

FLAGLER  COLLEGE

COMMUTER
STUDENT
HANDBOOK

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WHO YOU REPRESENT!

Flagler College is a large part of the St. Augustine and St. Johns County community; as a student, you represent the College's past, present, and future. Your actions and behaviors are how most of the neighbors judge the College. Being a good neighbor is not difficult. Respect your neighbor's property, consider your neighbor's privacy, and be aware that a college student's time commitments are generally different than those of the people in your neighborhood. Future students would like to be able to rent the property long after you're gone, so leave an impression that College students make the best neighbors.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR SEARCH

Finding the right place to live in college can be tricky. Before you begin your apartment search, it's helpful to make a list of features you're looking for in an apartment, condo or house. From this list, decide which features are most important to you, and which features you can live without. This practice will help you compromise and find an apartment that suits your needs. Just remember – if you need an apartment with lots of room, it may be necessary to sacrifice location. But, if location is most important, you may need to consider compromising on the size of the apartment.

Start looking for apartments about four to six weeks before you want to move. If you wait too late, you may be stuck finding temporary housing at the last minute.

Remember houses and apartments go fast. Many get listed on Friday and are rented on Saturday. Be diligent, and don't wait too long before contacting the listing agent.

Compromise is good, but don't compromise on your most important issues. You can be flexible and still find an apartment that suits you. You don't want to get stuck in a lease on an apartment you will hate in six weeks.

ESTABLISHING YOUR HOUSING BUDGET

Moving to a new city can be exciting, and scary. To help you prepare a budget and eliminate some surprises along the way, here is a list of possible expenses you will incur during your move.

Temporary Accommodations

If your search takes too long or you get a late start, you may need to find temporary housing. Hotel and condo prices can range from \$60 to \$250 a night.

Credit Check

Landlords often require that you pay a fee so they can run a credit check on you. This fee can range from \$25 to \$50. To save money, you can obtain a credit report on your own and print out as many copies as you will need. You may also qualify for a free credit report. The three main credit agencies are TransUnion (www.transunion.com), Equifax (www.equifax.com), and Experian (www.experian.com).

Rent/Security Deposit

Naturally, the biggest expense of off-campus housing is rent. Many landlords ask for the first and last months' rent up front, plus a security deposit that is often refunded when you move out. Count on spending around \$1,500 or more to secure an apartment.

DON'T FORGET: There may also be additional deposits for pets, which are usually non-refundable.

Renter's Insurance

Living off campus often comes with unexpected expenses, but replacing all of your belongings shouldn't be one of them. Your landlord's insurance won't cover anything you own, so you'll need to protect yourself. Several insurance agencies offer renter's insurance in Florida, and most agencies offer quick, personalized quotes online. The average cost is about \$12 a month. It's also a good idea to keep an up-to-date inventory of all the belongings in your apartment and keep it somewhere safe. This will make the claims process much easier.

DON'T FORGET: Renter's insurance won't cover flood damage. Additional coverage is necessary, and it may be offered through the same company you choose for renter's insurance.

Moving Expenses

Moving from out of town? You'll need to consider the cost of gas, truck rental and food.

Utilities

Some landlords pay for utilities, but most only cover garbage pick-up and recycling costs. You'll need to call all utility companies at least one week prior to moving in for connection. Most companies will require a security deposit if this is your first time connecting service in St. Augustine.

ParkNow Card

The ParkNow card is your best bet for downtown parking. Metered lots cost \$1.50 per hour, but the rate drops to \$0.50 per hour with a ParkNow card. Rates for the Historic Downtown Parking Facility, located at the Visitor Information Center on 10 West Castillo Drive, are also cheaper with the ParkNow card. All-day parking will cost \$12 without the card, but only \$3 with it. There's a one-time cost of \$2.50 for the card and pre-paid amounts are available in \$20, \$30, \$50 or \$100. Visit the city's Financial Services Center, 50 Bridge St., from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday for more information.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A POTENTIAL ROOMMATE

Looking for a roommate can be the hardest part of living off campus. Living with someone you already know can help take away the stress, but you'll still need to consider several factors when interviewing potential roommates. Here are some questions to ask before making a decision:

General Questions

- What is your estimated monthly budget?
- Where do you want to live?
- How long do you plan on keeping the apartment?
- Will you be able to pay rent on time? If possible, do you want to sign separate leases?
- What are your expectations? Are you looking for a friend or just someone to share your space and expenses?

Cleanliness Expectations

- How often do you do chores?
- Who will be responsible for common areas and how often will these areas be cleaned?

Study Habits

- How much quiet time will you need?
- Do you study in the evening or on weekends?
- Can you study with the sound of music or TV?

Personal Habits

- How often are you home?
- What types of entertainment do you enjoy?
- Do you smoke or drink alcohol?
- How often do you have guests stay the night?

Food

- Do you have food allergies?
- Will we share food and shopping responsibilities?

