Apartments

According to a 2009 study, 66% of students living off-campus reported renting a condo or apartment, which is the off-campus housing option that most similarly resembles life in the residence halls.

So, what distinguishes apartments from other types of off-campus housing?

- A 12 month lease with the property management company is standard. Shorter leases will likely result in a premium on rent.
- Most apartments will include some or all utilities in the rent (electricity, water, heat, AC, cable).
- The property management company is responsible for the maintenance of public areas and repairs and general maintenance of the unit.

Renting a condo means you are renting from the individual who owns the unit, so the individual landlord is responsible for repairs and general maintenance.

Shared Houses

Sharing a house with friends is another option for off-campus living. According to a 2009 study, 21% of students living off-campus reported renting a house.

With the added freedom and extra space associated with renting a house come added responsibilities. More so than if you lived in an apartment because you have more variables to factor in.

Instead of dealing with a property management company for an apartment, you will likely deal with an individual landlord to work out rental details for a house. This is an important point because you aren't necessarily working with a standard lease, so you need educate yourself on the exact contents of the lease before you sign anything. Clarify points you don't understand and make sure those points are in writing.

The maintenance policy will vary, so you'll want to clarify who is responsible for what. For example, lawn care and landscaping, snow removal, etc.

Repairs or maintenance may not be carried out as quickly as an apartment. If the landlord is the individual responsible for maintenance and repairs, who will cover for them while they are away? You don't want to get your landlord’s voicemail while they are at the beach and your dishwasher is flooding.

Basically, living in a house with friends requires more understanding of the off-campus housing variables than apartment life.

Sublets

A sublease, which can be ideal for people studying abroad or graduating midyear, is an arrangement where the person holding the lease assigns it to a third party. For someone holding a 12-month lease, it allows them to partially cover the expenses of a lease without breaking it while away. For people without a lease, it allows them to rent without the burden of a long-term lease.
**Beginning the search**

The Off-Campus Posting site is a great place to begin your search. In addition to roommate posting under the message board tab, many community members looking for AU students to fill their space post rooms, basement units, and single-family homes on the site. You will also find properties from around the DC area.

The Washington Post Apartment Showcase, available online as well as in hardcopy at news stands, provides an extensive list of apartment communities in Washington, Maryland, and Virginia with a breakdown of features and amenities offered.

Craigslist, the online classified ad community, includes a section devoted to housing. Many landlords and property managers post their listings on Craigslist because they are free in DC. To avoid irrelevant postings inevitable on a free site, search for listings with an image in specific neighborhoods.

Realtor.com, provides a list of homes for sale and rentals listed on the Multiple Listing Service by a real estate agent. This is a great place to search if you are interested in renting a house.

You should also consider talking to friends and organizational peers as they may be moving to study abroad or graduate.

**Housing Search timeline**

![Flowchart showing housing search timeline](chart.png)

**Neighborhoods near campus**

The various neighborhoods surrounding American University offer an assortment of residential styles, methods of available transportation, recreational parks, and commercial areas.

**AU Park (0.5 miles)** - AU Park, named after the university, was developed in the 1920's. The neighborhood houses roughly 2700 single family homes of varying architectural styles
as well as AU's Washington College of Law, the Georgetown Day School, and the chancery of the diplomatic mission of Japan. Friendship Park, also known as Turtle Park, offers neighborhood residents a place to meet and engage in athletic activities. AU Park is served by Wagshal's Deli and Market, Chicken Out, Le Pain Quotidien, and Super Fresh supermarket.

**Tenleytown (1.0 miles)** - Tenleytown, named after a roadside tavern owned by John Tennally in the 18th century, boasts of the highest elevation in the District. It is adjacent to Spring Valley and hosts the Tenleytown/American University Metro stop, making it the ideal place for students. Tenleytown consists of a variety of houses and apartments for students within walking distance to campus. There are more than just the necessities nearby: A myriad of restaurants, grocery stores, and ease of access to other parts of the city are all within reach.

