



## Moving into a rental? Here are tips to consider

By Lily Leung

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*Alan Pentico, executive director of the **San Diego County Apartment Association**, is the author of this guest blog post. Every Thursday, the U-T San Diego features useful information for tenants and landlords.*

It is easy to get caught up in the excitement of finding an apartment and moving in, especially for first-time renters.

There are certain steps, however, that you should take before signing on the dotted line and handing over a security deposit as well as first and last month's rent. There are additional steps you should take once you've signed a lease.

Make sure you know if you are paying first month's rent, and last month's rent or a security deposit. Indicate on the memo line of the check what you are paying for and get a receipt from the landlord. (Reporter's note: The column previously included incorrect information on what the tenant pays at the time of move-in.)

You should carefully inspect the apartment with the landlord. Make sure the apartment has been well-maintained. Ask the landlord to use a written checklist so you both agree on the condition of the apartment before you move in.

Take this seriously, recording the smallest of problems like nail holes and taking pictures of significant damage. Look for:

- Cracks or holes in the floor, walls or ceiling
- Signs of leaking water or water damage in the floor, walls, or ceiling
- Leaks in bathroom or kitchen fixtures
- Any signs of mold or pests
- Lack of hot water

- Inadequate heating or air conditioning
- Damaged flooring

If something is not to your liking asked to have it fixed before moving in, and ask for a copy of the checklist. Save it and use it to resolve differences when moving out and claiming your security deposit.

If you sign a lease, the landlord is required to give you a signed copy within 30 days. Keep your records in a safe and secure place.

You should consider purchasing renters' insurance. The landlord's insurance will generally not cover your belongings. Make sure to ask. Renters' insurance will protect you against loss of your property by fire or theft and often helps with temporary housing. It also will protect you against liability if someone claims you injured another person or damaged that person's property. Coverage in California for a two-bedroom apartment can be as low as \$15 a month.

"Renter's insurance has become less of an option and more of a necessity these days," said Christine La Marca, supervisor at the Kevane Company.

When you move, it is important to notify the U.S. Post Office of your new address so that your mail can find you. Forms are available at any post office branch. You also may file your change of address online at [usps.gov](https://www.usps.gov).

At least one week before moving into your apartment, contact the local utilities (gas, electricity, water, cable, telephone, sewer, etc.) in order to turn on the utilities in your name. Your landlord should be able to provide you with a list or may be able to do it for you. In many instances, the utility company may charge a deposit.

Here are some additional tips:

- Pay for professional movers or ask friends and family to help you
- Collect boxes a few weeks before moving
- Label boxes with a marker
- Buy cleaning supplies and expect to do some cleaning
- Before doing any painting or repairs, check with the landlord to see what is and isn't allowed
- Figure out where you want to put your furniture before moving in
- Ask your landlord where you are allowed to store your belongings, where you are allowed to park and what the property rules are

Lastly, enjoy your new place. It's your home.

*This guest blog was posted by reporter Lily Leung. Email her at [lily.leung@utsandiego.com](mailto:lily.leung@utsandiego.com).*

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