



# CROSSROADS



## A STUDENT GUIDE TO LIVING OFF CAMPUS



VILLANOVA  
UNIVERSITY



## **A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN OF STUDENTS**

Living off-campus for the first time can be a daunting task. This booklet has been specifically designed to assist you in finding suitable housing, understanding your lease, inspecting your new dwelling, making a budget and in becoming familiar with local ordinances. The booklet was compiled from a variety of sources both on and off the campus.

In living off-campus you will interface with many people. The residents of your new community have probably lived there for many years. They are as anxious about you as new neighbors as you are about them. Remember you are the newcomer – go visit your neighbors and introduce yourself.

The local townships each have their own ordinances and regulations, and expect students to comply just like other residents. Your landlord should provide you with a safe and habitable dwelling and must comply with certain township and county requirements. The relationship between you and your landlord should not be adversarial, rather it should be a business arrangement where both parties are treated fairly and respectfully.

Critical to a successful year is the roommates you choose. You already know how living in close proximity requires each party to be sensitive to the other. Choose your roommates wisely. Being good friends is not enough. Discuss how you will pay the bills; shop for food; share cooking arrangements etc. Make sure your roommates are responsible. You and they have entered a legally binding document by signing a lease, and you will be held accountable for paying your rent on time and for maintaining the dwelling in good order. Knowledge of your rights and responsibilities as a tenant can help you avoid needless expenses and hassles.

Living off-campus will undoubtedly provide you many positive experiences and challenging opportunities for your own personal growth. Although you live off campus, you are encouraged to actively participate in the many opportunities on campus.

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# SECTION I – HOW TO FIND HOUSING

## ON CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

- 1. The Office for Residence Life:** The Office for Residence Life maintains a list of off-campus housing opportunities as a service to the University community. The office neither inspects, certifies nor supervises any of these locations, nor is it a comprehensive list of all available housing. It is one resource and consists only of those properties where the landlord takes the initiative to call the University. It is, in effect, like a classified section of the newspaper. This list can be found at <http://www.reslife.villanova.edu/offcampus/offcampus.htm>  
There is no complete listing of all rental properties or of landlords who rent to students. Landlords are private individuals who own private property and elect to rent that property. For more information, please contact The Office of Residence Life Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Room 205 Kennedy Hall, or by phone at 610-519-4154.
- 2. Vice President for Student Life Office:** Kathy Byrnes, Esq. is available to meet with students to discuss the legal aspects of moving off-campus. Services provided include: reviewing leases, discussing basic landlord-tenant rights and reviewing local zoning ordinances. Her office is located in 202 Dougherty Hall. Call for an appointment at 610-519-4550.
- 3. Dean of Students:** Paul Pugh serves as the liaison with local township officials, civic associations, landlords and residents for matters regarding students and off campus community standards. His office is located in 213 Dougherty Hall. His phone number is 610-519-4200.
- 4. Off campus housing forums:** These informational forums are conducted late in the fall semester and early in the spring semester at various times and locations by the Division of Student Life. Please contact the Dean of Students Office for more information.

## **CHOOSING ROOMMATES**

- ◆ Choose your roommates wisely.
- ◆ Decide how much you are able to pay, what areas and setting you want to live in and what transportation each of you will have.
- ◆ Discuss lifestyles, habits and expectations thoroughly.
- ◆ Define what will happen if one party decides to move out before the term of the lease is up.
- ◆ Be honest about what you can and cannot live with in terms of cleaning, cooking, noise, guests, etc.

## **FINDING A PLACE TO LIVE**

- ◆ Check the residence life website for some current property listings.
- ◆ Talk to current students who live off-campus.
- ◆ Look in the local papers in the Real Estate Classified sections. They are usually published on Thursdays and the Office for Residence Life maintains copies for your review.
- ◆ Call a Real Estate Agency (but beware, most realtors are primarily interested in sales, not rentals).
- ◆ Go visit places that have "For Rent" signs outside.
- ◆ Don't make snap decisions. Visit several places.
- ◆ Talk to your parents. Ask them to visit potential homes and speak with potential landlords.

