

Tips for Off-Campus Housing

Looking for off-campus housing can be stressful as an International Student or Scholar. This guide is designed to help with your off-campus housing research.

Research about the area

- Locate your department on campus. Ideally you will want a place that's **closer to your department**, considering MSU's expansive landscape.
- See where all your **activities of interest** are in the city.



Visit or contact leasing offices

- These offices may not be near the rental property itself. Make sure to **call in advance** to see where these are to avoid any confusion.
- Ask about in-person or virtual **tours** of the apartment/facility.



Transportation

- Check the **CATA bus service** to your area, and see the number of buses you would change for your daily commute.
- Ubers and Lyfts can be difficult to find in East Lansing and may have a long wait time.
- See where all your **activities of interest** are located in the city.
- Contact **MSU Bikes** for renting/buying a bicycle for your commute.



Get your lease reviewed

- Contact **Student Legal Services** on campus and book an appointment to get your lease reviewed for free before signing.



Consider your requirements

- Consider whether you want a roommate, plan to rent an entire apartment/studio, or lease by the bedroom without needing to find a roommate.
- **Furnished/Partially Furnished/Unfurnished** depending on your needs
- **In-unit laundry/shared building laundry/ off-site laundry options** (You may need coins for off-site laundry.)
- **9 or 12 month lease** - Consider the duration of your stay
- **Other amenities** - Some apartments provide free coffee, gym, pool and more.
- **Parking spot** if you have a car
- **Anything else?** (e.g., see the section on transportation)



Budget expected expenses

- If utilities are not included in the rent, calculate the **utilities** into your total expenses.
- Review **renter's insurance** options
- Consider the **cost of moving in** (moving trucks, furniture, appliances, security deposit).
- **Plan for transportation costs** if you have a car or take the bus.
- **Food costs** - Compare grocery expenses to the cost of an off-campus dining plan through REHS. Perhaps combining your off-campus housing with a dining plan would be cheaper.



Sign your lease!

- Make sure that **everything is clearly written**.
- Do not **rely on anything that is verbally communicated** and not on the lease.
- Ask for clarification if **anything is confusing**.
- Finally, **move in** to your new home!



Helpful Resources

- **Student Legal Services** - <https://studentlegalservices.com/index.html>
- **CATA Bus** - <https://www.cata.org/routes-schedules>
- **MSU Bikes** - <https://msu-bike-service-center.shoplightspeed.com>
- **MSU Surplus Store** - <https://msusurplusstore.com>
- **Off-Campus Housing** - <https://offcampushousing.msu.edu>
- **MSU FoodBank** - <https://foodbank.msu.edu>
- **Eat At State** - <https://eatatstate.msu.edu>
- **City of East Lansing** - <https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/>

- **MSU Department of Student Life** - <https://studentlife.msu.edu/housing/index.html>
- **MSU Student Parent Resource Center** - <https://studentparents.msu.edu/housing/>
- **MSU College Life East Lansing - Housing:** <http://www.collegelifeel.msu.edu/housing-resources>
- **International Student Lending Center (CVIP):** <https://cvip.isp.msu.edu/programs/international-student-lending-center/>
- **Calculating utilities** - <https://www.reliant.com/en/residential/electricity/utility-bill-estimator.jsp>