

Housing Guide

The Oracle

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How to find the best off-campus housing

By Emily Plummer
U L O O P

Throughout your college years, housing is a topic that will never leave.

Each year you may face a move from one place to another, one lease to the next. For many of us whose schools guarantee dorm-housing for our first year, we are soon thrust out into the world of apartments and houses, rents and utilities, with no one but Siri to tell us where to live.

There are lots of options for housing – though it may not seem this way when spring rolls around and every open house you attend is crowded with masses of other students who have their deposits and paperwork ready. Meanwhile, you were just congratulating yourself on showing up to the open house on time.

It may start to seem like you will never find housing, and should just throw your hands up and pay the excessive dorm prices to make all this housing stress go away.

Here are some pieces of advice to find and select the best place to live off-campus next year.

Timeline of the search

First of all, get started early. This is what everyone says. They will tell you to start looking for places in February, and get going to open houses.

You should start going to open houses early to have the highest chance of finding your ideal place to live. Go in ready to make a decision on a place if you fall in love with it, but also know that plenty more options will open up throughout the spring and sometimes even summer.

However, it is also helpful to keep in mind that even if you get a late start, more and more housing options will become available and advertised as time goes on.

Think of housing like buying jeans. You could go to the store now and find certain styles available, and you could also go to the store two months from now and find an entirely new selection.

The places that appear on Craigslist in February are not by any means the best, the cheapest or the only options you will have for off-campus housing. By April, an

entirely new array of living spaces may be available.

and one-bedroom apartments off your search list.

Next, you will all have to decide what



Here are some tips on how to drown out the noise and find your perfect housing fit. SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/UNSPLASH

Finding roommates and group planning

Other than where you want to live, the most important part of housing is deciding who you want to live with – or deciding if you want to live alone and enjoy a home all to yourself.

Once you have chosen your roommates, make sure whatever group you have decided on is stable – or, in other words, there are none of those “I’ll-let-you-know-soon” people that you are counting on to be in your group.

In order to decide on a place to live, you need to know how many bedrooms and bathrooms you are looking for, the price range your group can manage and who will be signing the lease. It’s important that you know how many people and who you plan to live with. If you know there are four people in your group, you can right away cross off all the studios

type of living situation you are looking for and how you will make compromises to accommodate everyone’s wishes. Think about how far you want to live from campus, if you are looking to share bedrooms and how much everyone is willing to pay.

These may seem like details that can be worked out later on, but figuring them out at the beginning of your search will make this a much less stressful process.

Your hunt for housing can immediately be narrowed and save you going to open houses in places people in your group are not actually interested in living, if you know everyone’s preferences and requirements for housing up front.

Give it everything you’ve got

When embarking on your housing search, go forth at full force.

Don’t go to open houses with the

attitude that these options will be around forever. If you see an apartment and take too much time thinking about whether or not you want it, someone else will snatch it out from under you. This is a time to be fierce, competitive and fully prepared.

When you see a housing listing online or in an advertisement, check out its information – number of bedrooms and bathrooms, location and price – before you go to see it. If necessary, you can call the property manager, or whoever’s information is given out as a contact, to ask further questions beyond the information provided.

Knowing as much as possible before you see a place will give you an idea of how much you want it. For example, if you know that the house you are going to see has a great location and a cheap price, you may be more inclined to make compromises about the physical appearance of the house.

If you know the place you are going to see is something you are interested in, have your paperwork ready. Property managers often ask for applications and application fees at open houses, and while they will accept these at later dates, it is usually first come first serve. Those who turn in their applications at the open house will have a better opportunity of getting an offer for housing there.

Even if you are unsure and need to see the living space before submitting an application, get it ready before you go see the place. That way you will have everything you need if you decide you do want to live there. If you decide you don’t, no harm, no foul, you don’t need to turn the application in.

Housing is a constant struggle for students, especially during the spring semester when academic workloads don’t let up to allow time for figuring out living situations.

We all go through this hunt for shelter, prowling the streets of our college towns to track down our coveted prey: a home for next school year. Now, you may have the advantage you need to find it.

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Things to consider for your housing amenities priority list



Students should keep in mind certain practical amenities such as a built-in washer and dryer when looking at housing options this year. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/UNSPASH**

By Francine Fluetsch
ULOO P

Living off campus can be expensive.

In order to make sure that your money will be worth it, you and your housemates should compile a list of priority amenities that you would be willing to pay a bit extra for.

You don't want to get too picky, as you will never find something that meets all of your needs and is still in your price range. But if

an apartment or house hits a few of your wants, you can justify paying the price a little more.

Here are ideas to get you thinking about priorities that can bump up the value of a housing option.

