



# Towson University Off-Campus Housing Guide

## **You are about to start looking for a place of your own, a place that will be your home for the coming months or years.**

This will be where you eat, sleep, study and relax. Depending on your specific wants and needs, there are many things to consider. In Baltimore County, a dwelling must be zoned as a rooming or boarding house and be approved by the county if more than two unrelated people live in a single-family dwelling. This zoning law is enforced throughout Baltimore County, especially in the Towson area.

Take a few minutes to read this booklet, which may present some ideas that you have not considered.

### **Good luck on finding your new home!**

#### **Tiger Pledge**

As an off-campus resident I will...

**T**ake responsibility for myself and the choices I make.

**I**magine success and work hard to achieve my academic goals.

**G**ive my best in showing respect for myself and others.

**E**ngage in my community to make a difference.

**R**emember to pause to celebrate my accomplishments.

#### **Reminder: Change Your Address**

You may be asking why, but there are very good reasons for updating your local address through Towson's Online Services. Some students change their addresses annually, and not updating your address, may mean that you are leaving important information insecurely behind in your old mailbox. The quality of our service depends on the quality of our mailing lists. Help us service you better by updating your address online.

#### **Top 3 Reasons to Update Your Address:**

1. Safety - you don't want your personal information left in the hands of the unknown because you didn't change your address.
2. Security - don't you want to feel secure in knowing that the university can contact you for important issues like graduation?
3. Status - stay in the know by receiving updates about off-campus student services and programs like commuter appreciation days, good morning commuters, and more.

#### **How to Update Your Local Address:**

On Towson's Web site, you will find Towson Online Services.

1. Log-In (Same username and password as TU E-mail)
2. Click on:
  - Self Service
  - Student Center
  - Personal Information
  - Addresses
3. Add/Update Local Address

# Table of Contents

<b>In Your Community</b> .....	2
• Good Neighbor Guidelines.....	2
• Community Associations.....	3
• Parking.....	3
• Pets.....	3
• Trash and Lawn Maintenance.....	3
• Snow Removal.....	3
<b>Policies</b> .....	3
• Housing Codes.....	3
• Obstruction of Streets and Alleys.....	3
• Parties and Noise.....	4
• Summary of Policy on Off-Campus Disorderly and Disruptive Behavior.....	4
• TU Code of Conduct.....	5
• Prohibited Conduct.....	6
• Principles of Community.....	7
<b>Before You Rent</b> .....	8
• Questions to Consider.....	8
• The Lease.....	9
• Cosigning the Lease.....	11
• Security Deposit.....	12
• Renter’s Insurance.....	12
<b>After Moving In</b> .....	13
• Things to Remember.....	13
• Roommate Relationships.....	13
• Tenant Relationships.....	15
• Repairs to Your Dwelling.....	15
• Tenant Tips.....	15
• Illegal Lockout.....	16
• Helpful Agencies.....	16
<b>Home Security</b> .....	17
• Doors, Windows and Keys.....	18
• Keeping your Safety in Mind.....	18
• Security Checklist.....	18
<b>Transportation</b> .....	19
• Services.....	19
• Important Numbers.....	21
<b>Campus Resources</b> .....	22
• Campus Life.....	22
• Off-Campus Student Services.....	23
• Dining.....	23
• Important Campus Phone Numbers and Web sites.....	23
<b>Points to Remember</b> .....	24

# In Your Community

## TU's Good Neighbor Guidelines

Approximately 9,500 of our full-time undergraduate students live off campus, many of them in the communities surrounding the university. In addition to student housing in these communities, a variety of people live in the area: senior citizens, families with children and single professionals. Because Towson University students constitute an important segment of the population in the surrounding area, the impact of students' conduct in the community is of major concern.

As far as the other community members are concerned, students represent the university, even when they are off-campus. We ask students to be considerate of their neighbors, especially keeping in mind that students' schedules may differ considerably from other residents' schedules. Also, please be aware of community issues such as noise, parking, resident zoning laws, trash, property upkeep and alcohol usage.

## Good Neighbor Tips

When moving into a community, students must consider the needs and desired environment of those who already live there. Students are often short-term residents who move frequently, and those who have chosen to live in an area long-term often feel invested in their neighborhood and community at large. Often, interests and lifestyles of short-term and long-term residents conflict, with each party not fully understanding or investing in building a positive relationship.

## Relationship Building Techniques

Demonstrate an interest in your neighbors. Make an effort to meet them and learn their names. Greet your neighbors. "Interview" your neighbors. Find out what is important to them, learn about their families, interests and needs. Ask your neighbors for help when you need it. Likewise, be receptive to their requests for help. Strive to be approachable and friendly.

## Investing in your Community

Keep your apartment, home, and property clean at all times. Trash attracts bugs and/or animals and detracts from the appearance of the community. Your neighbors have chosen this community as their home and take pride in it. Keep parked cars to a minimum and be aware of the ability of others to get in and out of their driveways without their view being obstructed. Cars should be parked in the street or in your driveway, not on the lawn. Watch your noise levels. Families with children need a quiet environment in order to keep to bedtime routines. Loud music or cars, shouting individuals or increased traffic will disrupt your neighbors.

Take care of your pets. Barking dogs or other wandering pets are disruptive and a safety hazard. If your pet bites another person, be prepared to bear that responsibility as the pet's owner. For your individual liability and the safety of your pet, do not leave your pet unattended for long periods of time or let it roam freely. If you walk your pet, always clean up after it has defecated and never allow your pet to defecate on your neighbor's property.

Take responsibility for your guests. Instruct them on the need for respect of your neighbors' property and desired environment. Get involved with your block or neighborhood association. Be an active part of the decision making in your community.

