship violence, the University of South Carolina has resources available 24/7 to help.

1. Contact the police. Call the USC Police Department at 803-777-4215 or 911.

2. See professional help. Call the Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention and Prevention office at 803-777-8248.

3. Get medical attention. Go to the Palmetto Richland Emergency Room at 5 Richland Medical Park Dr., Columbia, SC 29203.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, harassment or relationship violence, report it at www.sa.sc.edu/shs/savip/report. The university’s procedures ensure prompt, fair and impartial investigation by trained professionals committed to protecting students from further harm.

According to the University of South Carolina, consent is permitting, approving or agreeing to comply with an act. Elements of consent include:

a. Both individuals are physically free and capable to act.

b. Someone who is incapacitated cannot consent

c. Both individuals are fully conscious.

d. Consent can be withdrawn at any time.

e. Both are clear about their intent to engage in sexual activities, and their desire to do so is willing.

f. Silence or an absence of resistance does not in and of itself constitute consent.

g. Coercion, force or threat of either cancels consent.

h. Past consent of sexual activities does not imply ongoing future consent.

From: www.sc.edu/sexualassault

BREAKS & VACATIONS
While students are away on university breaks and vacations, criminals are more likely to search for properties to rob, knowing they are vacant.

Before you leave for a break from school:

☐ Make sure doors and windows to your unit are locked and secured. The most common unsecured windows are in the kitchen and bathroom.

☐ Set your thermostat to a neutral temperature.

☐ Try to make your house look occupied while you are away by leaving a light or two on or by using a timer on your lights.

☐ Lock all of your belongings.

☐ Don’t leave valuables within view of windows of your unit or in your car.

☐ Close blinds and curtains.

☐ If you have an extra key outside of the unit, make sure to remove it before leaving for an extended period of time.

☐ Unplug all appliances.

FIRE SAFETY
To prevent fires:

• Cook in approved areas or kitchens and use laboratory-tested appliances. Stay nearby while appliances are on. Clean up grease and appliances as soon as possible.

• Don’t overload outlets. Match your appliance power requirements to the circuit power.

• Replace damaged wires.

• If you smoke, don’t smoke in bed or near flammable materials. Use large ashtrays and be sure ashes, matches and cigarette ends are cold before you throw them away.

• Closely monitor grills and bonfires. Fully extinguish them before leaving them unattended.

If there’s a fire:

• If you discover or suspect a fire, sound the building fire alarm. If there is no alarm in the building, warn the other occupants by knocking on doors and shouting as you leave.

• If you get caught in smoke, get down and crawl. Cleaner, cooler air will be near the floor.

• Before opening any doors, feel the metal knob. If it is hot, don’t open the door.

• Go to the nearest exit or stairway.

• Close as many doors as possible as you leave. This helps to contain the fire.

• Call 911. Give as much information as possible to the emergency dispatcher.

For more information, visit USC Fire and Safety at www.sc.edu/ehs/firesafety.htm.
COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS

Need an off-campus living consultation? Come visit one of our Community Ambassadors.

What advice do you have for students transitioning from living on campus to off-campus living?

There are so many new responsibilities that come with living off-campus like paying bills and having to manage your own money. When you live on-campus, those things are done for you already essentially. The key is to find a routine. Wake up a little earlier than you usually would in the morning to make sure you have everything ready for the day so that you don’t have to make an extra trip. Experiment with and find things to cook on a regular basis that are also inexpensive. The more of a routine you can get into with simple things like this, the easier your life will be.

-Sam Brunson, Exercise Science

Why is it important to stay involved on-campus as a commuter student?

Just because you are commuting to campus, you are no less of a Gamecock. It is super important to immerse yourself in the opportunities that USC has to offer because they benefit you during your years at USC and afterward. You don’t want to graduate and have nothing on your resume, and college would not be any fun if you just drive back and forth to campus for class. With more than 400 student organizations on-campus, it is easy to get involved in something you like. On-campus jobs are great as well!

-Chardonnay Ismail, Public Relations

Why is it important to have a healthy relationship with off-campus roommates?

