



Welcome to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts!

We are located in the heart of Center City, Philadelphia, easily accessible from many neighborhoods, and suburbs. The greater Philadelphia area offers a broad variety of housing options appropriate to students' needs and budgets. As Philadelphia is a competitive real estate market, students should plan ahead when looking for housing. We strongly recommend that you begin your housing search six to eight weeks before the semester begins.

Our Student Services staff makes every effort to assist PAFA students in their search for accommodations in the Philadelphia area. The resources listed in this guide and on our website offer a wealth of direct contacts as well as general suggestions for approaching a housing search. In addition, we keep a current Housing List in the Student Affairs Office with options for shared housing, which provides a means for finding other students with compatible interests and lifestyles.

We look forward to working with you,

Anne B. K. Stassen

Dean of Student Affairs

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Choosing a roommate

Rules To Live By

Communication is the key to establishing a healthy roommate relationship.

Consider the following:

- Personality/Compatibility
- Financial Responsibility
- Independence
- Discuss and agree on the rules of the house
- Put all agreements in writing

Issues to Discuss Before Moving In

- Rent and payment options
- Dividing space and/or utilities
- Household chores
- Shared expenses
- Food sharing
- Personal property sharing
- Quiet hours
- Independent transportation
- Entertaining (smoking, drinking, drug use)
- Privacy
- Overnight guests
- Moving out

Dealing with Roommate Conflicts

Roommate conflicts can be difficult to workout. The Office of Student Affairs will try to help when possible. Contact the Student Services Coordinator for more information.

See the housing section of the PAFA website for [sample roommate agreement](#).



Leases and Security Deposits

Guidelines

A lease is a BINDING, LEGAL contract.

- Read the lease thoroughly before signing
- Don't be pressured into signing the lease or any other documents
- Don't sign the lease until you have decided to rent that space
- Negotiate any changes
- Get all changes initialed by the landlord
- Keep a copy
- Upon signing the lease, be prepared to pay the deposit
- Date check for the first month of occupancy
- Know your rights

Sample Lease/Letters and Provisions ([see our sample lease – also on this website](#))

Provisions That Should Be Included In The Lease:

- Parties – Names of Landlord and tenants
- Premise – Location of unit
- Length of Term – Beginning and end
- Notice – Termination stipulation
- Rent – Amount, when and where it is due
- Multiple lesser obligations; occupant limit
- Penalty for late payment
- Utilities, appliances, furnishings included
- Damage and repair provisions
- Additional cost – parking, pets
- Deposit – amount, what it covers, when returned, interest provisions
- Subletting provisions
- Landlord entry
- Tenant and Landlord Promises
- Unit rules and regulations
- Eviction provisions
- Renewal options
- Early termination provisions

Security Deposit

- A security deposit usually equals 1 or 2 months' rent
- The landlord is required by law to place your security deposit in escrow for the length of the lease
- The landlord is required by law to return your security deposit or give a written list of the claimed damages within 30 days of the end of the lease. After 30 days, the landlord loses the right to withhold any of the deposit
- To protect your security deposit, carefully inspect the property before you move in. Photograph and make a written list of the conditions of the unit. Date and sign the list. Send one copy to the landlord and keep a copy for your records



Subletting

Subletting allows someone else to temporarily take over the lease. However, if it is not handled properly, it can cause problems for both the original tenant and the sub-lessee.

- When signing a lease make sure subletting is permitted
- Be aware that the original tenant is still bound to terms of the lease. Use a subletting contract; do not rely on a verbal agreement
- Inspect the premises carefully and document in writing its condition
- Make sure the utility accounts do not remain in your name
- If in an apartment/house share situation, be aware that you are jointly and severally responsible for the total rent payment

Basic Leasing Laws

The “Plain Language Contract Act” was enacted in July 1994. According to this act, all residential leases after this date must be written, organized, and designed so that they are easy to read and understand. Some leases still contain unfair clauses or ask tenants to waive important rights. Some leases may ask leasees to waive their right to notice or reduce it to 5 days. The law requires 10 days notice for non-payment on rent and 15 days notice for other violations. Make sure you understand that the right to notice in case of non payment or other violations is a waivable right. Another waivable right is the right to continue a lease when the property has been sold. By waiving this right, the new owner may have the right to terminate your lease. Since 1995 all leases for properties built prior to 1978 must contain a “Lead Paint Disclosure” clause.

The Pennsylvania Rent Withholding Act provides assistance to tenants living in substandard housing. Once the leased premises have been inspected and declared unfit by the local housing code enforcement agency, the tenant may deposit his or her rent with a specific, approved escrow agent, rather than paying it to the landlord. These payments continue up to six months. After six months have expired, if the premises are still unfit, the deposited rent is returned to the tenant.

Moving In/Moving Out

Before You Move in:

Inspect your rental before moving in. Ask your landlord to join you

- [See the checklist on the PAFA website](#)

Consider photographing your rental's condition

Have your landlord sign an agreement to fix things by a certain date

After You Move in:

Keep organized records

File all receipts, notices, changes and repair requests

Put all correspondence between you and the landlord in writing

Moving Out:

Put your notice to leave in WRITING!