## Community Associations

Many communities have associations that allow residents an opportunity to seek membership. These associations are helpful in serving as a voice to legislators regarding community concerns. Some also offer benefits to members, such as snow removal service. Community associations create great avenues for remedying community issues and neighbor relations. For a list of community associations, visit [www.towson.edu/offcampusrelations](http://www.towson.edu/offcampusrelations).

## Parking

Park your vehicles in the driveway, street or garage. The lawn is not an appropriate place to park a vehicle. Work with neighbors to develop a parking plan if not enough space is available, especially when friends visit. Be mindful of the parking needs of your neighbors as well. Make sure that your car is registered in Maryland or file the necessary paperwork to reside in Maryland with an out-of-state registration. You must also be sure to register for parking if you are parking on the street.

You will need a resident's parking sticker to park your car on the streets in the neighborhood. Be sure to secure a parking sticker from the Licenses and Permits Office in the Baltimore County Office Building located at 111 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Baltimore, MD.

## Pets

Know local codes on keeping pets. Keep in mind that you should have tags on dogs and cats in case they leave your yard. Remember to clean up after your pet if it uses a neighbor's yard as its bathroom. The same may apply for parks in the area. Have neighbors get to know your pets as well.

## Trash and Lawn Maintenance

Check your lease to determine who is responsible for lawn maintenance and trash. It is important that you keep your home and yard clean and managed. Make sure all trash is in a trash container. Know local codes for lawn upkeep.

## Snow Removal

Residents are required to remove snow from sidewalks. If you are going to be away during a winter break, make arrangements for snow to be removed while you are away.

# Policies

## Housing Codes

*Baltimore County:* No more than (2) two unrelated persons can live together in a single family dwelling.

*Baltimore City:* No more than (4) four unrelated persons can live together in a single family dwelling.

18-2-202. Obstruction of Streets and Alleys

(a) Prohibited. A person may not stop, park, or leave standing a vehicle on any road or alley:

(1) In front of or within (5) five feet in front of the edge of any private driveway or parking area without the consent of the owner or occupant of the premises; or

(2) In a manner that prevents free passage of vehicles or the movement of a lawfully parked vehicle to or from a driveway or parking area.

(b) Parking in an alley. A person may not park, stop or leave unattended a vehicle in any alley leaving less than 12 feet of clearance parallel to the vehicle.

(c) Authority to tow a vehicle.

(1) If a vehicle is parked, stopped or left unattended in a manner that prevents or impedes the free passage of an emergency vehicle or sanitation vehicle, the Chief of Police may tow the vehicle after making a reasonable attempt to locate the owner or, if the owner is known, the owner refuses to remove the vehicle.

(2) The owner of a vehicle towed under this subsection shall pay any towing fee incurred by the Chief of Police. (1988 Code, § 21-103) (Bill No. 131-97, § 1, 1-3-1998; Bill No. 66-01, § 2, 7-1-2004)

## Parties and Noise

One of the biggest issues that the community members have is partying. It is usually a neighbor who calls when a party gets too loud, moves outside or becomes too crowded.

Here are some suggestions if you are planning a party:

- Talk to your neighbors before planning a party. Give out your phone number so they can call you if it gets too loud.
- Limit the number of guests at your party.
- Make sure anyone consuming alcohol is 21 or older.
- From time to time, go outside and check on the noise level of your party.
- Discourage guests from wandering around your home or neighborhood.
- Clean up any mess from your party as soon as possible.

Remember...

Please be courteous to your neighbors and observe the Baltimore County ordinances regarding noise between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. As of 1993, there is a "no undue" noise ordinance in effect at any time of day or night. Residents and landlords can be cited for noise violations.

## Summary of Policy on Off-Campus Disorderly and Disruptive Behavior

### Reason for Policy

Towson University is interested in addressing the off-campus conduct of students who demonstrate a pattern of behavior over time that is disorderly and disruptive to others in the surrounding neighborhoods of the University.

### Definitions

Disorderly Conduct: Conduct which is a violation of local, state or federal laws or the University Student Code of Conduct. Examples of disorderly conduct include but are not limited to underage alcohol possession or consumption, public intoxication, noise violations, public urination, and harassment of others.

**Disruptive to Others:** Conduct which is likely to disrupt the activities of a reasonable person going about his or her daily life in the communities surrounding the university or his or her home.

## Policy Statement

Under the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, the university may bring charges against a student or group of students whose "off-campus actions affect the university community or the university's pursuit of its mission, policies or procedures" (Student Code of Conduct, section C. Scope, #1). Off-campus behavior which is disorderly and disruptive to others in the community or the neighborhoods surrounding the University may fall under this category.

When addressing the off campus behavior of its students, the university is primarily interested in responding to students who demonstrate a pattern of behavior over time that is disruptive to others in the community and involves disorderly conduct that is a violation of local, state or federal laws or the University Student Code of Conduct.

Repeated off-campus conduct that is disorderly and disrupts others in the community is prohibited and is subject to discipline through the university's judicial process. Students who own or lease off-campus residences shall be held accountable for the disorderly and disruptive actions of others occurring within the premises and shall be subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. It is not necessary for students to receive a criminal or civil citation in order for their behavior to be subject to discipline.

## Possible Sanctions

The Student Code of Conduct lists a variety of penalties which may be imposed on students or student organizations for violations of the Code. The Office of Judicial Affairs may use any of the penalties listed in the Code to address violations. However, if students engaging in disorderly conduct develop a pattern of violations relating to disruptive behavior, the Office of Judicial Affairs may respond with sequentially more serious sanctions. Students may be put on University probation and fined \$250 per student resident, increasing to \$500 for subsequent incidents of a similar nature. For particularly egregious violations, the university may impose a more severe sanction.

