



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
COMMUTER STUDENT SERVICES
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“LOCATING HOUSING”

On Campus or Off?:

- Have you considered living in University housing?
- Are you ready for the responsibility of living “on your own”?
- On campus living can offer the benefit of living in close proximity to fellow students.
- Off campus living, on the other hand, can offer the benefit of not living in close proximity to fellow students ...
- There is no “right” or “wrong” choice - you must make up your own mind.
- If you want to live on campus at U.S.M., you must contact the Department of Residential Life at (207) 780-5240 or on the web at <http://usm.maine.edu/reslife/>
- If you are interested in living off campus and attending classes at U.S.M., the Office of Commuter Student Services can help - call us at (207) 780-4090 or visit us online at <http://usm.maine.edu/commuter>

Listings:

If you have decided to live off-campus, make sure to check all listings available, including our listings at <http://usm.maine.edu/commuter/>, fliers posted by students on campus and the listings in the local newspaper at <http://www.pressherald.com/> How do you start looking? Think about your needs and wants. Ask yourself the following questions about each place that you consider:

- **Location:** Do you know anything about the area? Make sure to get a good sense of the neighborhood by visiting at various times of day and night - your safety should not be compromised for low rent.
- **Transportation:** Will you have a car? If so, will parking be a problem? What about during parking bans? If you won't have a car, is there public transportation available nearby?
- **Pets:** Do you have any? Are they allowed?
- **Amenities - whatever is important to you:** Are items such as garbage and snow removal included in the rent? Is cable TV available? Is there a pool/hot-tub or exercise room/area? Is there a good security system/staff?

Financial Concerns:

Be sure you can handle the cost.

- Do you know how much will rent be? What about the security deposit? Is heat included? If not, how much has it cost to heat the unit in the past? Are any other utilities included?
- How much is the security deposit? What are the conditions for getting it refunded upon move-out?
- Will the landlord/rental company run your credit? Do you know how good your credit is? Contact the Maine Public Advocate Office for more information at <http://www.state.me.us/meopa/credit.htm>

Roommate(s):

Are you searching for a place with someone? Are you looking for someone to live with? If so, think about the following:

- What are your expectations? Make sure to talk openly before you move in to avoid misunderstandings down the road.
- Use a roommate contract, if possible. This will spell out how rent and utility costs will be split, cleaning arrangements, and noise and visitor agreements. These items may seem trivial ahead of time, but they are especially important, particularly for students who are busy.

Rental Agreement:

Once you have found a place that suits you (and your roommate), it's time to look at the rental agreement/lease. Consider the following:

- Read your agreement/lease completely. What is the length of the lease? Is a co-signer required? If you have any questions, make sure to discuss them with your landlord and roommate(s).
- Get changes in writing! Verbal promises sound good, but written documents provide proof of the agreement.
- Will an Inventory Inspection Form be used? If the landlord does not provide one, you should fill one out on your own and provide him/her with a copy. This protects you from being charged for pre-existing damage.
- Once your agreement is signed by all parties, make sure to keep a copy for future reference.

Congratulations! Welcome to your new home - good luck convincing your friends and family to help you move in!