

Moving Out

A Complete Guide & Checklist

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Intro & Advice

Apartment hunting can be stressful and overwhelming. There are so many moving parts that go along with moving out and after navigating that process myself, I wanted to help anyone else going through the same thing.

I moved out of my parent's house a few weeks before my freshman year of college. I moved into a dorm with a roommate. Although that was my first time moving out, it was easy. Everything was all laid out through the school and there are a million and three blog posts all about moving into a dorm.

After my freshman year I moved back home with my Mom & Dad and transferred schools. I lived at home for a full year before deciding to look for an apartment of my own. This time was NOT easy. It was expensive, hard to find a place between work and school and even tougher to tell my parents I wouldn't be staying with them.

My number one tip for breaking the news to your parents; just do it. Tell them you love them but you want to move out and have more responsibility. I had a basic plan of how much I could afford, what city I'd be moving to and when I wanted to move. If you can't just break it to them, maybe you're not mature enough to leave just yet (no offense)!

If you have any questions about this guide just shoot me an [email](#) & I'd be happy to help!

Saving & Budgeting

Sit down, get a pen and paper and do it. Overestimate all your expenses and under estimate your income. It'll save you the headache later if something costs a little more than you thought it would. This step is important, especially if this is your first apartment.

Don't forget about all the new expenses you will have when you move out on your own. Keep in mind; many apartments require your income to be 2–3 times the rent amount. Divide your income by 3 to get a realistic idea of how much you can afford. The monthly bills you will have are listed below.

- Rent *(Include pet rent if you have a cat or dog)*
- Utilities *(Gas, electric, water, sewer, trash, cable, internet, phone)*
- Parking *(You may or may not have to pay for this)*
- Groceries *(Toilet paper, food, cleaning supplies, hair products)*
- Car *(gas, oil changes, maintenance)*
You should probably save up between \$500–\$1500 for emergency issues with your car
- Entertainment & Fun *(movies, eating out, date nights, etc.)*
- Savings *(Yes, you should budget for at least \$50 to be set aside each month)*
- Other Expenses *(Insurance, cell phone, Netflix, magazines & all that extra stuff)*

You also need to consider the one-time costs of moving in. Look at apartments in your area to get an idea for the average rates. I included the amounts I saw for the area I live to give you a basic idea of the cost in Colorado.

- Application Fees (\$25–\$60)
- Pet Fees or Deposits (\$200–\$500)
- Deposit (\$200–\$1000)

Keep an eye on your credit score, that's a huge factor on deposits

- Administrative fees (\$20–\$200)
- Holding Fee (\$50–\$500)
If you are waiting to move in until a later date you may have to pay a fee
- New Stuff (\$10–\$2000)
More on this later

Now that you have an idea how much everything will cost, you need to set goals and make a to-do list to get ready to move. Figure out how much money you need to save up to move in. *(All those one time fees + 1–3 months' rent + Additional savings is the optimal total)* Obviously everyone is different, you may not have time to save up for everything, but if you do plan how much you need to set aside to reach your goal.

Other things on the to-do list can include:

- Keeping an eye out for cheap furniture
- Finding a job or second job to help with costs/savings
- Cutting down on expenses before moving
(cancel those subscriptions, eat out less, get a cheaper cell phone plan)
- Find roommates (if you want some)
- Work on increasing your credit & paying off old bills that could affect your score
- Start working on getting everything planned and organized so when it's time to move, you have less stress.

Some Basic Tips

1. Do your research before. Make sure the apartment you want to check out has the right number of rooms, bathrooms, parking, pets allowed or not allowed.
2. Be practical. If the apartment you want is 20 miles from work/school and you don't own a car, you probably need to look somewhere else. Don't assume you'll figure it out later. Make a plan and stick to it.
3. Decide on a price and hold yourself to that price. You can always ask the renter to lower the price for you. It's better to ask, you don't want to be paying more than you can afford.
4. Save money before the move. When you start looking for a place to live keep in mind that not only do you usually have to pay the first month's rent but there will also be a deposit. Start saving now. It'll save your wallet later on.
5. Start looking for furniture and necessities beforehand to help you decide what you can afford. You may think you can pay \$900 a month in rent but later realize you don't own a bed, couch, dishes, or bathroom supplies. After all the expenses you may only be able to afford \$650. Keep the price of everything in mind at all times.
6. Always go see the apartment before deciding. Your new place may look great in the pictures, but in real life that carpet is falling apart, the ceiling fan is broken and the toilet hardly flushes. Always look around before you sign anything!
7. Ask a friend or family member for their opinion. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of moving into a new place and it may blind your judgment of what is a quality home. It's always good to have a second pair of eye with you when you're searching.