# Summary of the TU Code of Student Conduct

1. Generally, student or group conduct subject to institutional discipline is limited to: on-campus actions; off-campus actions which affect the university community or the university's pursuit of its mission, policies or procedures; off-campus actions by officially sponsored organizations, groups or NCAA teams; or actions on university property which is leased to, or managed by, an entity other than the university.
2. However, a student charged with a violation of federal, state, or local laws for off-campus behavior may be disciplined by the university without a judicial board hearing when: the student is found guilty by a court of law; the student pleads guilty or *nolo contendere* to the charges; the student is given probation before judgment; the student chooses to accept alternative sentencing by the court, i.e. community service; or, the case is settled.

Interim or final disciplinary action may be taken before any court action is completed. Examples of charges that may result in disciplinary action include acts of violence, drug- and alcohol-related violations and a citation for a disorderly house. Such action will be taken only after a limited investigation by the Office of Judicial Affairs and after the student has been offered a meeting with a university official.

Any interim action shall be reviewed and appropriate final action taken, at the student's request or at the university's discretion, when a final court decision is rendered or when the university receives additional persuasive evidence.

3. Some conduct clearly disturbs only the campus environment; when such behavior occurs, the university shall take internal action.
4. When there is evidence that a student has committed a crime on campus, disciplinary action at the university will normally proceed independently of pending criminal charges, including when charges involving the same incident have been dismissed or dropped. The student may then be subject to civil authorities as well as internal disciplinary action.
5. When a student is charged with a violation of one or more provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, a charge letter arranging a meeting with a representative of the Office of Judicial Affairs will be given or sent to the student within a reasonable amount of time. At the meeting, the student will be informed of:
  - a. the specific violation
  - b. the description of the alleged incident
  - c. the hearing or informal investigation procedure
  - d. his or her rights of appeal

## Prohibited Conduct

The following misconduct is subject to disciplinary action:

- 1a. Intentionally furnishing false information to the institution; this includes lying to university officials.
- 1b. Forging, altering or using institutional documents or instruments of identification with intent to defraud, or to otherwise benefit therefrom.
- 1c. Possession of false identification (e.g., a false driver's license).
- 2a. Disruption or obstruction of teaching, research, administration or disciplinary proceedings.
- 2b. Disruption or obstruction of university-sponsored activities or events.
- 2c. Off-campus conduct that is disorderly and disrupts others in the community (See Off-Campus Disorderly and Disruptive Behavior Policy).
3. Lewd, obscene or indecent behavior.
4. Physical abuse of any person.
- 5a. Unwanted physical contact or threat of physical contact with a university official.
- 5b. Threats of violence or placing a person in fear of imminent physical injury or danger.
- 5c. Any endangering conduct that imperils or jeopardizes the health or safety of any person or persons, including oneself.
- 5d. Stalking of any person.
6. Inflicting mental or emotional distress upon a person through a course of conduct involving abuse or disparagement of that person's race, religion, sex, creed, sexual orientation, age, national origin or disability.
7. Acts that invade the privacy of another person.
8. Sexual assault, as defined by the USM Policy on Sexual Assault, including but not limited to non-consensual sexual intercourse, incapacitated sexual intercourse and non-consensual verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
9. Abuse of any person; this includes verbal, written, e-mail or telephone abuse.
10. Intentionally or recklessly damaging, destroying, defacing or tampering with university property, public property or personal property of another.
- 11a. Uncooperative behavior and/or failure to comply with proper instructions of officials acting in performance of their duties.

- 11b. Event-related misconduct. (See Definitions.)
12. Violation of published institutional regulations and policies.
13. Violation of state, federal and local laws.
14. Unauthorized presence in institutional facilities.
- 15a. The possession or use of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia when not in accordance with established policy.
- 15b. The sale, distribution or manufacture of illegal drugs when not in accordance with established policy.
16. The possession or use of any firearms or instrument which may be construed as a weapon, without express permission of the University Police. (See Weapons Policy)
17. The possession of explosives, fireworks or pyrotechnic paraphernalia on campus.
- 18a. The possession or use of alcoholic beverages when not in accordance with established policy.
- 18b. Public intoxication.
19. The unauthorized use of or entry into university computer systems.
20. Violation of the University Housing Policy.
21. Violation of any disciplinary sanction.
22. Charging telephone or telecommunications charges to university telephones or extension numbers without authorization.
23. Theft, attempted theft, possession of stolen property, conspiracy to steal or misappropriation of another's property. This includes, but is not limited to, removing, possessing, concealing, altering, tampering or otherwise appropriating goods or property without authorization.
24. Violation of the Academic Integrity Policy.
25. Harassment of any person.
26. Unauthorized use of the name "Towson University" or the unauthorized use of any University trademark, service mark, logo or seal for advertising or promotional purposes in a manner that expressly or impliedly indicates the University's endorsement.

Note: When students are found responsible for violation of university policies involving alcohol or drugs, parents may be notified. Complete copies of the Code of Student Conduct are available in the Student Policy Book or at the offices of Judicial Affairs and Campus Life.

## **Towson University – Principles of Community**

1. Value every member of the university community by treating them with civility, courtesy, sensitivity and respect.
2. Practice personal and academic integrity.
3. Understand that we can maintain individual freedom of expression while acknowledging different viewpoints and perspectives.
4. Work toward mutual understanding among all those with whom we come in contact.
5. Acknowledge that we exist in a shared campus environment and that we all have responsibility for taking care of this valuable resource.
6. Take pride in celebrating our various achievements and the accomplishments of others.
7. Strive to create true community spirit by valuing the importance of academics, campus-wide involvement and athletics.
8. Conduct ourselves in ways that recognize Towson University's community extends beyond campus borders.
9. Have fun!