Distance to campus

Being close to campus means you can save money and easily walk to and from your place. This option will score high on

your list especially if you don't have a car.

This is great for when you have early or late classes, because you won't have to get to a bus stop freakishly early or wait a long time after your class is out. You can simply walk or bike home.

Built-in washer and dryer

Consider going over your budget for a place that has a washer and dryer. Make sure to

look this up carefully. Some places say they have a washer and dryer hook-up, which means you would have to buy your own machines.

Obviously that would be a lot of money, so picking a place that already has them would be your best bet. This will let you do laundry during a busy day, or when you just want to have a lazy Sunday and don't want to go anywhere.

You won't have to worry about anyone stealing your clothes out of a community washer, and won't have to save up any quarters or stay at a Laundromat.

Assigned parking

If you have a car, assigned parking by your place can be another thing that would really come in handy. After a long day at school, the last thing you want to do is drive around, aimlessly looking for a parking spot.

Some places allow each car to have assigned parking, and then have some free for all guest parking, which is really nice when you have family come visit or when you have to move in.

Your own room

Sharing space is something everyone hates. After you've had to endure it in the dorms, the last thing you want to do is share your space when you move off campus. Having your own room means you can have a big bed, have your own space to relax and freedom to live how you like in your own section of the house. Trust me, this is worth paying more rent for.

Even if your single rooms are small, it will just be you in there

so it won't matter all that much. You will appreciate being able to go to sleep when you want, staying up doing homework as late as you have to and having friends over when you want.

It also helps you get along better with who you have to live with, since you won't be on top of each other 24/7, so there are lots of benefits to having your own room.

Dishwasher

A dishwasher might be lower on your list, but it really can be a perk, especially if you are worried about splitting up the chores. It can save time and keep your space looking clean. Dishes pile up faster than you think without a dishwasher, especially if you live with multiple people. Having a dishwasher also means that you have a built-in disposal in your sink, which will really help you out.

When you don't have a disposal, you have to make sure nothing, and I mean nothing, falls down the sink, and then you have to scrape it out and it's nasty. A disposal will help you quickly take care of leftover food bits on your plate, and the dishwasher will do the rest of the work.

Think about the amenities you prioritize in your space and narrow it down to one or two. Then, consider that with the price of the place. It will really help you out in deciding.

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DECORATING

Continued from PAGE 8

Try not to choose a tablecloth with a particularly busy pattern or distracting print, but perhaps a solid color or a more relaxed print; florals are pretty hard to beat.

The living room

Most students who have a living room probably use it as an all-purpose space, perfect for an evening of “Chopped” reruns and hot chocolate, or a Saturday of homework and readings.

The living room may be the first room you walk into from outside. It may also be the designated hangout spot for your friends

and other visitors looking to study, relax or simply chat with you.

If this is the case, prioritize seating and table space in the living room. This will improve the aesthetic of your living room, promote a relaxed environment and provide function for maximum use of the room.

If your living room has a window, this is a great place to add a curtain. There are many curtain styles that can brighten a room and draw attention to the natural light. You can use the curtain design and colors to match the other elements of your living room. It can also serve as a

transition piece, if your living room connects to another room in a house with a window, you can use the same curtain in each room to add a level of continuity.

The bathroom

The bathroom should be a space for refreshment above anything else. It's often where you get ready for the day, as well as where you might end your day with a relaxing shower or bubble bath.

Try using a consistent color scheme that suggests serenity: perhaps you'll choose turquoise towels with light blue washcloths, or lavender floor mats

to coordinate with pops of deeper purple color around the room in accessories or even wall decals, which are much easier and more student-friendly than fussy wallpaper.

If your bathroom is well-decorated with a clear, consistent theme, you'll find it easier to unwind as you're doing your hair or trying on the best outfit options for an upcoming job interview. A bathroom more chaotic in decor likely won't throw off your energy too much, but it might subconsciously frazzle you the same way that a messy room makes it hard for someone to focus on their work.



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Tips for decorating your house or apartment

By Julia Dunn

U.L.O.O.P

Moving is (almost) always a hassle. Between coordinating the transport of all your items into a new space and saying goodbye to your old place, it's easy to forget the fun stuff on the horizon: decorating and beautifying your house or apartment.

Here are some tips for beautifying every room in your house or apartment.

The bedroom

This is where you'll spend most of your time relaxing, resting, sleeping and lounging.

When decorating your house or apartment, particularly the bedroom, store items vertically. This maximizes use of the space. You can put plants, books, picture frames or even figurines on a floating shelf to make a statement and add some nature to your room.

If you've got a desk in your bedroom, decorate it by making your own DIY storage containers. You can cover mason jars and old oatmeal canisters with stickers, scrap paper, magazine clippings and other embellishments. These can serve as cute containers for scissors, pens and other necessities.

