

THE ULTIMATE RENTER CHECKLIST

WALK-THROUGH & MOVE-IN INSPECTION

This checklist covers 140+ items across 14 categories that every renter should inspect before signing a lease. It was created by licensed Texas real estate professionals who have helped thousands of renters find apartments across Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston since 2013 — including renters with evictions, broken leases, and credit challenges. Use it during your apartment walk-through to catch problems before they become your responsibility, protect your security deposit, and confirm every detail of your lease.

ENTRY & SECURITY

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Front Door Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Deadbolt Works | <input type="checkbox"/> All Keys Provided |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Door Lock Re-Keyed | <input type="checkbox"/> Peephole / Camera | <input type="checkbox"/> Mailbox Key / Access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gate / Fob Access | <input type="checkbox"/> Patio / Balcony Lock | <input type="checkbox"/> Sliding Door Track |

Notes: _____

KITCHEN

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stove / Oven Works | <input type="checkbox"/> All Burners Ignite | <input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerator Cools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Freezer Freezes | <input type="checkbox"/> Dishwasher Runs | <input type="checkbox"/> Microwave Works |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage Disposal | <input type="checkbox"/> Sink Drains / No Leaks | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Pressure (Hot & Cold) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhaust Fan / Range Hood | <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinets Open / Close | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawers Slide Properly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Countertop Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Outlets Work (GFCI) | <input type="checkbox"/> Light Fixtures Work |

Notes: _____

LIVING SPACES & BEDROOMS

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walls — Holes or Damage | <input type="checkbox"/> Ceiling Stains / Cracks | <input type="checkbox"/> Flooring Condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carpet Stains / Wear | <input type="checkbox"/> Paint Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> All Outlets Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light Switches Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Ceiling Fan Works | <input type="checkbox"/> Closet Doors / Rods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blinds / Window Coverings | <input type="checkbox"/> Windows Open / Close / Lock | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Screens Intact |

Notes: _____

BATHROOMS

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet Flushes Properly | <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet Doesn't Run | <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet Base Sealed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sink Drains / No Leaks | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot Water Works | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Pressure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shower / Tub Drains | <input type="checkbox"/> Showerhead Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Caulking / Grout Condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhaust Fan Works | <input type="checkbox"/> Towel Bars / Hooks | <input type="checkbox"/> Mirror Condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outlets Work (GFCI) | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs of Mold / Mildew | <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet / Vanity Condition |

Notes: _____

LAUNDRY

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-Unit or On-Site? | <input type="checkbox"/> Washer / Dryer Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Hookups Present |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dryer Vent Connected | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot & Cold Water Lines | <input type="checkbox"/> No Leaks at Connections |

Notes: _____

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING BEFORE YOU UNPACK A SINGLE BOX.

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HVAC & CLIMATE

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A/C Blows Cold | <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Works | <input type="checkbox"/> Thermostat Responds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Filter Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Vents Clear / Open | <input type="checkbox"/> No Unusual Smells from Vents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Heater Location | <input type="checkbox"/> Hot Water Temp OK | |

Notes: _____

ELECTRICAL & SAFETY

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke Detectors Work | <input type="checkbox"/> CO Detectors Present | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Extinguisher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Breaker Panel Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> Breakers Labeled | <input type="checkbox"/> GFCI Outlets (Kitchen / Bath) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All Outlets Tested | <input type="checkbox"/> No Exposed Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Exit Route |

Notes: _____

THE STUFF PEOPLE FORGET

These won't show up on a standard walk-through form. Check them anyway.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell Signal in Every Room | <input type="checkbox"/> Smell Test — Close Door, Wait... | <input type="checkbox"/> Cigarette Smoke Odor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet Odor in Carpet / Vents | <input type="checkbox"/> Mildew / Sewer Smell | <input type="checkbox"/> Knock Shared Walls — Noise? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to Elevator / Stairs | <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to Trash Compactor | <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to Dog Park / Pool |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Noise from Windows | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet Providers Available | <input type="checkbox"/> Cable / Ethernet Hookup Locat... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Pressure at Peak Hours? | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Light — Time of Day? | <input type="checkbox"/> Which Direction Unit Faces |

Notes: _____

PEST EVIDENCE

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Droppings (Cabinets / Closets) | <input type="checkbox"/> Roach Traps or Evidence | <input type="checkbox"/> Gnaw Marks / Holes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ant Trails | <input type="checkbox"/> Gaps Under Doors / Around Pip... | <input type="checkbox"/> Pest Control Schedule? |

Notes: _____

EXTERIOR & COMMON AREAS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parking Spot Assigned | <input type="checkbox"/> Patio / Balcony Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Exterior Lighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stairway / Hallway Condition | <input type="checkbox"/> Trash / Recycling Location | <input type="checkbox"/> Pool / Gym Access |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Package Locker / Mailroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Laundry Room (If On-Site) | <input type="checkbox"/> Storage Unit Access |