## Before You Rent

### Questions to Consider

1. What kind of rental unit do you want to live in?
  - Apartment complex (a one, two or three-bedroom apartment)
  - Converted apartment in private home
  - Room in private home
  - Entire house
2. What are your transportation needs?
  - Walking distance to TU
  - On an MTA bus route
  - Close to work or shopping
  - Parking
3. What are your privacy needs?
  - Private bedroom
  - Share a room
  - Share a bathroom

4. What can you afford?
  - One-bedroom apartments tend to be the most expensive.
  - The closer the rental to campus, the more expensive the rent is likely to be.
  - Calculate utilities and transportation costs when determining a budget.
5. What about furniture?
  - Furnished unit
  - Unfurnished unit
  - Rental furniture
6. How much legal security do you want?
  - Apartment complexes often require you to sign a 12-month lease. They may also require your parent to cosign your lease, particularly if you have no income.
  - Private homes may offer a shorter-term lease or no lease at all. However, it is advised to always have some sort of written agreement before renting any apartment or room.
7. Are pets allowed?
  - Will you pay pet rent?
  - Will you pay a pet deposit?

## **The Lease**

### **Points to consider in the tenant/landlord relationship in Maryland**

Baltimore Neighborhoods Incorporated (BNI) provided the following information. For more information, contact BNI at 410-243-6007.

1. Examine the Property

Carefully examine the room or apartment you are interested in renting and the property in general. Be wary of promises that a property in bad condition will be in good condition by the time you are ready to occupy it.
2. Verbal Promises

If the landlord makes verbal promises, ask that these promises be put in writing so that there are no misunderstandings in the future. If a landlord refuses to do this, then you know that the promise may be meaningless.
3. Get Receipts

Never give cash without receiving a signed receipt. If you can't read the signature, ask the landlord to print his or her name below the signature.

#### 4. Deposits

Don't give the landlord a deposit for the first month's rent unless you are sure that you want the place. If you change your mind, the landlord is not responsible for returning your deposit.

#### 5. Know Your Status

Be sure to know whether you are a roomer or a tenant and the implications of each classification. A roomer is someone who rents a single room and may have access to a bathroom and a kitchen. In Baltimore City, a roomer is entitled to a 30-day written notice if the owner wants the roomer to leave. A tenant is someone who rents an entire apartment or house. In Baltimore, a tenant must be given a 60-day written notice if the landlord wants to change the terms of the tenancy or terminate the tenancy.

#### 6. Needed Repairs

A landlord should present a tenant with a clean and decent place to live that should be in compliance with all housing codes. If a landlord refuses to make repairs, the tenant should call the agency responsible for enforcing the code. Your local government can give you the number you need. In Baltimore County, call 410-887-4032. In Baltimore City, call 410-396-4176. If the lack of needed repairs could endanger the tenant, he or she can put the rent in escrow. This is where the tenant gives his or her rent to a third party such as a bank or any other financial institution, and the landlord is not able to cash the rent checks until a specified condition is met.

#### 7. Tenant Responsibilities

The tenant should pay the rent on time and treat the landlord's property with care. Unless there is a stated grace period, the landlord can file suit in rent court against a tenant if the tenant is one day late in paying the rent. (Late charges are limited to five percent of the monthly rent.) The landlord can also hold the tenant responsible for any damages to the property. Ask the landlord for information regarding trash pick-up and recycling procedures. Clarify who is responsible for keeping the property clean and the lawn mowed.

#### 8. Discrimination in Housing

Federal, state and local laws prohibit discrimination in housing based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, mental or physical handicap, marital status, and against families with children. Baltimore City includes protection against sexual orientation discrimination. Call BNI for information or help.

#### 9. Security Deposit

Maryland has strong security deposit laws. The security deposit is usually equal to one month's rent, but cannot be more than two months' rent. For deposits greater than \$50, interest is to be paid at the end of the tenancy, at the rate of two percent for every six-month period that the landlord has had the deposit. The landlord can charge the security deposit for lost rent, physical damage to the property beyond ordinary wear and tear, etc.

## Cosigning the Lease

There may be times when a tenant does not have the income required to rent an apartment. (The total yearly rent for an apartment should not exceed more than 30 percent of an individual's income.) Therefore, some landlords will require a cosigner. A cosigner, to be acceptable, usually needs to meet all of the qualifications that a tenant needs to meet: good credit, employment record and sufficient income.

Cosigning a lease is a serious responsibility that should not be taken lightly. If a tenant cannot afford the apartment or cannot budget his/her money properly and defaults on the lease, the landlord can seek payment from the cosigner, even if the landlord must take the cosigner to court.

A cosigner is responsible for the first full year of the lease and for any renewals thereafter. If a tenant renews his or her lease, then he or she must notify the landlord that the new lease will not include the original cosigner.

### **After deciding, but before signing the lease, consider the following:**

1. Inspect the actual unit you intend to lease. Consider writing necessary repairs into the lease.
2. Check the security of the unit. Check the doors and window locks. See how well lit the exterior of the building is at night.
3. Check fire safety (working smoke detectors, fire extinguishers/fire escapes).



## Security Deposit

A security deposit is money given to the landlord by the tenant to protect the landlord against unpaid rent or damages to the leased premises. Vacating the premises before the end of the lease, and damages to the property above and beyond normal wear are common reasons that a security deposit will be withheld.

As a tenant, you have a legal right to receive a receipt for the security deposit. The receipt, however, could be a written clause in the lease, as well as a separate document. A receipt should mention the right of a tenant to request a written list of damages. You have this right only if a written request is made to the landlord within 15 days of occupancy. All tenants should take advantage of this important right. If the landlord fails to provide a receipt, then he or she is liable to pay the tenant \$25.

