

Issues Concerning Your Apartment Lease

1. Make sure if you want to be an occupant or a co-resident. As an occupant, you have the right to have access to the apartment building and the apartment in which you reside. However, the resident, who bears the primary responsibility to the leasing office, remains the right to let you move out, if not get out, whenever s/he wishes. The advantage of being an occupant is that you are not responsible directly to the leasing office for any damage or obligations associated with your apartment. Don't take it for granted that you're a co-resident if you just find your name on the lease because you could be listed as occupant only. You would be thrown into a miserable position if the resident, who subleased the room to you, happens to be a mean person. **DO NOT** trust your feeling about a person at the first sight.
2. If you still like to be an occupant (to avoid some fees), here are some suggestions.
 - a. If you rent an apartment from a leasing office, or a room from someone you don't know at all, the first thing you want to do is **TO ASK**. You can post a message here to ask anything about the apartment building, or reputation of that resident from whom you want to sublease (if s/he happens to be a GWU student, in most cases are). You can also ask someone who happens to live in that apartment building or know that resident in private. (Maybe a better way) I believe you will get some helpful feedback, either in a positive or negative way. (Guys, if you are approached for opinions/advice and you had prior experience dealing with that particular resident or the leasing office of the apartment building, please be generous and offer whatever you think is right and fair. We should help each other, shouldn't we?)
 - b. Put everything in writing, including the copy of check for deposit, receipt of deposit, one months (or any length of time you agree on) of notice to either voluntary or involuntary moving-out, any restrictions of using facilities in the apartment, any bad or good habits you want the other party respect. You have the right to say yes or no.
3. Don't be afraid of giving your roommate a sweet smile, but never being intimidated by his or her threat to go to court when you guys have a confrontation while you think you're right.

Good luck,

Maggie (Lin) Zhu