Hunting & Visiting

Apartment hunting can be stressful but if you plan ahead it will help out a lot. First thing you should do is create a list of wants and needs.

Needs would be things like number of bedrooms, location, price range, and features you need. Wants are things you would love to have, but it wouldn't be a deal breaker if they are not included. This would be things like a view, skylights, fireplaces or updated kitchens.

Once you have that list, the best place to start looking is online. There are a ton of sites that can help you find an apartment but these are some of my favorites:

- [For Rent](#)
- [Rent](#)
- [Live Lovely](#)
- [Apartments](#)
- [Google Maps](#)...Let me explain this one...

Google maps doesn't allow you to choose a price range, features or rooms, but many times google maps will show apartments that do not show up on any other websites. Type "apartment" into the search and zoom in on an area you want to move near. Many apartments have websites linked with google, other's you can find by googling the complex name. Either way, this can be really effective when the other sites don't have many results.

Once you have a list of apartments you are interested in, contact each complex for more information. I kept a notebook with all the apartments I wanted to check out. Every time someone emailed me, I would add that info to their page. Remember that

moving into your first apartment can be exciting, don't let that excitement lead to rushing into something that doesn't work for you.

Once you have a list going it's time to actually visit the apartments. Plan an entire day (maybe two days) to looking at apartments. Try to schedule viewing ahead of time. Bring your notebook with you and take notes of each place, also make sure the prices and info you had written is all correct. At the end of your search you have to decide where you want to move.

For me I've had to go through this step several times. Don't get discouraged, you won't find a perfect apartment; you just need to find one that will work for you. If you are having a hard time, adjust your budget, adjust your needs/wants and look in other areas.

It may be best to narrow your list down to 3 apartments, and then do some more digging. Drive by the apartments at night, on weekends, and early morning. See how far your drive would be from work/school. Read reviews online, but keep in mind, most people only review when they hated the apartment. Anything over 50% is probably good. Ask the landlord if there were any cases of bugs or rats, legally they are obligated to tell you if you ask. Just do it politely.

Finding an apartment can be a long process, but one of the most important parts is picking a good location. The neighborhood you pick will be where you live, eat, walk, shop and maybe even work. Picking somewhere doesn't have to be hard. I put together some tips to finding a good location.

Please keep in mind none of this is meant to offend anyone. I know there are exceptions to every statement below, these are just some general ideas that I used to find a good location to move.

- Visit during the day on the weekend, then again on a weeknight.
This is important if you are seriously considering a place. Listen to how loud it is, how many people are home, are there parties, what kind of people are outside. It's okay to judge a book by its cover in this case. If there's a bunch of creepy looking people around the place at night, maybe you should re-consider.

- Look at the landscape.

Is there dog poop on the lawns? Are there flowers, trees and how well taken care of are they? A landlord who cares about the place will make sure the location looks good.

Neighbors who care about their lawns and take care of their houses are probably the type of people who won't throw raging parties until 4am.

- Pay attention to the cars.

If there are nice cars in the lots, it probably means the people who live there make some good money, care about their belongings and usually the neighborhood will be a little better. This might seem silly to judge the neighborhood by the cars, but I'd rather live next to a family with a minivan than a single guy with a junk car and sketchy friends. They don't have to be Benz and Cadillac's but cars that look well taken care of and clean are usually a good sign.

- Are there more yoga studios than pawn shops?

Pay attention to the kind of store in the area. If there are a lot of pawn shops, dollar stores, thrift shops and alcohol shops then you might want to keep looking. All these stores are still in business meaning the people who live in the area go to those stores.

You can tell a lot by a person by where they shop. Again it's not to say any location with a pawn shop is sketchy but I guarantee a neighborhood with a 24 hour gym, Panera bread and target is probably nicer than one with a dollar tree, goodwill and "we buy gold" shops.

- The school district can be a huge indicator.

Do some research on the school district in the location. A good school system almost always comes with good neighborhoods. Parents who value education move to those areas, kids do well in school in those locations, and the overall area has more successful people and families.

- Visit a coffee shop and a grocery store.

Everyone needs groceries. Go to the closest store to your place and get a feel for the people and the atmosphere. Are people polite? How busy is it? What kinds of people live there? A coffee shop is another great spot to get a feel for the area.

Often times coffee shops have events, flyers or some sort of billboard. Look at what is going on in the community. This is also a great place to chat with the people who work there and find out what they think of the area. They will know the location better than most and they will likely give you an honest answer.

- Use online tools

There are a number of website you can use to find crime rates, neighborhood ratings, and other stats to help you get a better idea of the location. Use them to your advantage.

The absolute best way to find a good location is to visit a couple times and trust your gut. Bring some friends or family along and get their opinion as well. You can update your home and change the paint but you cannot change the location, so pick carefully.