Within 30 days of receiving your security deposit, your landlord is required by law to place the money in an escrow account bearing at least two percent simple interest accrued at six-month intervals on a deposit of \$50 or more. The interest is returned with the deposit to the tenant at the end of tenancy.

Before moving out, you should notify the landlord by certified mail of the moving date and your new address. As a tenant, you have a right to be present when the landlord inspects the premises. However, this must be requested in writing by certified mail 15 days prior to the date of moving. The premises should be inspected within five days before or after you move out. The landlord is obligated to respond with a date and time for inspection.

The landlord may withhold all or part of the security deposit for nonpayment of rent or for damages to the leased premises. Many tenants lose their security deposit by vacating the premises before the expiration of the lease or by failing to give the landlord a 30-day written notice. Even though you may have vacated the premises, you could still be held accountable for rent if timely notice was not given. Check your lease to determine your landlord's policy. The landlord can charge a tenant for any unpaid utility bills and damages to the premises above and beyond normal wear. If a security deposit is not returned in full, the tenant has the right to request an itemized list of damages within 30 days after the legal expiration of the lease. The landlord has 45 days to return the security deposit. If the deposit is not returned within this amount of time, and the withholding is unreasonable, the landlord can be held liable for up to three times the amount, plus reasonable attorney's fees.

## Renter's Insurance

Most people do not realize their need for renter's insurance until it is too late. Many situations can arise that will result in damaged property. For example, if the person in an apartment above you left his or her water running, causing an overflow, this could flood your apartment. Your furniture and appliances may be ruined. A fire in your apartment or in a neighbor's apartment could destroy all of your belongings.

Tenants must realize that they are not covered under their landlord's insurance policy. These policies only cover structural damage to the property, not the belongings of the tenants. Therefore, to protect your possessions, you may want to take out a renter's insurance policy. These policies are inexpensive and will protect your furniture and personal belongings against fire, water, vandalism, theft, etc.

Most insurance policies run from \$100 to \$200 per year. Once you have an insurance policy, you should carefully list and describe all personal property and the cost of those items. Receipts should be kept as proof of those costs. Keep in mind that photographs and videotapes may be priceless and will not be able to be replaced if they are damaged.

Renter's insurance can be purchased through major commercial insurance companies. Look under "insurance" in the yellow pages to find more agencies that offer this type of insurance and shop for the best price. Also, check with you parents and see if their policy will cover your apartment. Many insurance policies will cover your apartment if one of your parents is a cosigner on the lease.

## After Moving In

### Things to Remember

1. Complete a Change of Address form at the nearest post-office. Also, update your local address information with Towson Online Services.
2. Complete a thorough inventory of your apartment.
3. Give a copy of the inspection form to your landlord and keep a copy for your files.
4. Add any necessary locks to windows and doors.
5. Arrange to have your phone service and other utilities turned on if necessary.
6. Consider purchasing renter's insurance. First, check if your parents' homeowner's insurance will cover your personal property. If not, consult the yellow pages under "insurance" for more information.
7. Communicate. It is important to communicate with your landlord. Keep the lines of communication open. However, remember to respect each other's privacy.
8. Once you have moved into your new apartment, keep in mind that your landlord still owns the property and can enter it to make inspections or repairs or to show the property to other prospective tenants.

### Roommate Relationships

#### The Roommate Bill of Rights

- To read and study undisturbed in your room
- To sleep without interference from roommates
- To respect each other's personal property
- To maintain a clean living environment
- To allow guests as long as they respect the rights of others
- To feel free from physical and emotional harm
- To share the phone and other allowed conveniences
- To honor payment procedures

Whether you have already selected a roommate or are in the process of finding one, it is often helpful to discuss your mutual concerns. You can reduce the likelihood of disagreements by coming to some basic agreements about your living arrangements.

## Possible Hazardous Roommate Situations

- One tenant moves out, leaving the remaining tenant to pay the full rent until the end of the lease.
- One tenant stays, but refuses to pay his or her share of the rent.
- One tenant has his or her significant other stay over on a continuous basis, which crowds the living situation.
- One tenant is disruptive and the other tenant is not. The innocent tenant and the landlord want to take the disruptive tenant's name off the lease and have him or her leave.
- Two tenants agree to split up. One tenant is willing to assume the responsibilities of the lease, but the landlord does not agree.

## Things to Consider

- What are your study habits? Do you study with or without music? In the morning or at night?
- What are your socializing habits?
- What are your thoughts on cleanliness and neatness?
- What are your thoughts on borrowing clothes and other personal belongings from each other?
- What are your thoughts on hosting friends, boyfriends, girlfriends and guests?
- What are your thoughts on buying and sharing food?
- Do you drink? Do you smoke? To what degree can you tolerate these behaviors?
- What will be your housekeeping responsibilities?
- Finally, how will you resolve differences?

## Tips to Reduce Tension Between Roommates

- Have a clear verbal (or written) understanding of each other's lifestyle, how the apartment is to be managed and what is expected of each other, especially as to guests, noise and cleaning. It is also good to know how bills will be divided and when specific bills are due.
- If possible, each tenant should share with the other a current credit report, references and evidence of job history, and income. Most apartment companies will require that both tenants be qualified as to good credit, sufficient income, etc.
- If two tenants rent a two-bedroom apartment and do not get along with one another, the landlord may allow a transfer to a one-bedroom apartment.
- If one tenant has sufficient income to rent the apartment alone, and the landlord is agreeable, then he or she might want to be the only signer of the lease, and rent to the other tenant on a month-to-month basis. If the relationship does not work, it can be easily terminated and the lease signer would be free to seek another apartment mate.