Healthy relationships with your roommates are key to a positive off-campus living experience. Communication allows everyone to be on the same page and avoid unwanted surprises. If problems do arise, be sure to talk to your roommates about what’s going on as soon as possible. Avoiding the issue can cause a lot of tension and then create other problems. Developing a roommate contract at the beginning of the school year can be a great way to outline what expectations you all have for each other. Putting this contract in an accessible location can be a great reminder for everyone. Living off-campus can be a great experience, and healthy roommate relationships can making living in your own space more enjoyable!

-Amanda Basabe, Public Relations
What tips do you have for effectively commuting to and from campus?

Before you start commuting, know how long the drive takes from campus and back and how much traffic will affect your drive. Things like trains, accidents and downtown events can add time to your drive as well, so keep up to date on what’s happening and be ready to leave early. If you don’t have a car, make sure to know what transportation services are available to you, whether you will use the university’s shuttle service or your place of residence has its own.

-Josh Heming, Public Health

What advice do you have for incoming transfer students living off-campus?

Transferring mid-semester to USC was an interesting change for me, but with that change, I learned a lot of things. If you are a transfer student, you will definitely need to familiarize yourself with campus as soon as possible. Don’t let the transition from one school to another distract you from continuing to do your best in school. You also should be informed of all of the opportunities to get involved and beneficial services that USC provides. Lastly, make yourself at home and go Gamecocks!

-Chris Galloway, Environmental Science

How do you balance classes and a job while staying involved with on-campus activities?

Being able to balance studying and working along with clubs and activities is difficult, but very possible. The most important skill to learn is effective time management. It is also very necessary to prioritize your responsibilities and keep yourself organized. The sooner you can become accustomed to a schedule, the better. If you can do all of these things, you will be very successful and have an incredible experience.

-Andy Knight, Finance

How does time management play a key role to living off-campus?

When living off-campus, it is extremely important to develop effective time management skills. You have to balance your day by factoring in your commute time to and from campus, your study time and your possible work schedule. Initially, it will seem difficult, but over time, you will become used to the structure of the schedule and be able to flow with it.

-Aniysa Taylor, Broadcast Journalism
GOOD NEIGHBORING

As a member of the University of South Carolina and Columbia communities, it is your responsibility to practice civility and be a good neighbor. Here’s how:

**BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR**

**Be Friendly:**
- **✓** Introduce yourself. Put a face to a name and share contact information.
- **✗** Don’t ignore your neighbor. A hello and a smile can go a long way. Don’t play loud music that can be heard outside. Don’t park on the lawn, block driveways or block sidewalks.

**Live Green:**
- **✓** Know when trash and recycling are picked up. Pick up trash on your property daily. Pick up after your pets. Mow your lawn.
- **✗** Don’t leave trash and recycling bins out for more than 24 hours - that includes furniture. Don’t leave indoor furniture outside.

**Party Smart:**
- **✓** Keep the noise down. It’s the No. 1 reason the police are called. Notify your neighbors in advance and ask them to call you before calling the police. Provide non-alcoholic beverages and food for guests.
- **✗** Don’t drink if you are under 21 or serve alcohol to minors. Don’t let guests drive after drinking or let your party get out of your control. You are liable for the actions of your guests, and this type of behavior could result in sanctions from the Office of Student Conduct.

**Be Respectful:**
- **✓** Cooperate and show respect to police and your neighbors.
- **✗** Don’t be rude, belligerent or foul-mouthed.

**Live Safe:**
- **✓** Know your fire escapes. Keep a fire extinguisher handy. Test smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries. Lock the doors and windows of your house and car.
- **✗** Don’t overload electrical outlets. Never leave outdoor fires or grills unattended - this includes leaving cooking or candles unattended. Don’t use your roof as an entertainment space.

**Know the Student Code:**
Review the University of South Carolina Code of Conduct at [sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf626.pdf](http://sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf626.pdf). This code applies to all students, on- or off-campus. Violating the law off-campus can be a violation of this code. Students can receive consequences from both criminal court and USC for the same incident.
NEIGHBORHOODS NEAR CAMPUS

These local neighborhoods are popular areas for students to rent property. If you rent in a neighborhood, your neighbors will be students, working professionals, retirees, and families. Have a positive neighborhood living experience by following the good neighboring tips on the next page.
What are my living options in the Columbia area?

