Check your lease to determine what obligations the landlord has placed on you while you rent from the landlord. You might want to talk to your landlord if your lease doesn’t address the issues listed below. Specifically, before you move in, look at

- When and where rent is to be paid.
- What utilities your landlord will pay.
- Whether you and your roommates can pay with separate checks.
- Whether your lease places restrictions on noise levels and the number of people you can have over at a time.
- Whether you can use tape or nails on the walls.
- Whether you can have a pet.

Always put all agreements with your landlord in writing. If you and your landlord reach an agreement that is not in the lease or that violates a provision in the lease, make sure that you put the agreement in writing and have you and your landlord sign and date it. By putting agreements in writing, you make it more difficult for your landlord to go back on his/her word.

Thoroughly document the condition at move-in.

- Be sure to take pictures or a video-recording of the condition of the apartment at move-in. Be sure to get photographic evidence of all damaged items.
- Fill out a detailed move-in condition form that describes the condition of the apartment at move-in. When you finish completing the form, be sure to keep a copy for your own records. Your landlord will provide you with a move-in condition form or you can find one on our website at http://www.niu.edu/legal/forms/index.shtml

Be sure to list and to include on the move-in condition report the location and size of

- All stains on the carpeting and whether the carpeting had been steam-cleaned.
- Smudges and cracks on the walls and doors and whether the walls had been newly painted.
- Missing screens and blinds.
- Any item in the apartment that appears damaged and worn.
- The overall cleanliness of the apartment.

Request in writing repairs for any broken item or problem with the apartment.

- Both when you move-in and throughout the tenancy, report all broken items to your landlord in writing.
- Keep written records of all the maintenance problems with your apartment including the time, date, and outcome of the problems?
- If the problem is not promptly resolved or the problem affects your health and safety, contact Students’ Legal Assistance for help.
Your landlord is responsible for taking care of pest infestations (cockroaches, termites, mice, bedbugs, etc.). However, as a tenant, you are responsible for properly storing food and keeping your kitchen clean so that insects and other pests are not attracted to your apartment.

Get renter’s insurance. Renter’s insurance doesn’t cost that much and insures your personal belongings in case of fire, theft, flood, or other damage.

Under the DeKalb Municipal Code, your landlord must give you a 1-hour notice before entering your apartment for any reason unless there is an emergency.
- The 1-hour notice does not apply when the landlord is making repairs you have requested.
- If your landlord enters without giving you a 1-hour notice, send your landlord a written notice asking him/her to give you appropriate notice in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact our office for a free consultation.

Students’ Legal Assistance, Campus Life Building 120
Funded by Student Association
815-753-1701