## Tenant Relationships

Remember that an individual entering into any kind of rental agreement should make an effort to know all rights and responsibilities. Always try to inspect the unit before signing a lease or making any commitments. Sit down and talk with your roommates and landlord. Communicate with one another. It is important to be honest with each other.

There are several agencies that can help you with landlord-tenant problems. Towson University and Off-Campus Student Services cannot get involved in personal landlord-tenant issues. However, there are agencies listed later in this booklet that can provide you with help and/or information on landlord-tenant issues.

## Repairs to Your Dwelling

If your landlord has not made repairs to your dwelling, follow these steps to begin the process:

1. Request a list of damages to your dwelling within 15 days of moving in. Having this documentation gives you a place to begin. To find out what housing standards are required by law in Baltimore City or Baltimore County, see Off-Campus Student Services for more information.
2. Write your landlord a letter and keep a copy for yourself. Always put your requests in writing and specify how and when you would like your landlord to respond. For example: "Please put in a request to fix the air conditioner this week and send a copy of the work request to the following address." Send the letter to your landlord via certified mail. This means that someone has to sign for it and it gives you documentation that your mail has been received. This service costs about \$3 and is available at the TU post office in first floor of the University Union.
3. If your landlord does not reply, you can call county or city housing inspectors to help you get the repairs made. To make an appointment with a Baltimore County Housing Inspector, call 410-396-6041 for the Northern District, or 410-887-8099 for Baltimore County. An inspection by one of these representatives will generate a report that may assist you in getting the repairs accomplished. Your landlord can be fined for housing violations that are not repaired within a specified time frame.

## Tenant Tips

1. Always get a written receipt from your landlord when you pay rent or a deposit.
2. If you have a written lease, find out your rights and responsibilities and what the landlord must do to evict you.
3. If something needs to be fixed, be sure you refer to your lease for a repair clause, because you may have to fix it. If your landlord is responsible for the repairs, give a written notice of what needs to be repaired and wait a reasonable amount of time for a response.
4. If you think your apartment is uninhabitable, call the health department and the building inspector to inspect your apartment for housing code violations.

## **Illegal Lockout**

A tenant may come home to his/her apartment to find that the landlord has changed the locks or cut off an essential service, such as gas, heat, water or electricity, to which the tenant is entitled. Such action usually follows a tenant being behind in rent or staying after the day he or she was to vacate the apartment. A lockout may be the result of an argument between the tenant and the landlord.

Should a lockout occur, or if services are diminished, the tenant has the right to hire a locksmith, change the locks, reenter the premises and hold the landlord responsible for the costs involved.

In addition, in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, the landlord may be subject to additional fines and a possible jail sentence for an illegal lockout. The basic principle is that a landlord cannot take the law into his/her own hands. If the tenant owes rent or has not vacated the premises when he should have, the landlord's remedy is to take the tenant to court.

## **Helpful Agencies**

### **Baltimore Police Department**

242 W. 29th St.

Baltimore, Maryland 21211-2908

Emergency: 9-1-1

Non-Emergency: 3-1-1

[www.baltimorepolice.org](http://www.baltimorepolice.org)

### **Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc. (BNI)**

2217 St. Paul Street

Baltimore, MD 21218

410-243-6007

[www.bni-maryland.org](http://www.bni-maryland.org)

\*BNI can provide advice and assistance on landlord-tenant laws and problems for both Baltimore County and Baltimore City.

### **Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development Complaint Office**

417 E. Fayette Street

Room 100

Baltimore, MD 21202

410-396-4176

\*This agency should be contacted if you live in the city.

## **Baltimore County Community Affairs Office – Fair Practices**

400 Washington Avenue

Room 124

Towson, MD 21204

410-887-5557

[www.co.ba.md.us/agencies/fairpractices](http://www.co.ba.md.us/agencies/fairpractices)

\*This agency should be contacted if you live in the county.

## **Legal Aid Bureau – Baltimore City**

500 East Lexington Street

Baltimore, MD 21202

410-951-7777

[www.mdlab.org](http://www.mdlab.org)

\*These nonprofit agencies may be of assistance if your income is below a certain level.

## **Baltimore County – Small Claims Court**

401 Bosley Avenue

Towson, MD 21204

410-512-2000

\*For information and instructions on filing suits in small claims court, go to the office in person or send a self-addressed stamped envelope.

## **Zoning Office – Baltimore County**

111 W. Chesapeake Avenue

Room 111

Towson, MD 21204

410-887-3391

# **Home Security**

### **Exterior doors should:**

- Be core wood or metal.
- Be fit to the frame tightly (no more than 1/8 inch clearance).
- Be well lit.
- Have hinges on the inside, not the outside.
- Not be blocked by trees or bushes.
- Not have decorative glass panels or windows.
- Have a deadbolt with a one-inch chain (Chain locks and/or knob locks are not sufficient).

## **Sliding Glass Doors and Windows**

- Windows should not be covered by trees and bushes.
- A solid strip of wood or metal in the track can reinforce sliding glass doors and windows.
- Sliding glass doors and windows have special key locks, also found in hardware stores.

## **Keys**

- Protect yourself by never putting identification tags on your key ring or key holder. If your keys are ever lost, intruders will find you!
- Never hide a key outdoors.

## **Keep Your Safety in Mind**

- Keep all doors and windows locked.
- Never let strangers into your home without proper identification, including maintenance, service or repair persons.
- Do not panic if your home has been entered. Do not go into the unit. Contact the police and your landlord immediately.
- Make sure all entranceways and stairwells in your house or apartment are well lit.
- Do not automatically open the door when someone knocks. Ask who it is; if you have questions about the response, do not hesitate to keep the door locked.
- Be sure that your smoke detectors are working; check the batteries on a monthly basis.

