

FIND YOUR PERFECT RENTAL

In 5 easy steps

By Lisa Evans

One of the first things every newcomer needs to do is find a place to call home. Renting an apartment or house provides you with a safe place from where you can begin to adjust to your new life in Canada. But finding the home that's right for you can be a challenge. Follow these five steps to finding your perfect rental.

[1] Price check

The first step is figuring out how much you can afford. Don't forget to factor in other costs in addition to rent. While most rental units include the cost of heat and water; electricity and cable/internet are often additional costs the tenant is responsible for. Ask how much you can expect to pay each month to light and entertain your home.

[2] Location focus

Assess the neighbourhood for proximity to public transit, schools, parks and shops, and consider how the area will fit your lifestyle. Mark Salerno, of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), advises newcomers to consider the proximity of their employment to their home. "You may be swayed by a cheaper price outside the city, but when you consider the transit cost, it might be better to spend the extra cash to live closer to where you work," says Salerno.

[3] Space needs

Be realistic about how much space you will need and evaluate

it for functionality. Open the closets and make sure there's enough storage for your belongings. If you're living with a roommate, consider how you will set up the unit. Abhinav

Sharma of India is sharing a basement apartment with a friend and says size was one of his main considerations when selecting a rental unit. "I could take my budget up by say \$50 or \$100, but the apartment needs to be spacious enough for two people," he says.

[4] Landlord questions

Although you're being interviewed by the landlord as a potential tenant, Salerno says the tenant should also interview the landlord. "Ask if they've had renters before and why the last tenant left," says Salerno. You can ask for references from previous tenants and question them about the maintenance of the building, how approachable the landlord was about repairs and the overall treatment of tenants.

[5] Don't rush

Finding the perfect rental can take time. Don't rush into signing a lease on the first apartment you see. Sharma looked at four units before deciding on his current home and says comparing units helped narrow down his needs.

Although your rental may be temporary, you want it to feel like home. 🌟

BEFORE YOU SIGN ...

Ensure you understand your rights and responsibilities

By Lisa Evans

Congratulations! You've found a rental unit that suits your needs and your budget. Before you move into your new abode, you'll probably be asked to sign a lease. While you may be tempted to get the paperwork out of the way as soon as possible, signing a lease requires more than a casual glance.

A lease is a legal agreement between you and the landowner, and outlines your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Before you sign, make sure your lease is clear on the following items.

Costs

Your lease should specify how much you will pay each month in rent and what is included and excluded (such as utilities, parking or cable/internet).

Term of lease

The lease will specify the amount of time the lease is valid for (typically 12 months), what happens when that lease is up and how much notice you have to give to terminate the lease.

Privacy

Be clear about the landlord's access to the unit. Typically, they

have to give 24 hours' notice. Azfar Rizvi left his Toronto basement apartment after only two months because of privacy concerns. "My landlady would come downstairs and use bucket loads of paper towels to clean the kitchenette and leave notes for me," he says. If the unit is not self-contained, be sure to ask whether you will have exclusive rights to the unit and under what conditions the landlord may enter the unit.

Deposits

Most leases call for the first and last months' rent to be paid upfront. The last month's rent is not considered a security deposit, however, which are not allowed in Ontario. A refundable deposit for keys is allowed, but it cannot exceed the cost of replacement.

Repairs

Things are bound to break. Make sure your lease outlines who is responsible for repairs and who you should call in case of an emergency. Turn on the appliances and taps before moving in to make sure they're all in working order. A tenant cannot withhold rent for repairs. 🌟

PERSONALIZE YOUR SPACE

Making a rental feel like home

By Lisa Evans

White apartment walls and generic cabinets can feel drab, so the desire to personalize your rental space and make it your own is understandable. But there is often a fear of repercussions by the landlord. Will you be asked to pay for repairs if you put nails in the walls to hang pictures? "It's important for people's homes to reflect who they are," says Vancouver interior designer Kim Anderson. Follow these tips to personalize your rental apartment without angering your landlord.

Add colour

You may not be able to paint the walls, but that doesn't mean you have to live in a beige box. "Colour can be added in so many other ways than just painting the walls," says Anderson. Bold accent colours repeated



throughout the space is a great way to add your own personality to your home. Use your accent colour on rugs, pillows, vases, art and other accessories. "You can even paint a piece of furniture like a coffee table in your accent colour to make it stand out," says Anderson. Craigslist or yard sales are great places to look for gently used furniture that you won't be worried about ruining with paint.

Decorate the walls

Wall decals are a great way to add pattern and colour to your walls without using paint and are completely removable and won't damage the walls. Hanging artwork or family photos is another great way to add a splash of personality to your walls, but if you're worried about putting nails in the walls, 3m command strips offer a great

way to add artwork to the walls without making any holes.

Reflect your culture

"Your home can become an oasis from the stress of being in a new country where culture and language are very different, [so] decorating to reflect who you are and where you come from can be a very important and valuable thing to do," says Anderson.

Incorporating pieces of home into your new Canadian apartment is a great way to help you feel connected to your roots. Adding family photos or treasures you brought with you to a bookcase or creating a memory board out of foam and fabric are great ways to display your culture. Using colours and fabrics that remind you of where you came from is another great way to make your rental feel like home. 🍁



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