Personal Items

- What is your policy on the use of your personal items; i.e. television, stereo, etc.?
- Do you own any furniture?
- How do you feel about loaning your things; i.e. clothes, books, utensils, food, etc.?

Sleeping Patterns

- What time do you go to bed?
- What time do you wake up?
- Are you a light sleeper?

Suggestions

- Always be honest about your own needs and concerns.
- Communication and respect are the keys to a healthy roommate relationship.

APARTMENT HUNTING AND RENTING TIPS

With the proper planning and inspection, you can often avoid 90% of apartment-related problems. If you're renting an apartment or house with a lease, make sure you read all of the fine print. If possible, have a parent, friend or lawyer read it, too. It can also be helpful to bring a friend when you view apartments. Having a second pair of eyes is always a plus.

Flagler Listings

Flagler College maintains an active listings database. You can access the list from your MyFlagler page. Keep in mind that Flagler does not endorse any property or rental unit included in the list.

What to Consider When Searching for an Apartment

Here are a few questions to ask yourself when searching for an apartment.

- Is the apartment close to campus? Use Google to map out your commute. Take into consideration traffic downtown can be tricky, and parking is often scarce.
- What's nearby? Is there a grocery store, pharmacy or gas station near you?
- Is the landlord an individual or a property management company? Individual landlords are often more flexible with lease terms and payments. It's always helpful to be able to go directly to the owner when issues arise.
- Can you afford this? Make sure you've double (and triple) checked your budget. Don't over stretch your funds and stick to your bottom line.

What to Look for When Viewing an Apartment

Outside

- Does the exterior seem well maintained and clean?
- Is there exterior lighting?
- Is there on-site parking?

Inside

- Open and close doors, and check for working locks.
- Look at the shower or bathtub for signs of mold or drainage issues.
- Is there adequate water pressure in the shower?
- Does the toilet flush properly?
- Are the bedrooms large enough? If you will have roommates, how will the rooms be split?
- Inspect all windows and make sure they are secure.
- Are there closets?
- Are telephone, electrical and cable outlets in good condition?
- Are there smoke and carbon monoxide detectors?
- Check kitchen appliances and make sure they turn on properly.

Building amenities

- Where is the trash can or dumpster located?
- Is there a yard, porch or common area?
- Is the back of the property secured?
- Is there a bike storage area?
- Is there a washer and dryer on site?
- Where is your mail delivered?

What to Ask Before Signing a Lease

- Who is signing the lease? If you're renting with roommates, it's a good idea to have all parties sign the lease.
- How will rent payments be made (individual or group checks, cash or money order)?
- What is the late payment policy?
- What are the terms of the lease?
- When are the move-in and move-out dates?

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The best advice is to know your rights. Check out <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/florida/renting/tenantrights> to download a summary of your rights and responsibilities and how to get legal assistance if problems arise. If you wish to file a complaint with the City of St. Augustine's Planning and Zoning department regarding unsafe living conditions, please call 904.825.1065 or email cosa@citystaug.com

Some key parts of the document listed above include:

If possible, arrange for a walk-through of the premises to identify any problems that should be fixed BEFORE signing a rental agreement. Take pictures, video or make notes of any questionable conditions and include provisions for repairs in the rental agreement or in a separate written document signed by both parties.

Before you sign, make sure you thoroughly understand the terms of the agreement. If you DON'T understand, DON'T sign the agreement. There is no grace period allowed for canceling a rental agreement, so if you sign, you are bound to its terms.

Florida law requires that notices to and from a landlord must be in writing, and either be hand-delivered or mailed, even if the rental agreement is oral. You should always retain a copy of any correspondence to and from your landlord.

The Landlord

Section 83.51(1)(a)(b), F.S.

The landlord's responsibilities will depend on the type of rental unit. The landlord of a single-family home or duplex shall at all times during the tenancy:

- Comply with the requirements of applicable building, housing and health codes; or
- Where there are no applicable building, housing or health codes; maintain the roof, windows, screens, floors, steps, porches, exterior walls, foundations and all other structural components in good repair and capable of resisting normal forces and loads;
- Keep the plumbing in reasonably good working condition.

The landlord's obligations may be altered or modified in writing when renting a single family dwelling or duplex.

Section 83.51(2)(a), F.S.

In addition to providing the above requirements, the landlord of a dwelling unit other than a single-family home or duplex (such as an apartment) shall, at all times of the tenancy, make reasonable provisions for extermination of rats, mice, ants and wood destroying organisms and bed bugs; locks and keys; clean and safe conditions of common areas; garbage removal and outside receptacles; and functioning facilities for heat during winter, running water and hot water.

This does not mean that the landlord is obligated to pay for utilities, water, fuel or garbage removal, although he/she may choose to do so.

The Tenant

Section 83.52, F.S.

