BE INFORMED • BE SAFE • BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

A Student’s Guide to Living Off Campus
What You Need to Know BEFORE You Move

Stony Brook University
Dear Students,

If you are deciding to live off campus, keep in mind that students who choose to live in the surrounding communities near Stony Brook University are not only Seawolves; they are also ambassadors for all that is Stony Brook. Our students are woven into the fabric of the local neighborhoods of Long Island and represent our University in all that they do. Your behavior off campus is a direct reflection on the University.

This guide and its companion website, stonybrook.edu/offcampusliving, are designed to help you find safe and legal housing. Included are pages detailing what to look for in safe housing, what to know before you sign a lease, and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the resources in this booklet, including information on what it means to be a good neighbor and the importance of knowing about the Social Host Law. From keeping the noise down to taking in the trash cans, Stony Brook students should always do their best to show their Seawolves pride.

If you have any questions regarding how you can stay connected to life on campus, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Division of Student Life and Commuter Student Services and Off-Campus Living. We are here to help you enhance your educational experience in any way we can. We hope to hear from you, and we wish you all the best.

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Table of Contents

Thinking About Living Off Campus? 3

Getting Started
Finding a Place 4
What To Look for in Housing 6
Before You Sign a Lease 8
Your Rights and Responsibilities 9

You’ve Moved, Now What? 10
Safety First 10
Staying Connected 11
SB Alert and SB Guardian 11

Being a Good Neighbor 12
Social Host Law 12
Thinking About Living Off Campus?

This guide provides the basic information students should know BEFORE renting off-campus housing. The Office of Commuter Student Services and Off-Campus Living (CSS/OCL) wants you to be prepared so you can find suitable, safe and legal housing. There is more to think about than just the rent. Please read through this guide and bring it with you when you look at housing.

In addition to the materials in this guide, you will find more detailed information and checklists online at stonybrook.edu/offcampusliving to help you with your housing search. From tips on how to budget so you can afford the housing to information about your legal rights as a renter, the site has everything you need to be fully prepared to find the best housing for you.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please visit CSS/OCL, 225 Student Activities Center (SAC). To help you make the most of living off campus, CSS/OCL serves as a resource for students who currently live off campus, as well as those who are thinking of moving off campus. Once you move, CSS/OCL will also help you stay involved with the campus community.
Getting Started

Finding a Place
It is recommended that you begin your search three to four months in advance. Begin your search online through stonybrook.edu/offcampusliving. Follow the link to Off-Campus Housing, which has a searchable database of legal properties to rent.

When you have found something that seems promising, check out the regulations (zoning laws and town codes) of the town your housing is in. Links are available on the Off-Campus Living website to help you learn more specifics about your township’s codes. Know what the requirements are before you move in so you can avoid fines or even eviction.

When you arrange to visit the property, bring a trusted friend or family member with you to help you do a thorough review. The Off-Campus Living website provides printable versions of Inventory and Renter's Checklists. These are also very helpful to bring along.

Important Questions to Consider
- How much can I afford per month for rent?
- Do I want a roommate(s)?
- How long will it take me to get to school, work, etc.?
- What type of transportation will I require?
- Can I afford the cost of utilities, food, gas, cable, etc.?
- What is the neighborhood like?
- Who will be responsible for damages? Repairs? Landscaping?

Please note that Off-Campus Housing does not inspect, approve or supervise any premises listed with its service. The University does not become party to private landlord-tenant matters.

DID YOU KNOW?
Neighbors can call the police if they hear a noise disturbance after 10 pm.
Yes, playing Xbox full volume counts as noise.
What to Look for in Housing

Apart from the price and the location of the housing, what should you be looking for as you tour the property? Below is a partial list of what to look for. Please visit stonybrook.edu/offcampusliving to download the entire form to make sure your potential new living space has everything it needs to keep you safe.

If you answer NO to any of these statements, you should NOT rent the housing.

