

Avoiding Rental Scams and Dishonest Landlords

Red Flags For Rental Scams:

-  If the landlord will not meet you in person
-  If the landlord will not personally walk through the property with you
-  If the landlord asks for the security deposit before you sign the lease
-  If you see the same property advertised on different web sites by different people or different management companies or different prices
-  If the property has a for rent sign and the phone number on the sign isn't the same as the landlords
-  If the landlord lives out of state and doesn't have a local management company with whom you can have regular contact
-  If the landlord will not provide you with their office or home address
-  If the landlord asks you for money up front to help you find a property
-  If the landlord doesn't have an official Rental Application form for you to complete
-  If the landlord does not require that you sign a legally binding lease and give you a fully executed copy

Questions To Ask Your Potential Landlord:

What criteria do you use to accept or deny my rental application?

 *They should have specific criteria which is understandable to you*

Are you the owner or do you represent the owner?

 *If it is not the owner then it should be a licensed real estate agent*

Will you hold my security deposit in an escrow account?

 *State law requires deposits be held in a security deposit escrow account*

How quickly will my security deposit be returned after I move out?

 *It must be returned no more than 60 days after move-out*

What do you consider allowable deduction to the security deposit?

 *Make sure this is stated in the lease and deductions for “regular wear and tear” will not be made*

Do you allow for a certain amount of notice before you can enter the home?

 *Make sure this is stated in the lease so you know when they can enter*

How do you assess damage to the home regarding the security deposit refund?

 *You should have a check-in sheet to document any damage prior to your move-in. You should take pictures of the entire home for additional documentation*

When/How/Who do I contact for maintenance items?

 *There should be someone to call 24/7 incase of an emergency*

How many methods of payment are available for my monthly rent?

 *Online payments are very nice to have available for debit or credit card*

When is the rent due and what are the late fees?

 *Make sure you know when you have to pay, when you’ll get assessed late fees and how much those late fees will be*

Can I have time to read the lease in full?

 *The most important thing to do is read your lease agreement and know what it says. Ask questions and do not make any verbal agreement*

Are you current on your mortgage payments?

 *Most county assessors web sites post pending property foreclosures*