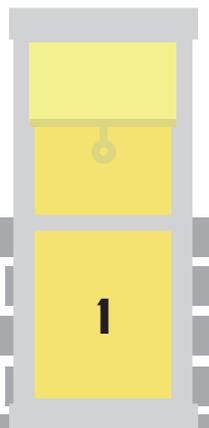


THE APARTMENT RENTER'S GUIDE TO HOME SECURITY



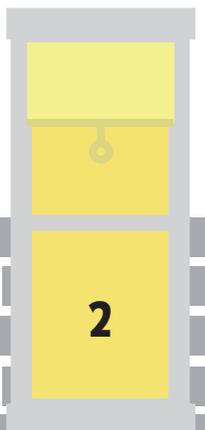
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INTRODUCTION

As an apartment dweller, your security concerns are unique. Living in close proximity to others offers a sense of community, but it also means increased foot traffic near your front door, which can pose safety risks. This guide offers tips for questions to ask and things to test before you move in, as well as suggestions for keeping the place safe after you've signed the lease.



QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE MOVING IN

When checking out a potential new residence, you always have a million questions to ask, and sometimes it's easy to forget a few important ones. Consider taking a checklist with you, so you make sure to ask everything you want to know. Here are seven safety questions to get your checklist started:

1. WHAT'S THE LOCAL CRIME DATA?

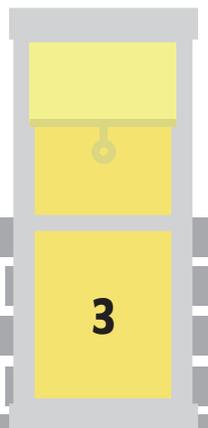
Of course, this isn't a question you ask your potential landlord as much as a question you pose to the internet. When you think you've found your dream apartment, check local crime data in its vicinity. Make sure you know about any troubling activities in the area before committing to a lease. Talk to the local police and neighbors to get an honest picture of what life will be like in your new place. Websites like [CrimeReports.com](https://www.crimereports.com), [CrimeMapping.com](https://www.crimemapping.com), and [SpotCrime.com](https://www.spotcrime.com) can give you a good idea of the local crime history in almost any community. You can also contact your local police department for more information.

2. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE FOR UPKEEP?

Take in the general look and feel of your new place. Broken windows, cracked drywall, or water stains could show a lack of concern from the landlord. Check to see if the lawn and landscaping are well-kept. If the landlord won't take care of basic maintenance, he or she probably isn't concerned with general security. Ask the landlord about what upkeep is included with the rent. For example, does the landlord make sure the walkways are cleared when it snows? Does the landlord maintain the common areas? A landlord's answer to these questions should give you a better idea of what you're getting into.

3. ARE THE DRAPES, BLINDS, OR CURTAINS INCLUDED?

Sometimes the window treatments are not included with the residence, so it's always good to check. Blinds, drapes, or curtains are



essential when you're moving into a place. You don't want strangers being able to look into your place and see all your valuables, especially when you're moving in and everything is scattered in plain view. Make sure to get some good window treatments installed stat, if they don't come with the residence.

4. WHERE ARE THE BUILDING'S FIRE ESCAPES?

In apartment complexes, exterior fire escapes can be lifesavers during an emergency, but their access to windows and balconies can also attract burglars. If your apartment has a fire escape, make sure it is stored properly off the ground, so intruders can't reach your apartment.

5. IS THERE A BUILDING MANAGER TO CONTACT IN CASE OF EMERGENCY? DO THEY LIVE ON THE PREMISES?

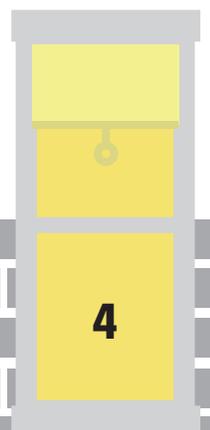
If something goes wrong with your apartment's plumbing, electricity, or thermostat, it's nice to know if there's someone nearby who has your back. Before moving in, it's good to know what the procedures are in place to get things quickly and efficiently fixed. If you have to contact the landlord who then hires a contractor, that takes more time than having a handyman (or woman) living in the building.