- The housing has a rental registration certificate of compliance.
- There is a maximum of four unrelated occupants in the rental.
- The property around the building is clean and well maintained.
- Electrical outlets on each wall have covers and are in good condition.
- Smoke detectors are in each hallway leading to bedrooms and in each bedroom.
- All exit routes are clear; doors work freely.
- Carbon monoxide detector is present in housing.
- Kitchen appliances appear to be clean and are in good working condition.
- Kitchen exhaust and kitchen surfaces are free of grease.
- All circuits are marked on electrical panel (breakers and fuses).
- The basement is dry and free of standing water and mildew.
- All rooms have heat.
- Hot and cold water in the bathroom turns on and off.
- Toilet flushes completely and does not leak.
- Window (one required) in each bedroom operates easily; glass not broken.
- Bedroom doors work freely and latches and locks from the inside only.

Remember, according to the New York State Property Maintenance Code, bedrooms are not permitted in cellars or attics.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only four non-related people can live in any rental. And sorry, your sorority sisters or fraternity brothers don’t count as relatives.
Before You Sign a Lease

You have found something you like, that is within your budget, close to school and is legal and safe. You toured the housing with your checklists and asked all the right questions. But before you sign the lease and give a deposit, remember these additional steps:

- The landlord is not your buddy — your relationship is about business, not friendship. Check your landlord's reputation before signing a lease.
- Read (don't skim) the lease. A lease is a binding legal document — all leases are NOT the same.

Make sure the answers to these questions are all detailed in your lease before you sign:

- When is the rent due?
- Is there a penalty for late payment?
- What deposits and fees are required (cleaning, damage, security, key)?
- What are the terms for refunding deposits?
- Who is responsible for cleaning and maintenance?
- Will the landlord take care of the lawn or garden?
- Who takes care of snow removal?
- Are pets allowed?

Your Rights and Responsibilities

It is important to know your rights as a tenant when renting. Download and review the Tenant's Rights Guide, a booklet designed to highlight some of the principal rights of residential tenants in New York State. A variety of federal, state and local laws protect these rights.

One way to protect your rights is to take inventory of your housing using the Inventory Checklist. It helps to establish the condition of your housing at the time of your arrival and should be completed and returned to your landlord within the first three days of occupancy. Make sure to keep a copy. By completing this step, you can note any existing damage so you won’t be charged for it at the end of your lease.

As a tenant, you also have responsibilities to your landlord, your roommates and to the community. Abide by the rules spelled out in your lease, pay your rent on time, and be a good neighbor.

DID YOU KNOW?

By living off campus you become a member of your community. There are many service projects that take place locally. Learn more via the Commuters for Causes segment of the Off-Campus Living website.
You've Moved, Now What?

Safety First
Being safe in your new residence is vital. With just a few easy steps, you can make your residence and belongings more secure.

• Lock all windows and doors whether you’re home or out; lock your bedroom to protect personal belongings.
• Get housing/renter’s insurance. Floods from broken pipes or leaky roofs can happen to anyone. Make sure you are covered.
• Make sure there are smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in at least every room used for sleeping; regularly test your detectors.
• Don’t leave stoves, grills or lit candles unattended. Purchase a fire extinguisher.
• If you leave for an extended period of time, turn off or unplug any electric appliances such as toasters, portable heaters and coffee pots.
• Always identify a visitor before you allow him or her to come into your home.
• Remember to take your key out of the door or ignition of your vehicle and lock your vehicle.

Be Safe, Be Seen
• Walk on lit paths and sidewalks, be aware of traffic and always walk against the flow of traffic. Don’t walk alone; always be aware of your surroundings.
• When walking at night, always wear bright and visible clothing (free reflective vests are available from CSS/OCL in 225 SAC).
• Avoid distractions while walking or driving. Using a phone or MP3 player while walking increases your likelihood of being involved in a motor vehicle accident.

Staying Connected
Now that you live off campus, you are a commuter student and the Office of Commuter Student Services and Off-Campus Living is here to help you stay connected to campus life. In addition to holding events and running programs, the office staff is here to answer your questions.

