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The finer points of renting

The following are a few tips to avoid mistakes made by inexperienced renters:

1. Read the lease

It sounds pretty simple, but many renters don't read each provision. ASUO Legal Services warns not to sign anything without understanding the contents. If a landlord is rushing the renter to sign the lease, it may be an indication that something is not right. Once the lease is signed, the renter is obligated to obey it.

"Landlords like to hand you a lease, but if there is something in there you don't like, you can negotiate," Nicole Miani, a staff attorney for Legal Services, said.

For example, most pet deposits are non-refundable, but renters could ask the landlord for it to be refundable if the animal causes no damage. Whatever changes are made to the lease, it is essential to get them in writing with the tenant and landlord's signatures.

Another indication not to sign the lease is if the fees are outrageous.

"If students read the lease at all, it's very easy to think it will never happen to them," Miani said.

This is a common problem with renters who have numerous roommates. If one of the roommates is late with their part of the rent, then all tenants are responsible for the late fee.

Note what the termination of lease fee is. While renters don't usually plan on breaking

Tenants can avoid rental mishaps by paying attention to details

By Emily LoVerde

Freelance Reporter

the lease, unexpected events can arise that might require payment of the fee.

Miani advises students not to rush into leases.

"The market is pretty good right now, and I think students can be a lot choosier about what rental situation they are getting into," she said.

2. Don't move in until you have written a list of damages

A common problem when renters move is that the new place is not clean. Miani said to call the landlord immediately and inform him or her of the condition of the apartment.

"Break a deal and see if you can get money off next month's rent," she said.

If the landlord agrees, write a letter thanking him or her for the agreement, and keep a copy for yourself. The letter serves as evidence that the agreement took place. If the landlord refuses to make an agreement, renters can break the lease and refuse to move in.

Once a renter moves in, the landlord will ask them to write a list of damages or provide check sheets to fill out. Renters should thoroughly fill out the

form and make a copy for themselves. Miani said many tenants don't discover all the damages right away.

"If you notice anything else after moving in, send a letter to the landlord even if it doesn't bother you," she said.

If the renter doesn't see the damages right away, the landlord probably didn't either, and he or she could charge the renter for those damages when the lease is terminated.

Miani said a frequent misconception is that renters think if they paid a cleaning deposit fee at the beginning of their lease that they do not have to clean up when they leave. Landlords will use the cleaning deposit first and then dip into the security deposit to cover cleaning costs. Hourly rates of cleaning can be \$15 to \$20 an hour, according to Timothy Breen, a property manager for Jennings and Co. Property Management Inc.

Miani recommends taking pictures of walls and floors after terminating a lease.

"Sometimes landlords do overreach and claim they spent 16 hours cleaning," she said. "If you have pictures, it helps your argument."

3. Communication is key

"Communication with your landlord is a big deal, and most people don't do it," Breen said.

By maintaining a good relationship with the landlord, he or she might be more willing to

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The dirt on deposits

Renters can clean and repair damage to make sure they get their deposits back

By Lauren Wilson • Freelance Reporter

Moving time is right around the corner, and what renters do now may influence the amount of cash in their pockets in the near future.

As the school year ends, so do leases for many renters, and it's time to start thinking about what needs to be done to get deposits back. Landlords and property management agencies stress that the most important factor for getting a deposit back is cleaning. Apartment complexes such as Duck's Village offer an extensive cleaning checklist for renters to follow before moving out. The Duck's list requires scrubbing all areas from baseboards to ceiling light fixtures and also mentions cleaning the toilet seat bolts.

Duck's Village Leasing Manager Cathy Engebretson encourages renters to begin cleanup about a month before moving.

"Sometimes it takes you two to three times longer than you would think," Engebretson said.

Many renters don't receive portions of their deposit because of cleanup they unintentionally failed to do. To avoid these charges, follow the checklist provided by management. Landlords should provide adequate instructions to help avoid unnecessary charges.

Managers also assess damages after renters move out, so it is important renters get an apartment inspection report

Turn to **DEPOSITS**, page 6B

ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR A QUICK DEPOSIT RETURN

- Return anything that belongs to the landlord such as keys and garage door openers.
- Replace items such as light bulbs, which can be withdrawn from the deposit.
- Deal with maintenance issues prior to inspection. Even if the repair is the responsibility of the landlord, it should not be saved for the last minute.

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