

Resource Guide: Client Telephone Guide - Calling About an Apartment

Note: It is recommended to be prepared before calling a landlord. You should be prepared to answer questions about your circumstances and explain what changes you have made to prevent similar problems from happening again. Try to make a list of responses to potential questions that might be asked by landlords.

This worksheet will help you keep track of who you have talked to, when, and what follow-up actions are required. It is important to come across as responsible. This means to show up on time to view a rental, and must call and reschedule if you cannot keep an appointment. Also, remember that you should confirm whether the landlord will call you back with a decision or if you should call the landlord.

Tip: If you do not have access to a phone, then you can use other forms of communication if possible. You can use an email or social media like Messenger. Also, you can use someone that you would trust to let you know if a landlord try's calling you back. Some examples: a family member, friend, co-worker, case manager, etc.

Directions: This worksheet is designed to help you determine whether an apartment would be appropriate for you and, if applicable, your family. The questions about screening are important because many landlords charge an application fee to screen for criminal history, credit history, and rental history. It is recommended to find out in advance the landlord's flexibility (that is, whether the landlord will rent to people in your situation), then you can decide if it would be worth paying the fee to apply for the apartment. It is recommended that if you have any thing that you know will be a barrier for the screening process, then you should write a short letter explaining it. Also, if you have a criminal history then it is recommended to make a portfolio with attached letters of reference/support.

Recommendations Before Calling:

- If possible, call from a quiet place so you can hear the landlord. It is also better if the landlord does not hear a lot of noise (like people yelling) in the background.
- Take the time review the listing of the rental.
- Make sure to review the list of questions below so you are prepared when you call the landlord.
- Know when you can move.
- Know your schedule. If the landlord tries to set up a time to view the rental, then you are ready.



- Make sure to use proper language and communicate professionally.
- Write down the name of the person you talked to, his or her phone number, and the date you made the call in case you need to call back to ask more questions or to reschedule an appointment.
- Since you may have to contact several landlords to find an apartment, try to keep track on a separate page when you have scheduled an appointment to look at an apartment, where you have submitted applications, and when and with whom you need to follow up about an apartment.

Table 1: Questions About the Apartment

	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
What is the address of the property?		
What date is the unit available?		
Do you charge an application fee? <i>If he/she says yes: How much?</i>		
What is the monthly rent?		
How much is the security deposit?		
What type of heating does the unit have (forced air, wall furnace or other)? Gas or electric? This can impact your utility bill. Is the unit insulated?		
What utilities would I pay?		
Do you know approximately how much utilities for that unit cost each month?		
Has there been a recent rent increase?		

How many people are allowed to live in the unit?		
What is the minimum lease you require (how many months)?		
Do you require me to have a certain income to rent the unit? <i>If he/she says yes: How much?</i>		
What appliances are included? Are there washer/dryer hookups (if washer/dryer is not included)? Are there laundry facilities on-site? <i>If he/she says no: Is there a laundromat nearby?</i>		
Is the stove gas or electric?		
Is the unit furnished?		
Does the rental have a garage and/or driveway? Does the unit have off-street parking? How many parking spaces? Are parking permits required for street parking? If so, what is the cost?		
Is the rental near public transportation?		
Were the locks changed after the last tenants vacated?		

Table 2: Screening Questions
[Ask only those questions that apply to your situation.]

	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
<p><i>If you have Section 8 or another rent subsidy:</i></p> <p>Do you accept Section 8 or other rent subsidies?</p>		
<p><i>If you've had credit problems:</i></p> <p>Do you work with people who have had credit problems in the past?</p>		
<p><i>If you have been evicted:</i></p> <p>Do you work with people who have evictions that can be explained?</p>		
<p><i>If you have a criminal history:</i></p> <p>Do you work with people who have a criminal history if they've worked to improve their life?</p>		
<p><i>If you have a disability:</i></p> <p>Can you accommodate people with disabilities?</p>		
<p><i>If you have pets:</i></p> <p>What are your rules about pets?</p>		



The landlord may ask you to explain the circumstances if you have bad credit, limited rental references, a criminal history, or prior evictions etc. They may want to know dates, places, and people they can call for clarification and verification. The best response is to be truthful, take responsibility for your mistakes, and talk about what you are doing to make sure it never happens again.

Here are things that might show a landlord how you are improving your life:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> employed for ___ months/years | <input type="checkbox"/> taking classes on budgeting your money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> going to school (or job training) | <input type="checkbox"/> completed treatment and sober |
| <input type="checkbox"/> working with a credit counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> working with a social worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> paying off money you owe | <input type="checkbox"/> ended a bad relationship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> established a savings account | <input type="checkbox"/> taking classes about being a better tenant |

If the landlord is willing to work with people in your situation:

- Is it possible to set up a time to see the rental? When? _____
- Can you give me directions from [*where you are living/staying*]? (If you need it)

- Can I have your name again, in case I need to call you back? _____
- And what is the best number to reach you at? _____

Be sure to thank him or her before hanging up.



Table 3: Follow-Up

	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
Apartment address		
Date and time of appointment		
Did you fill out an application? <i>If yes, when will the landlord be contacting you with a decision?</i>		
Did you get the apartment? <i>If yes, when is the move-in date?</i> <i>If no, what was the reason provided?</i>		