A tenant, at all times during the tenancy shall:

- Comply with all building, housing and health codes and keep the dwelling clean and sanitary.
- Remove garbage from the dwelling in a clean and sanitary manner.
- Keep plumbing fixtures clean, and in good repair.
- Not destroy, deface, damage, impair or remove any part of the premises or property belonging to the landlord, nor permit any person to do so.
- Conduct him/herself, and require other persons on the premises with his/her consent, to conduct themselves in a manner that does not unreasonably disturb the tenant's neighbors or constitute a breach of the peace.
- Use and operate in a reasonable manner all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, air-conditioning and other facilities and appliances, including elevators.

Access to the Premises

Section 83.53(1), F.S.

The tenant shall not unreasonably withhold consent to the landlord to enter the dwelling unit from time to time in order to inspect the premises.

Section 83.53(2), F.S.

The landlord may enter the dwelling unit at any time for the protection or preservation of the premises.

- The landlord may enter the dwelling unit upon reasonable notice to the tenant and at a reasonable time for the purpose of repair of the premises. "Reasonable notice" and "reasonable time" are defined as twelve (12) hours prior to the entry and between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m.

The landlord may also enter at any time when:

- The tenant is absent from the premises for a period of time equal to one-half the time for periodic rental payments. If the rent is current and the tenant notifies the landlord of an

intended absence, then the landlord may enter only with the consent of the tenant or for the protection or preservation of the premises.

- The tenant has given consent.

Top Ways to be a Good Tenant

- Pay your rent on time.
- Report maintenance issues appropriately.
- Be considerate of your neighbors.

BALANCING FOOD AND EXPENSES

Flagler College has two dining locations on campus offering a variety of food options from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Students can choose from 10 serving stations in the dining hall, plus grab-n-go options in The Bistro located in the Ringhaver Student Center.

On-Campus Dining Plans

Students living off campus have several choices when choosing a dining plan. You can choose between the full meal plan, the 15 meal plan or the 10 meal plan. Non-resident students also have the choice of purchasing meal tickets or paying cash for food in the dining hall. Here's the breakdown of the costs of each meal plan.

20 Meals Per Week

Features 20 meals to use per week at the All-You-Care-to-Eat dining hall plus 150 Dining Dollars to use at our fast casual restaurant

15 Meals Per Week

Features 15 meals to use per week at the All-You-Care-to-Eat dining hall plus 150 Dining Dollars to use at our fast casual restaurant

10 Meals Per Week

Features 10 meals to use per week at the All-You-Care-to-Eat dining hall plus 50 Dining Dollars to use at our fast casual restaurant

Best Choices for Commuters

Commuter 20 Block

\$125

Features 20 meals to use for the entire semester at the All-You-Care-to-Eat dining hall

Commuter 10 Block

\$149

Features 10 meals to use for the entire semester at the All-You-Care-to-Eat dining hall plus 100 Dining Dollars

Commuter 20 Block + \$100

\$215

Features 20 meals to use for the entire semester at the All-You-Care-to-Eat dining hall plus 100 Dining Dollars

Clipping Coupons

If you'll be cooking at home on a regular basis, you'll soon find that groceries don't come cheap. Coupons and special deals can help you save money each month. Clipping coupons doesn't sound like fun, but there are many websites that have made it just a little easier. Coupons.com has tons of printable coupons for grocery items, health and beauty and more. Many grocery stores, including Publix, also take digital coupons, as well. Extreme couponing isn't necessary to save money on groceries. Look for coupons in the Sunday newspaper and local ads, and stock up during Buy 1, Get 1 Free sales and 10 for \$10 deals. If you and your roommate split the grocery bill (at least for pantry staples like milk, cereal, bread, etc.), it can help you stretch your money and eliminate unnecessary spending.

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

St. Augustine Utilities

- St. Johns County Utility Department – (904) 209-2700; www.co.st-johns.fl.us/Utilities
- After Hours and Emergencies: (904) 209-2745
- Florida Power and Light – www.fpl.com
- Xfinity – www.xfinity.com
- Time Warner Cable – www.timewarnercable.com

Helpful Resources

- Flagler Hospital – (904) 819-5155; www.flaglerhospital.org
- ParkNow Card – www.staugustinegovernment.com/sites/park
- Google Maps – maps.google.com
- Walk-Score – www.walkscore.com (Search potential addresses for walkability to area resources.)
- The St. Augustine Record – www.staugustine.com

Flagler Offices

OFFICE OF STUDENT SERVICES

Ringhaver Student Center, 2nd Floor
(904) 819-6238
studentservices@flagler.edu

OFFICE OF RESIDENCE LIFE

Michelle Holland

Director of Residence Life
mholland@flagler.edu
(904) 819-6307

Kristina Lombardo

Assistant Director of Residence Life
klombardo@flagler.edu
(904) 826-8583

If you need immediate assistance outside normal business hours, please contact [Flagler Security](#) at (904)-819-6200 and they can connect you with the appropriate staff member.