

## 9. Rent is not the only thing you will need to pay for

Utilities are another cost that renters often forget to work into their budgets. You can expect to spend about 31 to 35 percent of your income on the combined cost of rent and utilities. Before you sign a lease, contact the utility companies to find out how much the bills were last year and how much you'll pay in setup fees and deposit. If utilities are included in your rent, find out how much control you have over their use. What sounds like a good deal might not be so hot if you hit a cold snap before the landlord turns on your radiator.

## 10. You Have Rights

Remember, while paying rent, the apartment is your private home first and the landlord's property second.

### More Questions?

This brochure is general information and is not everything you need to know before you rent. You should talk to an attorney if you have more questions or if you want advice on your specific situation.

Additional information may be found at:

# LawHelp.org/SC

South Carolina's guide to free legal resources

## Housing Cases Accepted

- Access to Quality Housing
- Evictions
- Foreclosures
- Heirs Property
- Landlord/Tenant Issues
- Public Housing
- Security Deposit Returns
- Utility Cutoffs

## Other Legal Representation

- Consumer & Bankruptcy
- Education
- Employment
- Family
- Federal Income Tax
- Housing
- Migrant Farm Workers
- Probate

This brochure was prepared by South Carolina Legal Services and is provided as a public service.

Copyright retained by South Carolina Legal Services

Printed June 2014



South Carolina  
**BAR FOUNDATION**  
Lawyers Sustaining Justice



**South Carolina  
Legal Services**

*Balancing the Scales of Justice*

# 10 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU RENT



## Our Mission

South Carolina Legal Services is a statewide law firm that provides civil legal services to protect the rights and represent the interests of low-income South Carolinians.

## For Free Services

1 (888) 346-5592

contactus@sclegal.org

www.sclegal.org / www.lawhelp.org/sc

www.probono.net/sc



## 1. Location matters

Visit potential neighborhoods a few times, at different times of the day, before deciding on whether to rent.



## 2. The landlord is not your buddy

The landlord might be perfectly nice, but your relationship is about business, not friendship. Check into your potential landlord's reputation before you sign a lease. Get everything in writing, even something as simple as assurance of when a problem will be fixed. Keep copies of all documentation and correspondence between the landlord and you.

## 3. Skimming your lease is not enough

All agreements between the landlord and you should be in the lease before you sign it. Be sure you completely understand and agree to all of the provisions in the lease. Never let anyone pressure you into signing with just a cursory once-over.

## 4. You are in charge of your own safety

New renters also need to know where smoke alarms and fire extinguishers are, how to maintain them and what to do in an emergency.

## 5. Roommate caution

Remember that when you sign a lease together, you could be responsible for the whole bill if roommates do not pay their share.



## 6. You need to go shopping

Remember to factor household costs into your budget. Some of the basics you will need to buy: cleaning supplies, small appliances; pots and pans; light bulbs; shower curtains and plunger.

## 7. Insurance is cheap, and necessary

Costing as little as \$12 a month, renters' insurance could save you, if your belongings are stolen or destroyed in a fire. Your landlord usually is not responsible for replacing



or repairing your property. Insurance can cover against those situations, as well as theft from other places, such as the trunk of your car.

## 8. Be Nosey, be pushy

Spend time examining utility closets and appliances during your tour. If something breaks, keep calling until it's fixed. Some landlords may not respond unless you call them frequently.

