

Finding a place to call home

First steps

- Consult the ☺ [listing website](#) to look for available roommate and/or apts.
- ▶ Take a look at the ☺ [Housing Guide](#) to obtain a better idea as to what different apartment (apt.) complexes have to offer and where they are located
- ▶ Refer yourself to the ☺ [Off-Campus Guidebook](#) to familiarize yourself with some of the terminologies, or how to go about living off-campus and what you should think about, including what signing a contract/lease means.
- ▶ When you are reaching out to potential roommates, ask them if they are undergraduate or graduate students? Lifestyles of undergraduate students can be different than those of graduate students.
- ▶ Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance keeps a ☺ [webpage of downtown apartment complexes](#), all of which are appropriate for a more mature student.
- ▶ While most of the apts. may be around JMU, make sure to ask where the nearest bus stops can be found.

Signing the lease

- ▶ Property managers/landlords will most likely ask you for a financial guarantor, (typically a US one) to co-sign, as they are concerned that you may not be able to honor the financial commitment of your lease. Finding a financial guarantor can be almost impossible for international students to obtain, however...
- Provide proof of a source of revenue (through your graduate assistantship) or contact ☺ [Thomas Lavenir](#) so that he can write you a letter stipulating that by virtue of being on a student visa you had to demonstrate that you had enough money to pay for your studies and living expenses.
- ▶ Note that you most likely will not be able to sign a contract/lease from abroad. You will need to do so in person
- ▶ Before you sign a contract or lease, make sure that you agree to all of the terms. Once you sign a lease or contract you cannot back out of the agreement. If you signed a document that stipulated that you need to pay a certain amount for the next 12 months, you will need to pay make these payments, etc..

Utilities

- ▶ Depending on the apt. complex you decide to live-in, the rent that you pay may include the cost of utilities (electricity, waters, etc) whereas others may not. If you will need to pay separately for utilities do so through ☺ [UDAP](#) as it will greatly simplify this whole process for you. When completing the form you will be asked to enter a US Driver's License Number. If you do not have one:
 - ▶ Go ahead and create a dummy number that starts with (a) 1 letter of your choice then (b) followed by 8 numbers of your choice.
 - ▶ For the Driver's License Expiration Date, go ahead and enter program end date found on your I-20.
 - ▶ For the Driver's License State, enter VA (for Virginia).
- Now complete and submit the contract, and use your 5-digit contract number to connect utilities off-campus without a deposit.

Obtaining the keys to your new home

- ▶ To help you move in into your new home as soon as you arrive in Harrisonburg, don't forget to ask the apt. owner or leasing agent several questions:
 - ▶ The specific date and time will greatly impact if you can move in directly into your new home. For example, many offices close at 5pm. [\[refer yourself to the "Trip Planner" step\]](#)
 - ▶ You may therefore need to find a hotel or ☺ [airbnb](#) to stay in the meantime. [\[refer yourself to the "Trip Planner" step\]](#)
 - ▶ In addition to the deposit and the agreed upon rent, there may be some additional fees (like an internet activation fee...) that you may have to pay. [\[refer yourself to the "Money Matters" step\]](#)