Shopping & Packing

When you move out, especially into your first apartment (or dorm), you're going to need a lot of stuff. Furniture, appliances, technology, cleaning supplies, grocery items like flour, sugar, spices. There's a ton you will forget to buy before moving, so start your list early and add to it as you think of more stuff.

Also consider making a list of things you already have, so you know what you need to pack before moving. Things like coffee mugs, computers, clocks and curtains that you can take with you when you leave the nest.

It's really easy to forget little things you will need in your new place. To help you out I made a whole list of things you'll need to buy for your new home.

- Bedroom Stuff
 - Hangers
 - Sheets
 - Comforter
 - Blankets
 - Pillows
 - Pillow Cases
- Furniture
 - Bed
 - Side table
 - Bookshelves
 - Coffee Table
 - TV Stand
 - Table & Chairs
 - Couch

- Desk & Chair
- Drawers
- Mirrors
- Pictures and Décor
- Lamps
- Clocks
- Fans or Heaters
- Laundry Room Accessories
 - Laundry Basket
 - Laundry Detergent or Quarters for Machines
 - Bleach
 - Fabric Softener
 - Iron
 - Ironing Board
- Cleaning Supplies
 - Trash bags
 - Trash Cans
 - Window Spray Bleach
 - Toilet Cleaner
 - Mildew Remover
 - Sponges
 - Paper Towel
 - Dust cloths
 - Vacuum
 - Broom
 - Dustpan
 - Mop
- Kitchen Tools
 - Toaster
 - Microwave
 - Coffee Machine
 - Crockpot
 - Dish Scrubber

- Pots
- Pans
- Bakeware
- Kitchen Utensils
- Kitchen Towels
- Kitchen Rug
- Plates
- Cups
- Bowls
- Cutting Knives
- Cutting Board
- Groceries
 - Sugar, Flour, Spices, Pepper, Olive Oil, Cooking Oil, Foil, Ziploc Bags, and weekly meals
- Tool box
 - Light Bulbs
 - Power Extension Cords
 - Surge Protectors
 - Hammer
 - Nails
 - Glue
 - Screwdrivers
 - Duct Tape
 - Command Hooks
 - Heavy Duty Scissors
 - Measuring tapes
 - Level
 - Pliers
- Office Supplies
 - Computer
 - Mouse
 - Chargers
 - Tape

- Scissors
- Stapler
- Paperclips
- Envelopes
- Stamps
- Pens and Pencils
- Notepads
- Tacks / Push Pins
- Bathroom stuff
 - Towels (2 per person)
 - Washcloths (2 per person)
 - Hand Towels (2 per person)
 - Bathroom Rug
 - Hand Soap
 - Shower Rings
 - Shower Liner and Curtain
 - Toilet Brush
 - Toilet Paper
 - Tissue
 - Plunger
 - Toothbrush
 - Toothpaste
 - Floss
 - Razors
 - Shampoo and Conditioner
 - Other hair products

Target, Ikea and Walmart are great places to start. Both Target and Walmart have apps to help you save money. And don't be afraid of thrift shops or garage sales. I got a brand new couch for \$20. It won't hurt to look and it certainly won't hurt your wallet. Just be sure to really clean everything before using it.

The Lease & Moving

Once you find your future home you will have to apply to get the place. Some companies have a form online, other's you'll have to fill in at their office or fax to them. Either way fill out the ENTIRE form. Missing parts will just make it take longer.

Once you've been approved, they will send you a lease, ask you to sign it, and pay a deposit. READ THE ENTIRE LEASE! This step is so so so soooooo important. Really. Do not skim it. Do not sign it and read it later. Read it now and read it 3 times. If there is something you don't agree with, tell them. Make sure they'll allow you make small changes to the lease (letting someone move in or getting a pet) and find out what is needed from you to make those changes.

Have your parents read it. Make sure the company will allow you to make note of the damage already done to the place. If there's a missing doorknob or scratches in the paint that you don't record when you move in – they will charge YOU. Take photos of every little thing and send them all the info within a week of moving in.

Pay your deposit online or with a cashiers' check. Never transfer money directly to someone – that has scam written all over it. Start packing ahead of time to avoid more stress. Make sure your furniture will fit through the door & will fit in the room. Also make sure you have the utilities set up BEFORE you move in. Call the utility companies, cable and phone companies and get everything set up.

Once all the crazy stuff is done, it's time to move. Get a couple sets of house keys, a mail key and any other keys needed. Get info on your parking space and mail box and the community pool or gym. Pack your stuff in a truck and then unpack it!

Good luck on your new apartment. Decorate, pay your bills on time and keep the place clean. I hope this guide helps you in some way! Thanks for reading 😊