**Glover Park (1.5 miles)** - Glover Park is another neighborhood in NW, less than half a mile from Georgetown. Housing in the area is a mix of apartments and porch-front row-houses built in the 1920s and 1930s when it began to develop. It is also the home of the U.S. Naval Observatory, Number One Observatory Circle (home of the vice president), and several embassies. The western part of the neighborhood is an extension of Rock Creek Park, there are also several restaurants in the area. While, there are no Metro rail stations that serve this neighborhood, there are some Metro buses that are available for students to take to go to campus.

**Van Ness (2.0 miles)** - Van Ness, technically called Forest Hills, is often mislabeled because of the metro rail stop named after the Van Ness Campus of UDC. Van Ness lies between Connecticut Avenue and Rock Creek Park and roughly Nebraska Avenue and Tilden Street to the north and south, respectively. The neighborhood is home to numerous high rise apartment buildings as well as the University of the District of Columbia, the Levine School of Music, the Edmund Burke School, and the Hillwood Museum. The neighborhood is served by Potbelly’s, Epicurean and Co., Pier 1 imports, and Giant Food among others.

**Friendship Heights (2.0 miles)** - Friendship Heights, directly north of Tenleytown, is known for the quality of the stores and restaurants. Stores in the area, which can be accessed by metro, include Tiffany & Co., Saks 5th Ave, and Neiman Marcus, while restaurants include Cheesecake Factory, Meiah, and Bambule. Not many live on the main strip, but around it are townhouses and single family homes that cater to families and students alike. The area is expensive, but conveniently located with all the necessities close at hand.

*Information about the area*
When looking at various neighborhoods and properties, it is important to keep the following things in mind.

What forms of public transportation are available to and from these places? Take a look at Trip Planner on metro website at [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com) for map and arrival info for metro rail and bus.

How safe is this area? Crimemap.dc.gov, mylocalcrime.com, and familywatchdog.us provide statistical and mapping information regarding neighborhood crimes.

How close is this place to that place? maps.google.com can provide you with information related to the proximity to AU, grocery stores, restaurants etc.

### Budget breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Recurring</th>
<th>Typical amount/person*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent (within 2.5 miles of campus)</td>
<td>1000±200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable/Internet</td>
<td>90±50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Purchases</td>
<td>20±5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$930-$1440</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-Recurring Charges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amounts (Estimates)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security Deposit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Non-Refundable Service Fee (Non-Refundable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Furniture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pots and pans</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plates, silverwares, glasses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cheaper Housing Alternatives**

Trade-offs for lower rent can include longer commutes, higher transportation costs, and higher incidents of crime. If you are interested in budget friendly neighborhoods, consider one of these areas along the red line to avoid prolonged transfers in the metro.
**Popular apartments**

According to a 2009 study, 23% of off-campus students reported living at the Berkshire, 15% at the Avalon, 5% at Connecticut Heights, 4% at The Towers, and 4% at the Brandywine. The rest reported living at various locations, including The Brandywine, McLean Gardens, Greenbriar, The Chesapeake, The Consulate, Archstone Glover Park, and The Kenmore.

**Visiting properties**

In order to make the most of your visits, you want to keep a few things in mind:

- Prepare questions, which we’ll go over in the following slide, prior to visits
- Always visit properties with a friend. Not only is it important to have another set of eyes, but you never want to be alone in a stranger’s house.
- Ask to read a copy of the lease in your own time and make sure everything you discussed concerning the lease is in writing.

**Questions for landlords**

Asking the right questions while visiting properties will give you a solid understanding of what is being offered:

- How long is the space available?
- What is the total rent?
- When is the first payment due and for what month?
- What utilities are included?
- What are the average costs of utilities?
- What is the security deposit?
- Are there laundry facilities in the unit or building?
- Is parking included in the rent price?
- Is there guest parking available?
- What is the subletting policy?
- What is the repair and maintenance policy?
- What is the pet policy?
- Are there any additional charges for pets, lost keys or lockouts?
- What is the guest policy?
- How far in advance do residents have to give notice prior to moving out?
- Is there an early termination penalty?
- Is there anything I should know about the building?

**Furnishing**
Traditionally, you have some time between the date you sign your lease and your scheduled move-in date. This is a great time to organize furnishings for your place. These options will give you a great range of products and prices. Also, you should also consider bringing older items from home that are no longer in use.