## ZONING CONCERNS

It is important that you are aware of what township you are going to live in because each local township has zoning ordinances that control, among other things, the number of unrelated people who can live together. Additionally, some townships restrict student rental property to only those sites designated as a “student home” by the Township (see Insert). Make sure that you ask your potential landlord in what township the property is located, and verify that this location is appropriate housing for students with the township.

Here is a summary of the zoning ordinances that affect most students:

- ◆ Radnor Township: In order to rent to students, a landlord must obtain an annual license each June and advise Radnor Township if the tenants are students. The number of students residing within a 1,000-foot radius of a rental unit occupied by students can not exceed two students, regardless of whether the students are blood-related. Multiple family dwellings and apartments are exempt.
- ◆ Lower Merion Township: No more than 3 unrelated people & the property must be approved as a "student home".
- ◆ Haverford Township: No more than 3 unrelated people & the property must be approved as a "student home".
- ◆ Conshohocken: No more than 2 unrelated people.
- ◆ Upper Merion Township: No more than 2 unrelated people.

**See Section VII of this publication for more information about important local ordinances.**

## SECTION II – THE LEASE

### THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE SIGNING A LEASE

#### Talk with different landlords and ask:

- When is the property available?
- Is parking available?
- What utilities are included in the rent?
- What is the condition of the dwelling?
- What is the monthly rent?
- What security deposit is required?
- Has the landlord provided the township with a certificate of occupancy
  - Are there any special conditions or provisions in the lease?
  - Is the dwelling unit required to be registered with the township?
  - When was the last time the property was inspected by the township (Inspection reports should be on file with the township).

### SIGNING THE LEASE

- ◆ **READ YOUR LEASE THOROUGHLY BEFORE SIGNING**
  - Make sure you understand all aspects of the agreement.
  - A lease is a legal and binding contract!
- ◆ You should not pay your entire rent up front or in two large sum payments. Withholding rent is your primary bargaining power over your landlord.
- ◆ **BE AWARE** of zoning ordinances dealing with student housing.
- ◆ Do not agree in the lease to pay possible fines against the landlord for township code violations. **Both tenants and landlords are responsible or compliance with the zoning ordinances.**

- ◆ DO NOT SIGN a lease with a clause labeled "Confession of Judgment." If you do, you give your landlord the right to take you to court without your knowledge or presence. Ask your landlord to cross out that paragraph and initial it.
- ◆ Inspect the property before signing the lease. You should physically visit the dwelling and discuss with the landlord those items that require maintenance. Discuss with your landlord what constitutes normal wear and tear.
- ◆ Have the landlord put in writing, in the lease, any improvements the landlord says he/she will make. Anything not repaired before you sign the lease should be annotated in the lease.
- ◆ Send all correspondence to your landlord by certified mail. This way you will have a receipt of all communications with him/her.
- ◆ Have one roommate be the contact person for the landlord.
- ◆ Keep a photocopy of the lease for yourself.
- ◆ Keep a copy of all correspondence to and from your landlord with your lease.

## **UTILITIES**

- ◆ Discuss utilities with your landlord and review what the lease includes. Utility costs may or may not be part of the monthly rent.
- ◆ Check with the landlord about specific companies you will have to deal with and what services they provide.
- ◆ Check with the landlord or former tenants about average utility costs.
- ◆ Decide whose name will appear on the bill. Discuss ahead of time how the bill will be divided to prevent any disagreements