## **Off-Campus Housing Security Checklist**

### **Along the exterior of the building**

- Are the building and grounds well maintained?
- Are the entryways, sidewalks and parking areas well lit? Are they visible from the street?
- Is there an intercom system?
- Are the residents' names (first and/or last) printed on the mailboxes?
- Are the mailboxes lockable and in good condition?
- Are exterior doors kept locked?

### **In the parking area(s)**

- Are the lots and surrounding streets free of abandoned cars?
- Is parking usually available close to your door?
- Is the area well lit? Especially at night and on weekends?

### **Doorways and windows within the unit**

- What kind of security does the unit have: knob locks, chain, deadbolt locks or peephole? Deadbolt locks provide the best security. The unit should have more than one locking system.
- Can the main entryway be easily seen from the street, even at night? Is the entryway well lit?
- Do trees, weeds or bushes obscure doors and windows?
- Are curtains, shades or blinds provided?
- Are there sturdy locks on all windows? Are security bars or screens provided if it is a ground floor or basement unit?

## Other considerations

- Are doors to the laundry room kept locked? Are residents given keys?
- Does the apartment complex provide security services such as patrol or escort services?
- Does the landlord have a published policy about issuing and replacing keys?
- Know your roommates' security habits. You are only as safe as your roommates allow you to be!
- Ask about the turnover rate of residents. A high turnover rate may indicate problems with the area, unit or landlord.
- Talk with prospective neighbors. Do they feel safe?
- Call the local police and ask about the rate and types of crimes in the neighborhood.

# Transportation

## Bus, Metro and Light Rail schedules

The complete line of Mass Transit Administration (MTA) schedules can be found in the Campus Life office (410-704-2332), room 232 in the University Union. Some of the more popular schedules are also displayed in Cook Library. Schedule changes generally occur three times a year: January, June and September. Exact fare for busses is required. You may use bills, coins, MTA tokens or MTA monthly or weekly passes.

## Monthly Passes

Monthly bus, metro and light rail passes are discounted for Towson University students. The monthly pass allows you unlimited rides and is usually worthwhile if you plan to ride five days a week. You can buy your pass at the ticket office (410-704-2244), on the first floor of the University Union, across from the University Store. MTA monthly passes are sold from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday during the first and last week of each month.

## All-Day Passes

If you plan to use public transportation more than once in a day, buy an all-day pass from the driver. This pass allows you to use the bus and light rail system all day long.

## Light Rail

The MTA light rail system currently provides service between Hunt Valley and Glen Burnie. Major light rail stations include: Timonium (near the Park-and-Ride on Deereco Road), Lutherville (at Ridgely Road), University of Baltimore, Cultural Center, Lexington Market, University Center (UMAB), Camden Yards, Patapsco and Cromwell Station/Glen Burnie.

## Metro Service

The Baltimore Metro is also operated by the MTA and runs from Charles Center in Baltimore City to Owings Mills in Baltimore County. There are special feeder bus lines that service the metro and they are known as the “M-lines.” These take you directly to the metro stations. Unfortunately, the metro is not easily accessible from TU; to reach it, you must first take a bus into the city. For more information on the metro system, call MTA at 410-539-5000 or pick up the metro schedule and the M-line bus schedules at Campus Life.

## Handicapped Bus Service

The MTA provides wheelchair lift-equipped buses on all regular routes for disabled passengers, but you must call 410-MTA-LIFT (410-682-5438) by 1 p.m. on the day before your travel day to request a lift-equipped bus for the specific route and time you want. In addition, wheelchair lift-equipped service is available at certain times on most routes and on all Sunday routes. A “W” next to the time slot on the schedule denotes wheelchair service. Both the Metro and the light rail are accessible by wheelchair.

## Baltimore Collegetown Shuttle

The Baltimore Collegetown Shuttle is a FREE service for Towson students. To get more information on this service, go to the University Union, room 232 to pick up a brochure or go to [www.baltimorecollegetown.org/shuttle](http://www.baltimorecollegetown.org/shuttle).

## Off Campus Transportation

Towson University operates several off campus shuttle routes which serve several apartment complexes and other residential areas. A TU ID is required to ride all off-campus shuttles. This service is provided from approximately 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday – Friday. Times vary according to the route. Please see the Parking and Transportation Web site at [www.towson.edu/transportation](http://www.towson.edu/transportation) for route and schedule information.

## Carpooling

Parking and Transportation Services is partnering with Commuter Connections to provide access to the metropolitan area carpool/vanpool database. Sign up with Commuter Connections, find a Ride Match and save up to 50 percent on the cost of driving. Go to [www.commuterconnections.org](http://www.commuterconnections.org) for more information.

Check the Web for other parking and transportation programs at [www.towson.edu/parking](http://www.towson.edu/parking).



