

**1. Finding a place** – Consider the following when looking for a unit:

- Location. Do you have your own means of transportation; want somewhere close to public transportation, within walking or biking distance from campus?
- Residential Style. What type of rental unit are you looking for? Condominium, House, apartment and whether furnished or unfurnished.
- Cost. What price range are you looking for? Are utilities included in the rent or not? What other services will you need to pay for? Be sure you know who is responsible to pay utilities when comparing rental prices.
- Amenities. Do you want housing with a pool, gym, laundry machines, dishwasher etc.?
- Pet Friendliness. Do you want to have a pet? Find out any restrictions.
- Number of Occupants. Do you want to live with roommates? If so, how many and what is the maximum capacity legally permitted in that unit?

Use an apartment search engine online. Here is one that lists options near campus. The University of New Haven doesn't recommend any places in particular. It is up to you to find out whether the property is adequate, whether the landlord is fair, what is the legal capacity of occupants, etc. Remember, you will not have access to University services if you choose to find your own housing. It is all your responsibility.

**Jump Off Campus** <https://www.jumpoffcampus.com/map?location=University+of+New+Haven>

Other search engines include apartmentfinder.com, apartments.com, and Craigslist.com. Be cautious when using any search engine because you don't know what you don't know.

**2. Networking to find roommates or other students looking for roommates** – Connect with your University of New Haven colleagues on social media. If you are unsure how to connect, email the ISO for help at [iso@newhaven.edu](mailto:iso@newhaven.edu). Here are some ideas:

- Each incoming class has a facebook group. Ask your admissions counselor.
- Recognized Student Organizations (RSO's) on campus have social media groups (African Graduate Students Association, Caribbean Students Association, Chinese Students and Scholars Association, Indian Student Council, International Students Association, Saudi Students Club).
- ISO has Facebook and Instagram pages:

**3. Signing a Lease** -- It is worthy to note that a lease does not only reserve you a place to live but it is also a legal document that you must review carefully before signing. Once you sign a lease, you are responsible for the provisions of that lease.

Here are links to important questions to ask before signing a lease

<https://www.esurance.com/info/renters/questions-to-ask-a-landlord-before-signing-lease>

<https://www.moving.com/tips/15-questions-to-ask-before-signing-lease/>

<https://www.landlordology.com/20-revealing-questions-renters-landlords/>

Do you know the difference between joint and several vs individual liability leases? There are different types of leases, so before you sign a lease, be sure you know the type of lease and the legal

consequences binding that lease. For example, if you sign a joint and severally liable lease, you and your roommates are equally liable but if you sign an individual lease, you are only responsible for yourself.

Therefore, if possible negotiate for individual leases for each roommate with your property manager or Landlord so everyone is responsible for themselves.

For Further info: [http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/joint\\_and\\_several\\_liability](http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/joint_and_several_liability)

<https://www.rentally.com/help-finding-apartments/individual-lease-versus-joint-lease>

CAUTION: The ISO cautions against “ghost” roommates who don’t appear on the lease at all. Not only can they easily avoid paying their share, the persons who sign the lease can be held legally responsible for violating zoning codes that dictate how many non-family members can live in one unit. In the town of West Haven, the law dictates only four non-family members can share a unit.

**4. Getting along with your roommates** – Just as important as choosing the right place to live is sharing a living facility with the right person. Your roommates can influence your health, financial decisions, academic progress, social life, and off-campus safety in a positive or a negative way. They can be a lot of fun or added stress so it is pertinent to communicate your expectations clearly to each other.

A great tool to use when deciding who to live with is a [ROOMMATE AGREEMENT](#) and here are some life style considerations and things to ponder on when choosing a roommate and drafting a roommate agreement. Click on the link above for a sample agreement.

1. Study habit/expectations and quiet hours.
2. Cleanliness
3. Use and maintenance of common spaces (living room, kitchen, bathrooms)
4. How you feel about guests? Can guests stay overnight? How long can a guest stay without paying rent? What does your lease say about guests?
5. Smoking preference
6. How will chores be divided?
7. Pets
8. Will you share groceries? If not, designate separate shelves in the cupboard and in the refrigerator.
9. Will you share kitchen utensils, pots and pans? If so, agree on dishwashing habits.

**5. Security Deposits** -- Property managers will most likely demand for security deposits in order to cover any unpaid rent or damages that occurred during your tenancy but this deposit should not be more than two months rent. It is refundable if there is no damage and or unpaid rent at the end of your lease.

In order to get your security deposit back, it is always advisable to record anything in need of repair or hazardous with a check-in form, and ask the property manager to sign the check-list to ensure that you both agree to the outcome of the inspection.

For more information, visit <https://ctlawhelp.org/en/security-deposit-laws-rent-increases>

**What if the landlord doesn't return your security deposit?**

You can sue the landlord in **Small Claims Court** if

- the landlord doesn't respond to your request within thirty (30) days;
- he or she didn't return your security deposit or give you a list of repairs and costs within thirty (30) days; or
- the landlord returned some or none of your deposit and gave you a list of repairs and costs, but you don't agree with the amounts.

You will have to fill out and file court forms and go to court to explain your case. You do not need a lawyer for Small Claims court. For more information, see our booklet, [Small Claims Court](#).

You can file a complaint with the **Banking Department** if

- you gave the landlord your new mailing address using certified mail with a return receipt requested, and
- landlord does not return your deposit or only returned part of your deposit without giving you the list of repairs.

You can get a rental complaint form at the Connecticut Department of Banking website (<http://www.ct.gov/dob>). Send your complaint and copies of the documents they ask for to:

**Security Deposit Investigator**

Connecticut Department of Banking  
260 Constitution Plaza  
Hartford, CT 06103-1800

**Email:** [dob.sd@ct.gov](mailto:dob.sd@ct.gov)

**Tel:** 860-240-8154, or 800-831-7225, ext. 8154

**Fax:** 860-278-7014

**6. Do you know that renters have legal rights?** Here is a link to an article that explains your legal rights as a renter and where you can get help. <https://ctlawhelp.org/en/tenants-renters-rights-laws>

Find answers on this website for questions like:

- When can the landlord raise my rent?
- What does Connecticut law say about repairs?
- Can I sublease my room to another person?
- When can I be evicted or locked out?
- What is the law regarding discrimination against immigrants, refugees, and people of all religious faiths?

Anyone who believes they have been the victim of housing discrimination because they are an immigrant or refugee (regardless of immigration status), because of where they are from, or because of their religious faith should call the Center at (860) 247-4400 or email [info@ctfairhousing.org](mailto:info@ctfairhousing.org).

For more information, visit <https://www.ctfairhousing.org/>

SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THIS GUIDE

1. <https://www.newhaven.edu/student-life/living-on-campus/graduate-housing.php>
2. <https://offcampus.uconn.edu/>
3. <https://www.esurance.com/info/renters/questions-to-ask-a-landlord-before-signing-lease>
4. <https://www.moving.com/tips/15-questions-to-ask-before-signing-lease/>
5. <https://www.landlordology.com/20-revealing-questions-renters-landlords/>
6. [http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/joint and several liability](http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/joint_and_several_liability)
7. <https://www.rentally.com/help-finding-apartments/individual-lease-versus-joint-lease>
8. <https://www.ctfairhousing.org/>
9. <https://ctlawhelp.org/en/self-help/535>