You can also accessorize your house or apartment with painted cork boards and colorful thumbtacks hung on the wall. Even displaying a magnetic whiteboard can help beautify a room if you decorate it with magnets and photos of your loved ones.

You might be thinking that your walls look a bit empty. Create your own art – or ask loved ones to create pieces for



Here are some practical and and stylish ways to spruce up your living space. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/**

UNSPASH

you – to personalize the space and add some visual interest to the room.

If you're not skilled with a paintbrush or lack magazines to make a collage, consider even printing a few of your favorite photos on a website and framing them.

You could also string them on a line using clothespins, which is an easy and inexpensive way to add a personal touch and take up horizontal wall space.

The kitchen

Keep the kitchen looking light

and refreshing; you'll spend a huge amount of time in there preparing meals for the week, throwing quick breakfasts together in the early hours and possibly entertaining guests.

You can usually find plenty of items at craft stores that can be used for decor even without transforming them into something else. Handmade paper is your best bet for a quick wall decoration.

To decorate your kitchen area even more, place potted plants and vases of flowers around on counter tops and eating areas. The freshness of a potted plant

can create a positive atmosphere and improve your mood, while easily tightening up a space to become more composed and mature.

For those with a less-than-ideal track record with keeping plants alive, a few succulents or cacti may be the smartest decision, as they require little water and minimal maintenance.

The dining space

If you have a designated dining room, you've got a lot more space to work with, but some houses may not have their

own dedicated dining rooms.

Sometimes, you have to make do with setting up a table in the kitchen or off to the side in a nook of the living room. In any case, if you've got a dining table and nothing else, you can still decorate it for extra impact when decorating your house or apartment.

Start with an eye-catching tablecloth or even a large swatch of fabric from the discount section of a craft store. This will pull your space together and draw interest to whatever else is on the table.

See **DECORATING** on **PAGE 7**

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Five tips for housing in college with a pet



on a budget for housing, make sure you consider your pet as well.

Pay attention to flooring

For dogs who misbehave when their owners are gone – most likely because of separation anxiety – it’s important to think about potential issues, especially when it comes to flooring.

Brand new carpets or new hardwood floors will be something your apartment complex or landlord will feel “protective” over. If they’ve just spent a good chunk of change on renovations, they’ll likely expect you to replace the flooring if your pet tears up the carpet or scratches the floors with their nails.

Investigating these types of things before moving into a place with a pet is important.

Pet fees and monthly rent additions

Most apartment complexes are going to charge for having a pet on a monthly basis. You should look into how much money you’ll be spending if you bring your pet with you. Sometimes it’s worth it — but it might not be.

When it comes to finding the perfect place to live in college, you’ll likely have to make some sacrifices. It’s tough to work off of a budget, but also live somewhere comfortable, in a good location with all the necessities. You’re either going to have to live without a dishwasher or be okay with visiting a laundromat every week.

On top of the normal stressors of finding housing, if you have a pet, it can make things even more complicated. Suddenly there are thousands of other things to consider. Square footage, access to the outdoors, roommates and fees are all things that become important when you think about moving in with a pet during college.

Before you make a decision about moving in with a pet during college, consider all of your options, including the quality of life for your pet.

While furry friends bring endless joy, they can also add challenges to the housing process. **SPECIAL TO THE ORACLE/UNSPLASH**

By Lorena Roberts

U L O O P

Your living situation is always important – especially during college. You want to be in an environment that’s going to support you and provide comfort, but you’re also on a budget.

With an animal, it’s like multiplying the effects of everything because you’re now making decisions not only for yourself, but also for another living thing.

So if you’ve decided to adopt, or if you’re bringing your family pet to college with you, here are five things you should know about housing.

Avoid roommates if possible

Having a pet is a lot of responsibility. Living with other people can sometimes be stressful. If you combine both of these by having a pet and living with people, you’re asking for a lot of tense situations.

From my experience, it’s easiest to live alone when you have a pet. However, if your roommates are willing to also care for your animal, it might not be too bad.

Find out if your roommates have pets

This is likely one of the biggest issues when it comes to having a pet and living with other people.

If your roommate also has a pet, it

might be tough to adjust. If they don’t get along, your housing situation and your home life is going to be much worse than it needs to be.

Consider making sure both animals have plenty of time to meet and engage before you move in together.

Find a place with space for your pet

Think about the size of your pet and how much room they’ll need to be comfortable throughout the day.

For example, dogs that are generally more active will need daily trips to the dog park, or a large backyard for exercise. The last thing you want to do is encourage bad behavior by “trapping” your pet in your home. So while it’s likely that you’re

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