There are a number of options to live both near campus and in the areas surrounding Columbia. If you’re looking for apartments nearby, our apartment complex map and amenity chart, located on pages 46 and 47, are great resources. Furthermore, housing.dailygamecock.com, an online resource hosted by The Daily Gamecock student newspaper, has listings of available properties. There are also many property management companies in town such as Columbia Property Management, Turner Properties, Midland’s Property Management, Bob Capes Property Management, Landmark Resources, APM Realty Group, and Cantey and Company as well as individual landlords advertising rental property on Craigslist, The State and the Free Times. Ultimately, when making a decision where to live for the next year, there is no substitute for viewing it in person.

How do I find a roommate?

We provide undergraduate and graduate student message boards for students looking for roommates or subleasing opportunities. The message boards are used daily with hundreds of posts each semester. Most apartment complexes that offer individual leasing will also provide assistance with the roommate matching process.

Where is the safest area to live?

Columbia is an urban environment, and campus is located in the middle of downtown. As such, crime is a possibility anywhere, and it is the individual’s responsibility to ensure safety. USC Law Enforcement partners with RAIDS (Regional Analysis and Information Data Sharing) Online, an online crime-mapping tool, to show crime activity in the surrounding area so you can make informed decisions about your safety. View the local RAIDS online crime map to find out more. As well, USC Law Enforcement offers the RAVE Guardian Safety App, which can alert them or 911, leave anonymous tips, and more, at the push of a button. Students must be vigilant about their personal safety, no matter where they live. For more information on safety, read the Community Safety section starting on page 18.

Which neighborhoods are popular with students?

The neighborhoods found on page 23 are some of the most popular neighborhoods in close proximity to campus: Wales Garden, Olympia Mills, Granby Mills, Rosewood, Hollywood-Rose Hill, Shandon, University Hill, The Avenues - Cayce, Old Shandon, Earlwood, Cottontown, Elmwood Park, and Waverly. Be sure to read page 22 for tips on how to be a good neighbor.

Where can I find information on parking services and parking passes?

There are a variety of parking options both on and off-campus. There are hourly parking meters on city streets around campus. We recommend that you download the Passport Parking App to pay for city parking meters. The university offers parking lots and garages; lots and garages vary in price depending on location and accessibility. More information can be found on page 22.
What is there to do in Columbia?

Columbia is a thriving city that offers many great options for entertainment, shopping, and more. The city website contains a variety of Columbia resources. Information about things to do in “Famously Hot” Columbia for day-to-day activities and offerings are listed, and annual events, such as Famously Hot New Year and the Greek Festival - amongst others - are listed on their Annual Events page. Information on Columbia activities can also be found on page 26.

I’m new to South Carolina. What rights do renters have?

Student Legal Services is available for students as they transition to Columbia and prepare to move. More information on their office can be found on pages 14 and 15. Check out our general leasing tips on the Off-Campus Student Services website for more information.

If the place I’m living doesn’t come furnished, are there options available to rent furnishings?

Yes! Columbia is home to several furniture rental companies that are all just a quick search away. Browse around and choose which one works best for your individual needs.

Where do you buy food?

There are a variety of places to purchase food throughout the area. There are also weekly farmer’s markets available beyond your brick-and-mortar stores. The Columbia city website also promotes many restaurant options for you to try. We recommend looking at each address you are considering based on proximity to grocery stores and restaurants.

What utilities are included in my rent?

Utilities included vary between the various apartment complexes and rental properties. Ask your landlord or property manager what you are responsible for paying beyond your rent. Some common utility providers are: SCE&G – electricity & gas, City of Columbia water, Time-Warner cable/internet, AT&T cable/internet.

Do I need a car to live in Columbia?