## SECURITY DEPOSIT

- ◆ The security deposit is typically one or two months rent.
- ◆ By law, the landlord must place your security deposit in an escrow account, (a separate account keeping your money safe for the length of the lease). In Pennsylvania, the landlord is not obliged to pay you interest at the end of the lease until you have rented for three years.
- ◆ By law, the landlord must return your security deposit or give a written list of the claimed damages within 30 days of the end of the lease.
  - If he/she does not, the landlord loses the right to withhold any of the deposit.
  - To protect this right, you as the tenant must give the landlord a forwarding address in writing.
- ◆ To protect your security deposit make a careful inspection of the house or apartment as soon as you move in.
  - Make a written list of EVERYTHING in less than "good" condition. (see Section III).
  - Look for stains, loose tiles/windows/door knobs, etc; turn on all lights and check all outlets; flush toilets and run the shower unit checking for pressure; turn on heating and air conditioning units; open and close all windows, check for torn screens; make sure all doors and windows lock and all keys fit in the locks.
  - BE PICKY!
  - Take pictures of the house when you move in.
  - Date and sign the list.
  - Send the original to the Landlord (also known as the Lessor) and keep a copy with your records.
  - When you move at the end of your lease, be sure to give the written notice required in the lease (usually 60 or 90 days before the end of the lease) and a forwarding address to the Lessor in writing.

## **CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY**

Some townships require that a certificate of occupancy be filed for any rental property. A certificate of occupancy certifies that a dwelling complies with all housing ordinances and may be occupied. **IT IS THE LANDLORD'S RESPONSIBILITY TO FILE THIS CERTIFICATE WITH THE TOWNSHIP.** One month prior to moving in, check with you landlord or township to see if this has been filed. If it has not, you may not be able to move in.

### **IMPORTANT**

**Make sure you notify the Registrar's Office of your new local address.** This is important because during the semester, the University may send pre-registration materials and other important student related information from the University to your local address. In order to update your local address, you can call the Registrar's Office (519-4032), fax in an update (519-4033) or write to the Office of the Registrar, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Ave, Villanova, PA 19085. To ensure the security of your records, you are required to supply your student ID number. If you are concerned about access to your local address, you may ask the Registrar to tag the information as “confidential.”

# SECTION III – MOVING IN

## THE INSPECTION

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

	Check-In Condition	Check -Out Condition
Front door & lock	_____	_____
Back door & lock	_____	_____
Mail Box	_____	_____
Porch/Railings	_____	_____
Shrubbery/Lawn	_____	_____
Cleanliness outside	_____	_____
Smoke detectors	_____	_____
Kitchen:		
Stove	_____	_____
Refrigerator	_____	_____
Garbage disposal	_____	_____
Dishwasher	_____	_____
Counter Tops	_____	_____
Washer/Dryer	_____	_____
Bathroom:		
Sink	_____	_____
Toilet	_____	_____
Shower/Bath tub	_____	_____
Tiles	_____	_____
Mirror	_____	_____
Towel racks	_____	_____
For each room:		
Windows/screens	_____	_____
Flooring	_____	_____
Carpeting	_____	_____
Walls	_____	_____
Ceilings	_____	_____
Electrical	_____	_____

Signature of Landlord \_\_\_\_\_ Date

Signature of Tenants \_\_\_\_\_ Date

**EX = Excellent**  
**G = Good**  
**P = Poor**

**TURN ON WATER**  
**TRY THE A/C & HEATER**  
**CHECK CABLE AND PHONE JACKS**  
**CHECK EVERY OUTLET**

# SECTION IV – ESTABLISHING A BUDGET

## MONTHLY INCOME

Salary	\$ _____	Loans	\$ _____
Savings	\$ _____	Grants	\$ _____
Scholarships	\$ _____	Other	\$ _____

**TOTAL MONTHLY INCOME:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## MONTHLY EXPENSES

### Household:

Rent	\$ _____
Utilities	\$ _____
Telephone	\$ _____
Food	\$ _____
Non –Food Items	\$ _____

### Educational:

Tuition	\$ _____
Books	\$ _____

### Leisure:

Entertainment	\$ _____
Travel	\$ _____
Recreation/Hobbies	\$ _____
Subscriptions	\$ _____

### Insurance:

Medical	\$ _____
Renters	\$ _____
Auto	\$ _____

### Debt:

Loans	\$ _____
Credit Cards	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____

### Medical

\$ _____
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### Transportation:

Repairs	\$ _____
Parking	\$ _____
Train	\$ _____

### Clothing:

Laundry/Cleaning	\$ _____
New Purchases	\$ _____

### Personal Care:

Toiletries	\$ _____
Haircare	\$ _____

### Miscellaneous

\$ _____
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**TOTAL MONTHLY EXPENSES** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Monthly Income** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Minus Total Expenses** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Balance** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION V – RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

### Tenants Rights:

- ◆ Live in a clean, safe place under the implied warranty of habitability which is automatically part of every lease. This warranty includes:
  - waterproof roofs, ceilings and walls
  - adequate heat in winter
  - hot and cold running water
  - bathroom equipment and drains that work properly
  - doors that lock properly
  - windows that work and can be locked
  - no infestation with roaches and/or rodents at move-in
  - smoke detectors
  
- ◆ Quiet enjoyment of the premises.
  