Clean your rental thoroughly – inside and out!

Read your lease to see what it requires for notice

Inspect your rental before handing in your keys

Make sure your landlord has your forwarding address

Any deductions must be itemized and sent to you within 30 days after the end of the lease

Apartment Insurance

If you have items that would be costly to replace, consider getting apartment or renter's insurance. The property owner's insurance policy for a rental property does not cover the tenant's personal belongings nor does it offer the tenant any liability coverage. Students can obtain renter's insurance through their parent's homeowner's insurance policies or a reputable insurance agent.

- Keep an inventory of all your possessions
- Photograph the items and store photos off premises

Tenant and Landlord Rights

[See the PAFA website for a list of landlord and tenant responsibilities.](#)

Tenants have the right to:

Fair Housing

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 is otherwise known as the Fair Housing Act. It states that you cannot be discriminated against in any type of housing related transaction because of your Race, Gender, Religion, National Origin or Color. This act was amended in 1988 to include Familial Status (i.e. presence of children) and Handicap. In Pennsylvania, the human Relations Act also includes the protected class of Age (for those over 40). In this area, the City of Philadelphia also has local coverage and include other protected classes such as Marital Status, Sexual Preference and Source of Income. It is wise to determine if your state or locality has its own Human Relations Act that includes different protected classes.

Eviction

A landlord must first present you with a written notice.

- Failure to pay rent
- Undue damage
- Disturbing others
- Overcrowding
- Impairing safety
- Illegal Activity

Community Relations

The relationships between institutions of higher education and the communities in which they are situated are by nature both symbiotic and fragile; the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts is no exception. We simply ask you remember that you will reside in a neighborhood alongside people who are not college students.

Here are a few helpful hints for living in the city:

1. Be courteous to the residents in your community. Don't litter.
2. Operate stereos and other electronic equipment at reasonable sound levels.
Apartment walls are thinner than you think!
3. Maintain and orderly residence. Put trash in containers and out the night before or the morning of trash day.
4. Find out about the recycling policy in your neighborhood.
5. Hang appropriate window coverings for privacy on windows.
6. Put only outdoor furniture on your porch. Couches and other indoor furniture looks tacky.

Zoning and Ordinances

Living in the community also means that as a resident you must abide by local ordinances and codes. An ordinance is an authoritative rule or law having to do with quality of life issues. A zoning code is a city law related to its physical development. All violations of area ordinances and codes are subject to punishment by law. For more information, please visit <http://www.phila.gov>.

Parking In Center City

Please be mindful of others and follow the parking rules set forth by the city of Philadelphia.

Remember – it is illegal to:

- Park within 20 feet of a street corner
- Park on a sidewalk
- Park on a crosswalk
- Double Park
- Park within 15 feet of a hydrant
- Block a residential or commercial driveway
- Park in a bus zone
- Block mass transit vehicles

Certain neighborhoods in center city require parking permits for any long term parking. For more detail on this please visit the Philadelphia Parking Authority's website at <http://www.phila.gov/parking>.

Think about Philly Car Share as an alternative to owning (and parking) a car in Center City (www.phillycarshare.org).

Safety and Security

Security Checklist

- Keep doors and windows locked
- Cover windows completely with blinds, curtains, etc.
- Never answer the door without knowing whom it is
- Do not give out keys, entry cards or lock combinations
- Call 911 for emergencies
- Park and walk in well lit areas
- Try not to walk or exercise alone
- Always lock your car
- Always be aware of your surroundings
- Mark and take pictures of your personal possessions

Fire Safety

- Portable heaters can be dangerous if used improperly. Read instructions carefully
- Remember that kerosene heaters are illegal in any multi-unit dwelling
- Don't leave your cooking unattended
- Don't overload electrical outlets
- Store flammables safely. This includes a large number of art supplies. Read the warning labels on any product you purchase
- Never leave a burning candle unattended
- Never burn a candle near drafts or anything that can catch fire

Required Fire Protection Devices

The Fire Code (Title 5) requires that smoke detectors (certified by a nationally recognized fire testing laboratory) must be installed in all common areas, including basements, in combination with other required alarm systems. They must also be installed outside each sleeping area. It is the landlord's responsibility to install these devices, but the tenant must make sure that the devices are in place, and that they are tested weekly. Make sure you know how to replace the batteries in your smoke detectors! A smoke detector's early warning can provide you with the extra time essential to a successful escape.

Evacuation

- If you smell smoke or discover a fire, activate the building alarm
- Know where your fire alarms are located and how they operate and whether or not they actually alert the Fire Department
- If you hear an alarm, leave at once – do not delay
- Call 911. Say "I want to report a fire." Give your name and address
- Have an escape plan. Know where the fire exits are and have two escape routes from each room
- Accommodate the needs of people who may need help to escape.
- Avoid elevators. Use the stairs
- Feel all doors before opening; if it feels hot, or if smoke is seeping out, DO NOT OPEN IT.
- If you become trapped in your apartment and cannot reach an exit, do not panic. Close your door and seal off any cracks with wet towels. If you can, call the fire department and give them your name, address and location in the building
- If in smoke or heat, stay low where the air is better. Take short, quick breaths through the nose until you reach safety