



A Guide for Talking to Landlords (in person and on the telephone)

Preparing to call a potential landlord

- Plan to call from a quiet place so you can hear the landlord and he or she can clearly hear you (avoid places with a lot of noise, like people yelling in the background).
- Have a pen and paper ready for taking notes.
- Review the list of questions in this tip sheet so you are prepared when you call the landlord.
- Be prepared for an answering machine and practice writing a script using the examples below.
- Know the date you can move and what amount of rent you can pay.
- Write down the name of the person you talked to, their phone number, and the date you called in case you need to ask more questions or schedule/reschedule an appointment.
- Make note of all the landlords you have contacted to help you remember when you have scheduled a rental unit tour/viewing, which apartments you have applied for, and who you need to follow up with.

Sample script: Responding to an ad or listing

"Hello, my name is _____, and I saw your advertisement for a (describe apartment/unit) _____ in the (where you saw the ad, e.g. newspaper) _____. I was wondering if I could speak with you to get some details, and hopefully set up an appointment to meet with you to see the unit."

If you reach an answering machine: "I can be reached at (phone number and best time) _____. Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon."





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Sample script: Cold calling a landlord

“Hello, my name is _____. I’m looking for a (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) bedroom apartment for (when - this month, next month, two months from now) _____. Do you have any available units?”

If the landlord does not have any available units: “Do you have any other properties with a vacancy?” or “Are you keeping a wait list? If so, could I put my name on the list?”

If the landlord has a unit open, have a list of the questions you want to ask and be sure to write down the answers. If the landlord has two or more apartments, write down the answers for each unit.

Confirming the viewing

If the landlord seems receptive when you call, ask to arrange a time to meet to see the unit. Confirm when and where to meet, and who you should ask for. Be sure to thank her or him before you hang up.

Preparing for the viewing

Here's a list of what you should bring:

- Copies of your documentation (ID, references, proof of income, banking details, blank cheques to provide deposit, etc.)
- Notebook or clipboard with paper and pen
- Measuring tape
- Camera (or cellphone with camera feature)

If you're seeing more than one unit, bring the [Keeping Track of Your Inquiries](#) worksheet with you.

Be prepared to explain why you are looking for housing

If you get asked this question, there are many reasonable and positive factors





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you can share, such as relocating to be closer to family or work, wanting to downsize to save money, wanting to be in a neighbourhood with more amenities or activities, or a change in family status (e.g. separation).

You may want to explain upfront why the advertised unit meets your needs. By being proactive and open, you are less likely to encounter awkward questions you are not comfortable answering or that may present you as a less-than-ideal potential tenant.

What the landlord CAN ask you for

- A deposit for last month's rent when you apply for a unit
- A deposit for first month's rent by the first day of the lease
- Proof of income or the ability to pay
- A credit check
- References from past landlords

What the landlord CAN'T ask you for

- Damage deposits
- Post-dated cheques (although you may choose to provide these for your own convenience)

What you SHOULD ask the landlord

- For receipts for any money you give the landlord or superintendent
- To sign a lease in order to have a formal record of what you both have agreed to
- For a copy of the lease or any other papers you sign

What you SHOULDN'T ask the landlord

- Do you accept people on social assistance (OW or ODSP)?
- Do you rent to people who have been in jail (or have a criminal record)?
- Do you rent to single parents or people under 18?





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Responding to awkward questions: Reframing your responses

The landlord may ask you about your credit and rental history, and even your criminal history. What information you share is up to you. Generally it's best to be truthful (without giving too many details) and to take responsibility for your mistakes. It's best not to focus on the past, but to emphasize how things are different now and why. If a question feels intrusive or inappropriate, think about why the landlord is asking it and respond in a way that speaks to that concern instead of responding aggressively or not at all. See sample responses below.

Landlord: "Are you on welfare?"

Potential renter: "At this time I am looking for work but I have the funds to pay for my rent. I can arrange to have my rent sent directly to you so you can be sure of receiving it each month."

Landlord: "Do you work?"

Potential renter: "I am able to pay the rent you are charging, and I can give you a reference to show that I am a reliable tenant." (You may want to tell them about your past work history and your current job search prospects.)

Things to consider when viewing

When looking at a place, assess the unit and the overall condition of the building and check out the neighbourhood. Your sense of safety and the distance to services and other amenities will impact your quality of life. Also consider what the landlord is like; your comfort and rapport with him or her could help resolve problems easier. For tips on what you should be looking for during your viewing (e.g., do the appliances work?), see [Ten things to do when you check out a rental](#).

For more on how to prepare for and attend a viewing, see tip sheet, [Preparing for your Housing Search](#) or go to www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca and search "Before Meeting the Landlord."