Like any city, this depends on where you live and where you need to go. Visiting www.walkscore.com can help you see what is in walking distance of the location where you’re planning on living. The Comet is a bus system with routes throughout the city. Bus schedules and pricing can be found on the Comet’s website, catchthecomet.org. Furthermore, many of the off-campus apartment complexes offer shuttles to and from campus. There are also taxis and personal shuttles (Uber, etc.) offered in the area.

Have additional questions not addressed above?

Please visit the Off-Campus Student Services website at www.sa.sc.edu/ocss, contact us by phone at 803-777-3366, by email at saocss@mailbox.sc.edu or drop by in person to our office located in Russell House West Wing.
EXPLORING COLUMBIA

Columbia has a number of events and locations to keep you busy all year. Here’s a sample of what the city has to offer. For a full list of attractions and events, please visit columbiacvb.com.

WEEKLY
Soda City Market: Columbia’s own street market, held every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the 1500 block of Main Street. You can purchase goodies from local artisans, farmers, retailers and more!

MONTHLY
First Thursdays on Main: Head to Main Street from 6-10 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month to sample the work of local artists, merchants and food fair.

ANNUAL
S.C. Pride Festival: S.C. Pride is South Carolina’s longest running pride event. Come out for a day of fun to celebrate the LGBTQ community! September

Greek Festival: Celebrate Greek culture at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. A whole weekend of Greek food, festivities and artisans awaits! September

South Carolina State Fair: One of South Carolina’s biggest events, the fair brings two weeks of food, rides, exhibits and music to Columbia every fall. Be on the lookout for College Day when students get in for free! October

Vista Lights: Kick off the holiday season in downtown Columbia with an evening of festive celebration. Take in the tree-lighting and some performances, or get a start on your holiday shopping! November

Crafty Feast: Want to check out the work of area indie artisans and craftsmen? Maybe pick up some of their work for yourself or that special someone? Crafty Feast is the place to be! December

Famously Hot New Year: Ring in the New Year, Columbia style! Main Street hosts the city’s new year’s bash, complete with ice skating, music, and of course, fireworks! December

Artista Vista: Columbia’s oldest art gallery crawl hosted every spring in The Vista. Sample local artists’ work and enjoy music and other entertainment all around the district. April

Indie Grits: Check out some of the best Southern media around at the Nickelodeon, Columbia’s only independent movie theater. April

Rosewood Crawfish Festival: Start summer early with a day of food and music in Columbia’s college-friendly Rosewood neighborhood. May

Tasty Tomato Festival: Celebrate locally grown food and enjoy tomato bobbing, live music and lots of great food! May

ATTRACTIONS

Riverbanks Zoo & Garden: Home to more than 2,000 animals, Columbia’s own Riverbanks Zoo & Garden is recognized as one of the top four zoos in the country on TripAdvisor.com. 500 Wildlife Parkway

Columbia Museum of Art: You don’t need to travel far to find a world-class European and American art collection. 1515 Main Street

Outdoors: The Columbia area is home to three rivers (Congaree, Saluda and Broad Rivers), two national parks (Congaree and Sesquicentennial), two parks located downtown (Riverfront Park and Finlay Park) and Lake Murray, all of which provide endless things to do year-round.
Partners in Off-Campus Living are privately-owned apartment complexes that have a close working relationship with the University of South Carolina’s Off-Campus Student Services Office and cater their services directly to USC students. In order to qualify, complexes must demonstrate an ongoing commitment to fostering a positive and supportive living environment for residents. If you choose to live in a partner property, the majority of your neighbors will be USC students. Students are encouraged to shop around until they find their best housing fit by exploring the range of amenities, locations, pricing and leasing options offered by the partner properties. Page 28-44 of this guide will provide you with more information about these complexes.
University Oaks
“I like living in University Oaks because it’s conveniently close to the stadium. There is a nice pool and basketball court. I also really like that UOaks has a shuttle to campus, which makes my commute from home to school that much easier. The apartments are a good size and the staff is super friendly.” – Brooke C.

Cayce Cove
“I love living here because it’s beautiful and because of the many accommodations available to me. No matter if it’s hot or cold, there is always fun to be had and something to do. Not to mention how friendly the staff is! The Cove is not only your home but family too.” – Summer C.