- ◆ Fair housing – no discrimination based on race, color, national origin, gender, or disability.
  
- ◆ Make complaints to governmental authorities about code violations without retaliation.
  
- ◆ Return of their security deposit within 30 days of vacating the premises or receive written notice from the landlord outlining the reasons part or all of the deposit is being retained by the landlord, along with any balance of the security deposit.
  
- ◆ Specified legal procedures before a landlord may evict a tenant including a notice period to remedy the alleged default.
  
- ◆ If the rented dwelling is not habitable, a tenant has recourse. Seek help from the Office of Student Life (202 Dougherty Hall), the Dean of Students Office (213 Dougherty Hall), your parents, an attorney, or the township.

## **Tenant Responsibilities:**

- ◆ Limit the number of residents to the number of people permitted by local zoning ordinances.
- ◆ Pay rent and utility bills on the dates due.
- ◆ Keep the unit clean and safe.
- ◆ Promptly notify the landlord of damages to the premise.
- ◆ Dispose of all trash and other waste in a clean and safe manner in accord with the instructions provided by the landlord and in compliance with local ordinances.
- ◆ Use electrical, plumbing and heating facilities safely.
- ◆ Do not destroy, deface, or damage the premises or remove any part of the premises.
- ◆ Do not make any alteration to the premises without first obtaining the landlord's permission (in writing).
- ◆ Do not keep any animals in the unit, unless permitted by the lease and the township code.
- ◆ Do not change locks to the premises without written permission from the landlord.
- ◆ Tenants and guests should conduct themselves in a manner that will not disturb the neighbors.
- ◆ Report all problems with the dwelling to the landlord; if a problem persists, give the landlord notice of the problem in writing, keep a copy of the letter for yourself, and provide notice to your township.
- ◆ Leave the dwelling clean and in a condition similar to the one they moved into at the beginning of the lease.
- ◆ Provide proper written notice of intention to terminate or renew the lease at the appropriate time.
- ◆ Provide written notification of forwarding address for the return of security deposit.
- ◆ Comply with all provisions of the lease.
- ◆ Be familiar with local and state laws regarding noise, disorderly conduct, and underage drinking.

## SECTION VI – BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

### TIPS FOR GETTING ALONG IN YOUR NEW COMMUNITY

- ⇔ Introduce yourself and get to know your neighbors. They can be very helpful, especially when you need someone to watch your house/apartment over breaks.
- ⇔ Give them your phone number, so they can contact you rather than the police if there is a problem. **KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!**
- ⇔ Consider helping your neighbors with raking leaves, shoveling sidewalks, etc., to improve relations with your neighbors.
- ⇔ Be courteous with respect to noise. Keep in mind that students often keep later hours than families.
- ⇔ Be courteous with respect to parking. Parking tends to be a **GREAT** concern of neighbors and leads them to call the Township when they suspect more than the legal number of people live in a particular house/apartment. When friends visit, ask them to park in nearby lots if possible.
- ⇔ Do not block sidewalks so that pedestrians cannot pass by.
- ⇔ Do not block driveways.
- ⇔ Maintain a respectable appearance of your property:
  - Watch for lawn and shrub overgrowth if lawn care is your responsibility under the lease.
  - Shovel sidewalks promptly if it is your responsibility under the lease.
  - Store and dispose of garbage appropriately and as required by local ordinance (see Section VII).
  - Avoid litter in the yard and on the street.
  - Avoid unsightly porch furniture that may be an eyesore to your neighbors.