6. WHAT'S THE PARKING SITUATION?

Parking safety is a big thing to consider when deciding on an apartment. In fact, we have an entire section of this guide that will give you [parking tips](#). You'll want to ask your landlord a few questions:

- Do I have a designated parking spot? How many?
- Is it covered?
- Can you park on the street?
- Is there a parking structure?
- Where do guests park?

When you tour the apartment, you should also check to see where the designated parking spot is located for the apartment. Think about whether it will be well-lit at night, how far you'll have to walk from your car, and whether it's in an area where burglars could hide.



7. WHO ELSE LIVES IN THE BUILDING?

You want to move into a place where you can become friendly with your neighbors, so you can call on them in case of emergency— or if you need a cup of sugar. Ask about children, pets, and activities in the area. Ask what the neighbors do for a living. If the landlord doesn't know much, it's generally not a very good sign. In an apartment complex, the landlord should know the general demographic and lifestyle of nearby tenants.

Don't ever be scared to ask questions. If the landlord evades questions or suggests you talk about certain aspects later, that's generally not a good sign. A good landlord will be friendly, accommodating, and ready to listen to your needs. In fact, a great landlord will be ecstatic that you're asking so many questions because it's a sign that you've got a good head on your shoulders. Just as you look for a good landlord, good landlords look for reliable and upstanding tenants.

THINGS TO CHECK BEFORE MOVING IN

Once you've possibly tired out the landlord with a million questions (thus proving how thorough and responsible you are), you'll want to check certain aspects of the apartment and building. Give your attention to several aspects of the premises:

1. LIGHTING

Robbers and intruders prefer to sneak around in poorly-lit or dark areas. Therefore, when considering an apartment, check the entrances, hallways, walkways, parking areas, elevators, stairways, mail areas, and laundry rooms to make sure they have enough lighting at night. The fewer places an offender has to hide, the safer you'll be.

2. APARTMENT ENTRANCES

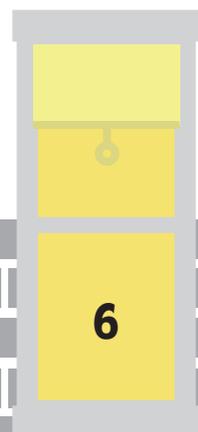
When looking at apartments, consider the security of the building. Many times, an outside entry door will require a key, pass code, or buzz-in to access the hallways and doors of the actual apartments. This way, residents control who can approach their apartment door, reducing loitering, break-ins, and solicitors.

3. PEEPHOLE

A peephole can keep you and your family safe by allowing you to see who's at your door before you open it. If your door does not have a peephole, inquire about having one installed before you move in. When a questionable character is at your door, a peephole will help you and your children avoid any compromising situations.

4. WINDOW LOCKS

Good window locks keep intruders from gaining easy access to your residence. This is especially true for windows on the ground level, but all windows should be properly checked—you'd be sur-



prised how determined burglars can be. Treat all windows as potential entry points, and make sure all window locks are working properly and cannot be manipulated from the outside.

5. APPLIANCES

If there are any appliances included with your apartment, such as refrigerators, toasters, washing machines, etc. you'll want to test them. A good landlord will check all the appliances after a tenant moves out, but sometimes they forget or feel short on time, so it's up to you to make sure everything's ship-shape. Turn on all the appliances, test all the burners on the stove and the oven, and try all the water faucets (and the shower) to check the water heater and water pressure.

If you're considering a long-term lease, you've got to test everything in sight to make sure it's a safe and suitable environment for you to live in. If you find anything that's off-kilter, insist that the landlord have it fixed before moving in. It's generally easier to resolve issues before moving in than afterward. If the landlord is antsy for you to sign the lease before things are fixed, then the landlord should include a contract with a date stating when faulty appliances will be replaced. When it comes to housing, always get everything in writing—no exceptions.