From the monthly Commuter Connection get-together to the weeklong commuter student festivals each semester, there are many ways for you to connect to campus through CSS/OCL.

For more information about the services CSS/OCL provides, please check out storybrook.edu/commuters and like their Facebook page at facebook.com/sbucss and follow them on Twitter and Instagram @sbucommuters.

SB Alert and SB Guardian
The University has two safety systems to help keep students safe on campus and off.

SB Guardian is a mobile emergency communication system that allows students to reach University Police quickly during an emergency or when needing assistance. The system, which is free for all students to use, works with your existing cell phone. To learn more or to sign up, visit stonybrook.edu/emergency/guardian.

SB Alert quickly notifies students, faculty and staff in the event of a major emergency, such as a hurricane, snowstorm or fire. To receive an alert, you must first sign up on the SOLAR System. If you don’t sign up, you will not receive the alerts. You may choose to receive alerts as emails, text messages or voice mail. To sign up for SB Alerts, visit storybrook.edu/emergency/alerts and click on the SB Alert link.

DID YOU KNOW?
SB is serious about pedestrian and bicycle safety. Get your free visible vest in 225 SAC. Make sure you are visible so you stay safe.
Being a Good Neighbor

As a Stony Brook student, you may wear many hats on campus — student leader, club president, researcher, athlete. Above all, you are a valued member of the University community. If you reside off campus, you take on another important role as a member of the surrounding community and an ambassador for the University. Staying positive, being respectful to your neighbors, and following the rules of the town in which you live help to build positive relationships.

Once you have found a safe place off campus, remember that you represent Stony Brook. Strive to be a good neighbor and a good tenant. Treat your rental as if it were your own home. Here are some ways you can live responsibly off campus:

• Keep noise to a minimum. Neighbors have the right to alert police of a noise disturbance, so keep the noise down after 10 pm.
• Get to know your neighbors. Introduce yourself to them when you first move in or early in the semester. Give them your phone number.
• Encourage your neighbors to call you first if there are any problems at your house, such as loud music, litter, etc. Be respectful and responsive to their concerns.
• Offer to help your neighbors, especially if they are elderly, with such things as carrying groceries, raking leaves, etc. Good deeds cultivate goodwill.
• Parking tends to be a great concern of neighbors and can lead to town involvement if not conducted in a reasonable fashion. When friends visit, be sure to consider your neighbor’s property lines and use parking spots that are legal and safe.
• Know the law about serving alcohol. (See Social Host Law this page.)

Do You Know About the Social Host Law?

Know the law and protect yourself and others. Hosting underage drinking is against the law. The Social Host Law prohibits any host over the age of 18 from knowingly allowing a minor (anyone under the age of 21) to drink alcohol or alcoholic beverages.

Who can be charged?

Anyone over the age of 18 who owns, rents or controls a private space (the “host”) and allows anyone under 21 to consume alcohol (regardless of whether the host provided the alcohol) can be charged. This also includes the failure to take reasonable actions to stop the consumption of alcohol by minors. Those found to have violated this law could face criminal penalties and also possible disciplinary action from the University.
Thinking of Moving Off Campus?

BE INFORMED

Before moving in:
• Check the rental registration certificate of compliance/Accessory Housing Certificate of Occupancy.
• Sign a lease and keep a copy.
• Make sure there are no more than four unrelated people sharing the home.

BE SAFE

Once you are moved in:
• Purchase renter’s insurance.
• Be sure that there are smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in every room used for sleeping.
• Don’t walk alone, and when walking at night always wear bright and visible clothing.
• If you ride a bike to campus, make sure to wear a reflective vest.
• Never leave your keys in your car ignition or your front door.
• Sign up for SB Alert and SB Guardian (stonybrook.edu/emergency).

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

• Maintain a clean premises and take pride in the appearance of the place in which you live. Show your Seawolf pride!
• Keep noise down after 10 pm.
• Never serve alcohol to anyone under 21 and be sure guests do not drink and drive.
• Never park on the grass or lawn.
• Clean up after your pet and be mindful of the noise it makes.