The Hub
“I am a junior at USC, and I have renewed the same apartment at the Hub At Columbia for three years now. I absolutely have enjoyed every aspect of my experience at the Hub. My favorite benefits the Hub has to offer are that the apartments are fully furnished, there are study rooms on every floor that are always available, and campus is only a 15-minute walk away. Management has always helped me with any issue I’ve ever had almost immediately. The high quality apartments, roof-top pool, gym, and amenity floor are just a few other things I have been able to enjoy during my time living here”. – Rob M.

Cooper Beech
“Living at Copper Beech has been great for me. While in graduate school, it was nice to have a place to call my own with no distractions. Plus, there is TONS of space. I’ve lived in student housing for several years, and I’ve never had a walk-in closet! To me, the space sets Copper Beech apart from everywhere else. Plus, there are some awesome features that go with the space. I love that I don’t have to have a gym membership or pay to go to a pool. It’s all on property and I can access it any time that I want. To me, Copper Beech has been a great experience, and I’ve already signed my lease for a third year.” – Brent M.

Garnet River walk
“After being a resident at Garnet for almost a year, I can honestly say its one of the best decisions I’ve made since choosing to become a Gamecock! The community staff is filled with genuine and amazing individuals who are always there to help no matter the circumstances. I love the distance to campus, but I also enjoy the feeling of getting away from all the commotion in the city. My apartment itself is perfect, and the grounds are always kept to the highest standards. I enjoy the quick access to the RiverWalk and close proximity to the Interstate. If you are looking for a quaint yet college-style living, then you should definitely consider Garnet River Walk to be your home away from home.” – Devin W.

The Retreat
“I love The Retreat, it’s a great place to live, and I would recommend it to anyone. I’ve lived here the past three years and haven’t had any complaints!” – Wanda F.

Aspyre
“Aspyre is an amazing place to live! You can’t beat the location—I walk everywhere downtown. The rooms are really spacious, with private bathrooms and walk-in closets. What really sets Aspyre apart is the staff. Everyone who works in the leasing office is willing and ready to help you out. The courtyards are awesome, and I love the security of the parking garage. Coming from other apartment complexes around the area, Aspyre is the only one I would recommend!” – Kurtis M.
The Village
“Great community with plenty of amenities and friendly service. Rooms are very nice with great appliances. The clubhouse is great with a gym, an amazing theater with a huge selection, and plenty of pool tables to play with your friends. Would definitely recommend living here.” -Nick H.

Station at Five Points
“I’m so excited to live at Station! Walking to Five Points is going to be great, and crashing on my comfy memory-foam mattress will be awesome. The people that work there are so friendly and took extra time talking to my dad. My roommates and I are pumped about working out in their huge gym and going straight to the pool to chill. We got a great deal on a 4-bedroom overlooking the putting green! Walking to class will be easy, and when I have to go further, the USC shuttle is close enough to catch.” - Dennis R.

Riverside
“Riverside is doing a tremendous job! I’ve lived here for two years, and it has been a wonderful experience so far. I love the shuttle because it is reliable and consistently on time. Our driver is well-mannered, personable, and genuine. The 24-hour fitness gym is still a personal favorite because it allows me to work out whenever I want and the equipment is awesome.” - Ebony W.

Stadium Suites
“I have lived at Stadium Suites for the past 2 years and will be living there again for a third this upcoming year. The office staff are all extremely helpful and kind, they are always willing to help in the event of a pressing issue. The location cannot be beat, especially come game days in the fall. I would highly recommend this apartment complex.” - Darby E.

Greene Crossing
“Being able to wake up and walk to class is just the best! I love being close to campus and walking to Greek Village for my meals. Moving into my home was easy because it comes with all the furniture. We have our own washer and dryer in the apartment, which makes laundry so convenient. Our kitchen area is beautiful with stainless steel appliances and granite counter tops. My roommates and I love spending time together on our patio. Going to the pool deck together is fun, and the lounge chairs and cabana area are great! We renewed our leases and are excited to keep our home.” - Lina L.

Park Place
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