SAFETY MEASURES AFTER MOVING IN

Once you've found your dream apartment, keep your family and valuables safe with ongoing security measures. Here are some things you should do to make your apartment a haven:

1. GET NEW DOOR LOCKS

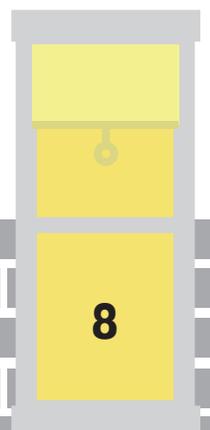
Replacing your locks reduces the risk of unwanted persons being able to access your new place. Many landlords say they've replaced the locks, but sometimes apartment managers will just rotate the old locks between apartments, and extra keys are not always returned. When you move into new housing, you never know how many keys have gone missing or how many previous tenants may still have keys. Ask your landlord about having your locks replaced with brand new locks, not redistributed old ones. Don't risk somebody being able to return to your apartment with an old key.

2. BUY ADDITIONAL LOCKS

For added safety, consider installing a deadbolt and chain lock if your door doesn't already have them. A deadbolt is more secure and difficult to pick than a standard doorknob lock. Deadbolts only open by rotating the lock cylinder, whereas a spring bolt lock can be retracted by applying force to the bolt itself. Additionally, a chain lock provides an extra layer of security when opening your door, allowing you to open your door a crack to talk to a stranger or ask for identification, before opening up completely.

3. BOLSTER SLIDING DOORS

Balcony doors are great for sunshine and views, but they can pose a hazard if they are not properly secured. An unsecured sliding door can provide an intruder with a relatively untraceable and quiet entrance to your place. While it's important to always lock your balcony door when it's not in use, many sliding doors have inadequate locks and come off their tracks with just a strong nudge. For optimal security, make sure to arm your sliding door with an



inside bar lock or a pole on the track. You can also install a secondary locking mechanism with a metal pin inserted through the doorframe and into the sliding door.

4. INVEST IN GOOD BLINDS

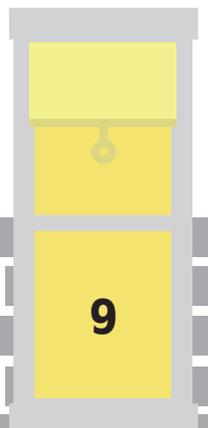
Good blinds may prevent robbers from looking inside your home and being tempted by all the valuables they see. If your apartment doesn't come with them, invest in blinds that completely block the view from outside, and make sure to close them when you go out. That way, you'll keep wandering eyes from scanning your valuables and reduce your risk of break-ins.

5. USE A SAFE

A safe can be a last line of defense to protect your most valuable and irreplaceable possessions. Items such as jewelry, cash, firearms, and sensitive documents can be locked away in a fire-proof case. Safes come in all sizes and range in price from under \$100 to thousands of dollars. Find a safe that fits your budget and needs, and talk to your landlord about bolting it to a floor or wall, so a burglar can't pick it up and take it. While a safe can't guarantee the absolute protection of your property, it can be effective at hiding items from thieves who are just looking to grab valuables in plain sight and escape quickly.

6. GET RENTERS INSURANCE

Renters insurance will protect the value of your possessions in case they are stolen or destroyed by a disaster. Your landlord may have an insurance policy, but those generally only cover the building you live in, not your personal belongings. Many insurance companies offer policies specifically for renters that run about \$20 a month and cover all your property at the full replacement cost. Renters insurance can also protect you in case of a liability lawsuit where you are deemed responsible for the damage of another tenant's property. You may think you don't own very much, but consider the cost of replacing everything you own in the event of a theft, fire, or severe weather. If you wouldn't be able to recover from the loss, then renters insurance is a good option.



Of course, there are many safety measures you can take beyond what we've mentioned here. Above all, staying safe means doing the little things: lock your doors and windows when you leave, check your peephole before you open your door, and don't let strangers into your apartment. Being safe doesn't mean you're untrusting or paranoid—it simply means you know how to protect yourself.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

When you live in an apartment, getting to know your neighbors takes on a whole new level of importance. You're in close quarters with one another, usually with your front doors just a hop, skip, and a jump away. While this means you may have more foot traffic near your front door, it also can be a source of safety. Here are some awesome things that neighbors can do for you:

1. KEEP AN EYE OUT

If someone fishy is lurking around your apartment, a neighbor who knows you can call or text to let you know.

