

Conducting the Housing Search Resources

The tools provided below are designed to help clients with their housing search, particularly those who are searching on their own.

- **Housing Preferences Worksheet**

Before your clients begin their housing search, they should carefully think through which features of an apartment, building, and neighborhood are most important to them. The [Housing Preferences Worksheet](#) provides a list of features and asks clients to decide which features they must have, which they would prefer, and which they can live without. Once they have made these decisions, they will be able to conduct a more targeted housing search

- **Sample Rental Application**

Clients need to be able to act quickly when they see an apartment that they like - which means filling out an application on the spot. To ensure that your clients are prepared, have them fill out a [sample rental application](#) prior to beginning their housing search. This will ensure that they have all of the information they need at their fingertips, including, as applicable, contact information for previous landlords and employers, checking and savings account information, contact information for references, etc. It will also give them time to think about how to answer difficult questions related to prior evictions, a criminal history, or a poor credit history. The link above will bring you to a website that provides attorney-approved rental applications tailored for each state (available for a nominal fee), although there are also a number of free sample applications available on the internet - just search for "sample rental application."

- **Client Telephone Guide: Calling about an Apartment**

This [Client Telephone Guide](#) is designed to help clients when making calls to prospective landlords. It provides tips to prepare the client for the call as well as a script to use during the call. The script includes a number of questions to help clients determine whether a given apartment would be appropriate for him or her. Some of the questions address the landlord's screening policies (i.e., whether they are willing to rent to individuals with credit problems, a criminal history, prior evictions, etc.), which are particularly important to ask since most landlords charge an application fee. If the client can determine a landlord's "tolerance level" in advance, he or she can decide whether it would be worth paying the fee and applying for the apartment.

- **Tips for Finding an Apartment**

This article, entitled [How to Find an Apartment](#), guides individuals through the apartment search process. It provides links to online tools for evaluating neighborhoods

(including neighborhood profiles, school reports, and neighborhood crime statistics), guidance to help individuals determine the amount of money needed to rent an apartment, and tips on the most common ways to identify available apartments.

- **Apartment Comparison Checklist**

Viewing apartments can be a daunting task - there are so many things to remember! Clients can use this [Apartment Comparison Checklist](#) to compare different apartments, especially if they are viewing a number of units in one day. The checklist will also remind the client to ask the landlord specific questions about the terms and conditions of the lease.

- **What Does My Lease Say?**

[What Does My Lease Say?](#) is a tool that provides clients with a way to summarize, in their own words, the terms of their lease. Many housing advocates have found this to be a particularly important exercise for clients. They have found that a number of problems can be prevented simply by making sure clients understand the rules.

- **Move-in Inspection Checklist**

Many low-income individuals must accept housing with some deficiencies. As a result, they are sometimes more vulnerable to losing their security deposits, making it more difficult to accumulate a security deposit for the next apartment. To help prevent this problem, clients can use this [Move-in Inspection Checklist](#) to conduct a move-in inspection. It allows tenants to document problems to prevent being charged for pre-existing damage, but it could also be used by a more assertive client to negotiate repairs.

Select each resource and its embedded links above to learn more.