Notes: _____

MOVE-IN DOCUMENTATION

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photo Every Room (Wide Shot) | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo All Existing Damage | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo Appliance Condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photo Floors / Carpet Close-Up | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo Inside Cabinets / Close... | <input type="checkbox"/> Video Walk-Through |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Note All Damage on Move-In Fo... | <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Form Within Deadline | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep Copy of Move-In Form |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Photos to Yourself (Tim... | | |

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RED FLAGS — PAUSE & ASK QUESTIONS

If you check any of these, get answers before you sign.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh Paint Only in Certain S... | <input type="checkbox"/> Strong Air Freshener on Move... | <input type="checkbox"/> Stains on Ceiling (Water Dama... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Soft / Spongy Floor Near Bath... | <input type="checkbox"/> Caulk Painted Over Instead of... | <input type="checkbox"/> No Move-In Condition Form Off... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance Outsourced / No O... | <input type="checkbox"/> Won't Let You See Actual Unit | <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure to Sign Same Day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lease Terms Don't Match What ... | <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive Non-Refundable Fees | <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews Mention Recurring Iss... |

Notes: _____

SECOND-CHANCE APPROVAL TERMS

Eviction, broken lease, low credit, or background concerns? Confirm these before you commit.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approval Conditional or Final? | <input type="checkbox"/> Deposit Amount (Often Higher) | <input type="checkbox"/> Last Month's Rent Required? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admin Fee Breakdown | <input type="checkbox"/> Application Fee Refundable? | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Signer Required? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Signer Income Requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> Approval Unit-Specific or Pro... | <input type="checkbox"/> Which Screening Company Used? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How Far Back Do They Look? | <input type="checkbox"/> Can You Appeal a Denial? | <input type="checkbox"/> Deposit Payment Plan Availabl... |

Notes: _____

LEASE & ADMIN

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lease Start / End Dates | <input type="checkbox"/> Rent Amount Confirmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Deposit Amount / Terms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pet Deposit / Pet Rent | <input type="checkbox"/> Renter's Insurance Required? | <input type="checkbox"/> Utilities — What's Included? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utility Transfer Dates | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance Request Process | <input type="checkbox"/> After-Hours Emergency # |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Termination Terms | <input type="checkbox"/> Guest / Occupancy Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Parking Rules / Tow Policy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lease Renewal Terms | <input type="checkbox"/> Move-Out Notice Period | <input type="checkbox"/> Move-Out Cleaning Requirements |

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What should I check before signing a lease?

Walk every room and test everything: run the faucets, flush the toilets, flip every light switch, open and close all windows, check that locks work, test the A/C and heat, look inside cabinets for pest evidence, and check your cell signal. Bring a phone charger to test outlets. If anything is broken or damaged, get it documented in writing before you sign — verbal promises from leasing staff are not enforceable.

How do I protect my security deposit at move-in?

Complete the move-in condition form the same day you get your keys. Photograph every room with wide shots and close-ups of any existing damage — scratches on floors, stains on carpet, dents in walls, appliance condition. Record a video walk-through. Email all photos to yourself so they carry a timestamp. Submit the condition form before the management's deadline (usually 48-72 hours). Keep a copy. This documentation is your only defense when move-out charges appear.

Can I rent an apartment with an eviction on my record?

Yes. Many apartment communities in Texas work with renters who have past evictions, broken leases, or low credit — sometimes called second-chance apartments. Approval terms vary: some require a higher deposit, a co-signer, or proof of income at 3x rent. Ask whether the approval is conditional or final, whether it applies to the specific unit or the entire property, and how far back their screening looks. A licensed apartment locator who specializes in second-chance placements can match you with communities that fit your situation at no cost to you.

What are red flags when touring an apartment?

Watch for fresh paint in only certain spots (possibly covering mold or water damage), strong air freshener on move-in day (masking odors), soft or spongy flooring near bathrooms (water damage underneath), caulk that's been painted over instead of replaced, and management that won't show you the actual unit you'd be renting. If the leasing office pressures you to sign the same day or the lease terms differ from what was quoted verbally, slow down and get clarification before committing.

What should I ask about utilities before renting?

Find out which utilities are included in rent and which you're responsible for. Ask about average monthly costs for the unit size — the leasing office may have this data or the previous tenant's usage history. Confirm when you need to transfer utilities into your name (often before move-in day). Ask which providers service the building for electric, gas, internet, and trash. Some complexes use third-party utility billing companies like Conservice or SimpleBills, which can add administrative fees.

Is a renter's walk-through checklist really necessary?

It is. Without one, you'll miss things you can't fix later. Most renters remember to test the stove and check the walls, but forget to check cell signal strength, noise from shared walls, water pressure during peak hours, whether the A/C actually cools the bedroom, or whether the dryer vent is properly connected. A checklist turns a 10-minute glance into a real inspection. The items you catch now are the ones that don't become disputes at move-out.

Created by licensed Texas real estate professionals at Austin Apartment Locators, a free apartment locating service helping renters across Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston since 2013. Brokered by Spirit Real Estate Group (TREC #562021).

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