2. CHECK ON YOU

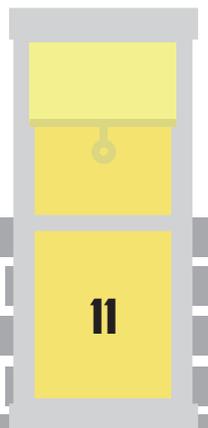
If your neighbor hears alarming noises, struggle, or yelling, they're more apt to check on you if they know you. Otherwise, people tend to think that if they knock on your door, they'll just be bothering you. And if you really are in trouble, you want those neighbors coming to your door.

3. RECEIVE PACKAGES WHEN YOU'RE GONE

It's easy for intruders to see that you're not home when you have packages piling up in front of your door. It can also be unsafe to leave unattended packages outside. But all these problems are solved if you have a neighbor friend who can receive packages for you.

4. ALERT THE AUTHORITIES IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

If your neighbor hears noises but can't get a hold of you, or if something happens and you're incapacitated and unable to ask for help, a neighbor can alert the authorities without wasting time.



5. KEEP A SPARE KEY

Keeping a key under the doormat is a bad idea, since it's the first place intruders will check, but it's a good idea to keep a spare key somewhere, in case you lose your keys or lock them in your car. Giving a key to a trusted neighbor can be a good alternative to putting a key in a conspicuous place.

Your neighbors don't have to be your best friends, but it's a good idea to reach out to them. Not only can they lend you a hand in a pinch, but they can also help you out in case of an emergency. The bottom line is if a neighbor hears you calling for help or if they hear a suspicious noise, they're more likely to check on you if you have a rapport with them. So, head on over with a plate of cookies and introduce yourself.

PARKING SAFETY TIPS

According to a [study](#) from the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), many thieves target cars in apartment complex lots. Most of the break-ins occur during the day, and it's easy for burglars to remain anonymous, since many cars and people come and go during the day. Apartment buildings specifically targeted by car burglars tend to be multi-family apartment complexes, and the items stolen are usually personal items and car parts, including music players, wallets, laptops, cash, and car stereo equipment. With that in mind, here are some ways to deter car theft:

1. AVOID PARKING NEAR SHRUBBERY OR LARGE PILLARS

Try to park in areas where your vehicle, and the area surrounding your vehicle, is in plain view. It's easier for burglars to break into your car when they have the cover of shrubbery or pillars to hide behind.

2. PARK IN A WELL-LIT AREA

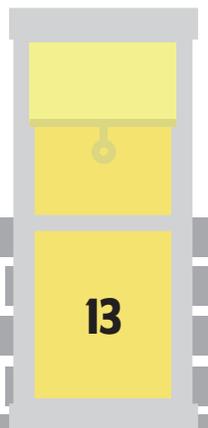
Sometimes it's difficult to find an empty spot in a parking garage, let alone a good one. But if you can, park next to a light post to ensure your vehicle is bathed in light, instead of hidden in a dark corner. This makes it more difficult for burglars to lurk in the shadows around your car.

3. HIDE VALUABLES

Don't leave any valuables in plain sight when you park. If you have shopping bags or a laptop in your car, hide them under the seats, put them in the trunk, or take them with you. Don't tempt thieves by putting your valuables on display.

4. DON'T FORGET YOUR CELL PHONE

It's easy to forget a charging cell phone on the seat of your car or in the cup holder, but it's an invitation for a burglar to break into your car. Before you leave your car, make sure you have your cell phone on you.



5. DON'T LEAVE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Be wary of leaving any important documents in your car, including bank statements or receipts with your credit card information. These kinds of documents can be used for identity theft. In addition, it may be convenient to keep your title in your car, but if a thief steals your car, having the title makes it a lot easier for them to sell your car.

We're in and out of our cars so much that sometimes we can fail to do the little things that can make a big difference to our personal security. Lock your doors and roll up your windows every time you get out of the car. Put any valuables out of sight, or better yet, bring them with you into your apartment. If you feel the parking stall assigned to you is unsafe, notify your landlord immediately and ask for improved lighting, trimmed shrubbery, or an alternate parking space.