# Important Numbers

## Buses

- **Trailways/Greyhound**  
800-231-2222  
410-484-2510  
210 W. Fayette Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

## Trains

- **Amtrak** (Trains leave from Penn and BWI stations.)  
410-291-4261  
1500 N. Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201
- **MARC** (Trains leave from Penn, BWI and Camden stations & runs weekdays only)  
410-291-4165  
1500 N. Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
[www.mtmaryland.com/services/marc](http://www.mtmaryland.com/services/marc)

## Train Stations

- **Penn Station**  
410-291-4165  
1515 N. Charles St.  
Baltimore, MD 21201
- **BWI Rail Station**  
410-672-6169  
Rte. 170 and Amtrak Way
- **Camden Station**  
410-613-6449  
Camden and Howard Streets  
Baltimore, MD

## Airport Shuttle Service

- **Airport Shuttle**  
1-800-258-3826  
508-C DiGiulian Blvd.  
Glen Burnie, MD 21061  
[www.supershuttle.com](http://www.supershuttle.com)
- **Mass Transit Administration (MTA)**  
6 St. Paul Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202  
410-539-5000  
[www.mtmaryland.com](http://www.mtmaryland.com)

## Airports

- **Baltimore - Washington International Airport (BWI)**  
410-859-7111  
[www.bwiairport.com/](http://www.bwiairport.com/)
- **Washington Dulles Airport**  
703-572-2700  
[www.metwashairports.com/Dulles/](http://www.metwashairports.com/Dulles/)
- **Ronald Reagan National Airport**  
703-417-8000  
[www.metrowashingtonairports.com](http://www.metrowashingtonairports.com)

## Campus Resources

### Campus Life

University Union 232

410-704-2332

[www.towson.edu/campuslife](http://www.towson.edu/campuslife)

Campus Life serves as the home base for Student Activities, New Student Programs, Off-Campus Student Services and Campus Recreation Services. These four offices are geared toward helping students get connected with student life at TU. The Office of Student Activities assists students with all aspects of student life, student activities and student organizations, helping them obtain information about how to use the university's many resources. The office advises the Student Government Association and its affiliated organizations, as well as the Campus Activities Board. The office also oversees Greek Affairs, addresses the concerns of commuter students, such as public transportation, parking and off-campus housing, and assists non-traditional students with issues of concern. New Student Programs assists students and their families with the transition to Towson University. The office coordinates orientation programs as well as hosts programs for new TU students at the start of the fall and spring semester.



## Off-Campus Student Services

[www.towson.edu/commuters](http://www.towson.edu/commuters)

This program promotes commuter student involvement in the operations, policies and activities of the university. The office sponsors various programs and events aimed at recognizing TU commuter students.

In addition, the office provides information on MTA bus schedules, off-campus housing, parking and other commuter concerns. Off-campus Student Services was established in 1984 to represent and serve Towson's commuter students.

## Dining

[dining.towson.edu](http://dining.towson.edu)

Many students living off campus wish to purchase a meal plan for the ease and convenience of eating on campus. Along with our traditional meal plans, we're offering block plans. These plans allow students to purchase as few as 25 or as many as 75 individual meals (with Dining Points) at any campus dining hall. The meals are purchased in a block at a fixed price and can be used any time through the end of the spring semester. Plans range from \$275 to \$607.

Off-campus residents may also purchase Dining Points, which allow them to buy food on campus using the OneCard (student ID) as a debit card. Mastercard and Visa are also accepted in all locations.

Call the Auxiliary Services Business Office, 410-704-2530, stop by the University Union, room 216, or go to [dining.towson.edu](http://dining.towson.edu) for more information.

# Important Campus Phone Numbers & Web Sites

### Auxiliary Services (One Card)

[www.towson.edu/onecard](http://www.towson.edu/onecard)  
410-704-2530

### Bursar's Office

[www.towson.edu/bursar](http://www.towson.edu/bursar)  
410-704-2100

### Campus Recreation Services

[www.towson.edu/campusrec](http://www.towson.edu/campusrec)  
410-704-2367

### Cook Library

[cooklibrary.towson.edu](http://cooklibrary.towson.edu)  
410-704-2452

### Emergency Closings

[www.towson.edu](http://www.towson.edu)  
410-704-2000

### Parking Services

[www.towson.edu/parking](http://www.towson.edu/parking)  
410-704-2284

### Off-Campus Student Services

[www.towson.edu/commuters](http://www.towson.edu/commuters)  
410-704-3307

### SAFE Walk/Ride Escort Service

[www.towson.edu/police](http://www.towson.edu/police)  
410-704-7233

### Student Activities

[www.towson.edu/studentactivities](http://www.towson.edu/studentactivities)  
410-704-3307

### Student Government Association

[www.towson.edu/sga](http://www.towson.edu/sga)  
410-704-2711

### Student Life Line

410-704-5433

### University Police

[www.towson.edu/police](http://www.towson.edu/police)

*Emergency:*

410-704-2133

*General Information:*

410-704-2134

### University Relations

[www.towson.edu/main/abouttu/newsroom](http://www.towson.edu/main/abouttu/newsroom)

410-704-2230

### University Store

[store.towson.edu](http://store.towson.edu)  
410-704-2665

# Points to Remember

**We want you to have a good experience at TU and also in your off-campus residence. In order to ensure this, it will be helpful if you remember these points:**

- You have the ability to portray a positive image for yourself and the university.
- You are expected to act as a responsible, and contributing member of your community.
- Some of your neighbors could be key people in the fields you wish to enter. Poor relations with them could hamper an otherwise positive connection with your future.

**It is in the entire TU community's best interest that we tell you what some of the consequences of disruptive behavior in our surrounding neighborhoods could be:**

- Property owners/landlords could face sanctions related to your behavior, and this could lead to the loss of housing for you.
- If you lose a positive reference from your landlord, a search for other off-campus housing options could be difficult.
- Being an off-campus student does not prevent you from being sanctioned by the university.
- If students who are part of an officially sponsored organization or group occupy your apartment or house, a number of complaints from your neighbors could result in disciplinary action against your organization.
- Frequent complaints may result in a meeting with the Office of Judicial Affairs at the university.

**Please create the most positive options for yourself and your neighbors.**

**Notes:**



## Off-Campus Student Services

Towson University  
8000 York Road  
Towson, MD 21252-0001  
t. 410-704-3307  
f. 410-704-2219  
[www.towson.edu/commuters](http://www.towson.edu/commuters)