While your house/apartment may be only a temporary place for you to live, remember that it is your neighbors' permanent residence and that your actions correlate to their quality of life.

SECTION VII—LOCAL ORDINANCES SUMMARY OF LOCAL STUDENT HOUSING RELATED ORDINANCES					
	RADNOR	LOWER MERION	CONSHOHOCKEN	HAVERFORD	UPPER MERION
Number living in dwelling	No more than 2	No more than 3 unrelated	No more than 2 unrelated	No more than 3 unrelated	No more than 2 unrelated
Registered with township?	Yes, by landlord	Must be a "student home"	N/A	Must be a "student home"	N/A
Trash	Covered Leak-proof containers, stored in rear yard. Rear door pickup. Schedule bulk pickup.	Covered; max 32 gallon trash can; place at curb only on pickup date; call for large items	Max 20 gallon trash cans; max 50 lbs.; place at curb only on pickup date;	Max 5 cans on pick up date; each must not exceed 40 lbs.; must curbside on pick up date.	Place in closed, watertight containers; place at curb on day of pickup; Recyclable material must go in town-ship containers
Grass and weeds	Not to exceed 12"	Not to exceed 12"	Not to exceed 6"	Not to exceed 6"	Not to exceed 6"
Snow	Remove within 24 hours	Remove within 30 hours	Within 24 hours	Within 24 hours	Remove within 24 hours
Parking	N/A	Minimum of 3 on-site spaces	N/A	Minimum of 3 on-site spaces	N/A

**In all communities:**

- ◆ Unruly gatherings, excessive noise, public drunkenness and other acts that significantly disrupt the community are prohibited.
- ◆ It is unlawful to possess, carry or transport any alcoholic beverage in an open container in any public place or in any vehicle.
- ◆ It is unlawful for any person to urinate in public.

**Please remember that the availability of future student rentals is contingent upon the behavior of the students currently residing in the community**

# SECTION VIII – USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Fire and Emergency.....911

## Police Departments

Haverford Police.....610-853-2400

Lower Merion Police.....610-649-1000

Radnor Police.....610-688-0500

Conshohocken Police .....610-828-4032

Upper Merion Police.....(610)265-3232

VU Public Safety.....610-519-6979

Emergency.....610-519-4444

## Utilities

PECO Energy Co.

Billing matters or to order service

.....1-800-494-4000

Gas and Electric emergencies (24hr day)

.....1-800-841-4141

Phila. Suburban Water Co/AQUA....

Customer Service.....1-800-711-4779

Emergencies.....610-525-1400

## Telephone

Verizon:in PA.....1-800-640-4155

if calling out of state.....1-888-571-0571

Townships

Haverford Township.....610-446-9405

Lower Merion Township.....610-649-4000

Radnor Township.....610-688-5600

Upper Merion.....610-265-2606

Conshohocken .....610-828-1092

Cable TV

Comcast.....610-667-8880

Health Care

Bryn Mawr Hospital.....610-526-3000

United States Post Offices

Zip

Ardmore	610-278-3000	19003
Bryn Mawr	610-510-9417	19010
Haverford	610-658-9801	19041
St. Davids	610-688-5599	19087
Villanova	610-520-9780	19085
Wayne	610-964-9348	19087

Web Addresses

Radnor	<a href="http://www.radnor.com">www.radnor.com</a>
Lower Merion	<a href="http://www.lowermerion.org">www.lowermerion.org</a>
Upper Merion	<a href="http://www.umtownship.org">www.umtownship.org</a>

Villanova University makes no representation whatsoever regarding the student housing listed in this publication. Students are responsible to inspect the property and negotiate lease terms with any landlord. Villanova University has not inspected or investigated these properties or landlords in any way and is not endorsing any specific properties or landlords. Villanova University disclaims any responsibility, among other things, for the condition of any premises, terms of any leases, treatment by any landlord, or compliance with any applicable local ordinances.

The summary of local ordinances contained in this publication is intended as a guide for student use. Because ordinances and laws are subject to change, students should check with their local township for a current and complete listing of all laws and ordinances.

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