INSTALLING AN APARTMENT-FRIENDLY SECURITY SYSTEM

Renters are 85% more likely to experience a home invasion than those who own their homes ([source](#)), and while many security companies won't sell to renters, some will. In the past, security systems were not renter-friendly due to an intrusive installation process, but now renters have several options. The following companies all offer wireless equipment that you install yourself and take with you if you move. Here are some of the options:

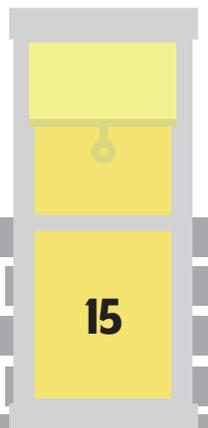
FRONTPOINT

With [FrontPoint](#), there's straightforward pricing: you pay for your equipment and monthly monitoring, with no installation or activation fees. FrontPoint is 100% wireless, meaning the security system contacts a monitoring center through a cellular uplink. Not only does FrontPoint's monitoring cover you for security, but it also includes fire, flood, carbon monoxide, and life safety, all included free of charge. Most monitoring packages include mobile access, so you can control your security system from your smartphone or other web-enabled device.

You install your system yourself, and an installation expert walks you through the process over the phone to test your equipment and make sure everything goes smoothly. What's more, FrontPoint offers flexible contracts. If you sign a 12-month contract you instantly save \$25 on equipment, if you sign a 36-month agreement, you instantly save \$300 on equipment—and the most expensive package is \$199.93, meaning you get a system free, plus you're credited \$100 for additional equipment. You can try FrontPoint risk-free for 30 days.

LIFESHIELD

While [LifeShield](#) mostly offers packages for homeowners, it does offer a Renters Package. With this package, you get a basic wire-



less security system free with a 63-month contract, an activation fee of \$129.99, and monthly monitoring fees. Its monitoring services include security, fire, environmental, and life safety, and you can choose between broadband or cellular monitoring.

One of LifeShield's huge perks is that mobile access is included in the Renters Package. Through LifeView, a proprietary mobile access portal, you can remotely control your security system from a smartphone or other web-enabled device. From anywhere, you can arm or disarm your system, control security settings, view history, or see video snapshots. You can even set up custom notifications and alerts. LifeShield also throws in a free LifeView security tablet—a \$199 value—so you can access your security system from anywhere in your home. You can put the tablet on your nightstand or take it with you as you walk around the house, for added ease and comfort.

SIMPLISAFE

SimpliSafe is a different animal. There are no contracts. You pay for the equipment and the monitoring and you can stop services whenever you want. Your equipment contacts the monitoring center through a cellular uplink, and the monthly monitoring fees are lower than with any other company—starting at \$14.99.

The equipment packages run a bit steeper than with other companies, but SimpliSafe gives you options to curb the expenses. You have a choice: buy your equipment new or buy refurbished equipment at a discounted price. To sweeten the deal, all SimpliSafe equipment comes with a 3-year warranty, even if it's refurbished. If anything goes wrong with the equipment, SimpliSafe will fix it or replace it free of charge. You also get a 60-day, risk-free trial period. Within 60 days if you decide SimpliSafe isn't for you, return it for a full refund.

When it comes to choosing a security system for your apartment, it's all about your personal preferences and priorities. Different security companies focus on different strengths. What they have in common is lots of options for customizing your equipment and features to suit your apartment. For more information on security system companies and how they stack up, check out www.safewise.com.

CONCLUSION

When renting an apartment, take safety into your own hands and make sure to explore all your security options. Don't let your landlord dictate the safety of your apartment. Instead, work with your landlord to make sure your residence is secure, and take personal steps to keep it that way.

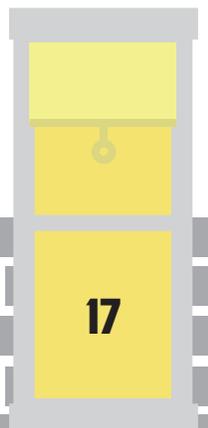
ABOUT SAFEWISE

At SafeWise, we're on a mission to help make your living space and community safe. We save your time and sanity through our resources and honest reviews of safety and security products—so you can quickly and easily get the information you need to protect yourself, your family, and your community.

Check out [Safewise.com](https://www.safewise.com) for more details on specific security companies and to compare security companies side-by-side.

For more information on how to secure your apartment, visit www.safewise.com.

We're happy to take any questions directed to info@safewise.com.





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