



Student Renter Tips

The Essential Checklist for Renting in Tuscaloosa, AL

Use this guide to protect yourself when searching for student apartments in Tuscaloosa, AL. Know what to look for, what to avoid, and how to negotiate with confidence.

LEASE PROTECTION

7 Things to Verify Before You Sign

- 01 Joint vs. Individual Liability**
Know whether you're jointly and severally liable for roommates' rent. Individual leases (common at larger Tuscaloosa student apartment complexes) protect you — joint leases carry more risk.
- 02 Document Everything at Move-In**
Record a timestamped video walkthrough on move-in day and email it to your landlord immediately. Security deposit disputes are the #1 student renter complaint.
- 03 Read the Early Termination Clause**
Study abroad, transfers, or early graduation are real possibilities. Many Tuscaloosa leases charge 2–3 months of rent to exit early — know the cost before you commit.
- 04 Clarify All Utilities in Writing**
"Utilities included" is vague. Get a written itemized list: water, electricity, internet, gas, and trash. Surprises here add up fast.
- 05 Check the Renewal & Rent Increase Policy**
Many leases auto-renew unless you give 60–90 days notice. Others allow rent hikes at renewal. Miss the window and you're locked in for another year.
- 06 Verify the Maintenance Response Policy**
Ask for a written timeline on maintenance requests — and ask current tenants if it's honored. A landlord who takes 3 weeks to fix AC in an Alabama summer is a serious problem.
- 07 Guest & Subletting Policies**
Some Tuscaloosa student apartments prohibit overnight guests beyond a set number of nights and ban Airbnb-style subletting entirely. Know the rules before they surprise you.

BEFORE YOU SIGN — CHECKLIST

■ Lease start/end dates explicitly stated	■ Maintenance procedure and response timeline
■ Total rent and all fees itemized	■ Pet policy Guest and subletting policy

■ Security deposit amount and return conditions	■ Parking — spots included, vehicle registration
■ Utilities — included vs. tenant responsibility	■ Noise/quiet hours policy
■ Early termination clause and costs	■ Move-out inspection procedure
■ Renewal terms and rent increase policy	■

SCAM AWARENESS

6 Red Flags That Signal a Rental Scam

■ Price far below market rate

If a 2-bed near campus is \$600/mo when comparable units run \$1,100+, something is wrong.

■ Landlord can't show the property

No legitimate landlord rents sight-unseen. "Overseas" or "traveling" landlords are classic scam signals.

■ Payment via Zelle, Venmo, or gift cards

Legitimate landlords use checks or verified portals. Any request for payment apps or gift cards for a deposit is a scam.

■ High-pressure urgency tactics

"Someone else is looking tonight" is designed to stop you from thinking clearly. Real landlords give you time.

■ Generic or stolen listing photos

Reverse image search every photo. Scammers steal images from real estate sites and repost them as rentals.

■ No signed lease until after payment

Never send a single dollar without a signed lease in hand — no exceptions, no excuses.

■ The Golden Rule

Never send money for an apartment you have not physically visited or video-toured with a verified landlord. No exceptions. If a deal requires you to pay first and see it later — it's a scam.

To verify a listing: Look up the property on the Tuscaloosa County property records database. Confirm the owner matches who you're talking to. Visit in person before paying anything. Use UA Off-Campus Housing resources for verified student apartments in Tuscaloosa, AL.

Report scams to: **Tuscaloosa Police Department · Alabama Attorney General Consumer Protection · ReportFraud.ftc.gov**



Safe · Local · Trusted

TuscaloosaStudentHousing.com

Your trusted resource for student apartments in Tuscaloosa, AL