Tips for Renting Out a Room in Your Home

The opinions expressed in this document are simply helpful ideas and suggestions, but should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any official or agency of Biola University or the State of California. While this publication is designed to provide helpful information, readers should consult an attorney or other expert for advice in particular cases, and should also read the relevant statutes and court decisions when relying on cited material.

Advertise

  - Biola University Off-Campus Housing Services has partnered with this third-party company, Off Campus Housing 101, to provide an Off-Campus Housing Website and Listing Service. This service makes it easy for landlords to market rental properties directly to Biola's current students, prospective students, faculty, and staff. Placing your rental listing on OCH 101’s website will provide you with an international audience of prospective tenants.
- Include as many details as possible including well-written copy, good photos, and all amenities. See [http://www.biola.och101.com/effective-ad-writing.php](http://www.biola.och101.com/effective-ad-writing.php) for tips.
- Keep it in accordance with California's Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of dwellings because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status (families with children under the age of 18) or handicap (disability). For more info: [http://www.dca.ca.gov/publications/landlordbook/discrimination.shtml](http://www.dca.ca.gov/publications/landlordbook/discrimination.shtml)
  - Ideas: Create a picture of your home environment. Talk about yourself and your values. Many potential rentees will self-select or decline based on this. Example: Say, “Christian Family Home” rather than “Looking for a Christian student.”
  - Interview well
  - When declining a potential tenant don’t use discriminatory language, (i.e. “You are not a man/woman.” “You are not a Biola student.”) Instead, simply state that you’ve already found someone who is a good match.

Rent

Amount: A dollar amount is the most common way people pay rent. To set the amount, you may want to check other advertisements on the Off-Campus Housing 101 Listing Service at [www.biola.och101.com](http://www.biola.och101.com) to get an idea of average prices. Variations in rent don’t depend on how nice the home is, but on how many of the student's needs will be met through the housing situation. Factors helpful to students are:

- A reasonable level of privacy for the student.
- Freedom to lead a normal student life.
- Proximity to campus or bus service.
- Use of kitchen facilities.
- Use of laundry facilities.
- A private bathroom.

Collection: Rent is usually collected in advance - i.e., on the first day of the month for which the rent applies. A receipt book (available at variety and office supply stores) is helpful so you can give a dated receipt to your tenant each time the rent is paid. This will help keep accurate records.

An Alternative To Cash: Rent reduction and pay in exchange for work. You may wish to offer the room for rent and/or pay in exchange for babysitting, yardwork, or household chores. This is often a successful, as well as practical, arrangement between landlord and tenant.

Here are a few suggestions to make this arrangement successful.

- Time Commitment: Remember that students already have a full schedule with classes, homework, work, and friends. Keep your work requirements to a reasonable level that will still allow them to keep up with their studies and have a normal social life.
- Work Duties: Be as specific as possible about the duties you require and at what times. Write down the work agreement and give a copy to the tenant. You can always change it, but you need a concrete plan to work with to ensure you both know what is expected.
  - If housecleaning or yard work is involved, make a list of what specific tasks are required, how often they are to be performed, and how many hours they should take.
  - It may be convenient for you to have an on-call babysitter, but most students need to plan their schedules in advance. Make a specific arrangement such as "babysit every Saturday night unless we tell you by Wednesday that you will not be needed."
- Pay for Work: If the duties will fluctuate, it may be easiest to charge full rent and then pay an hourly wage when duties are performed. This simplifies time and money accounting greatly.

Deposit
For details regarding security deposits please see links at:
http://studentlife.biola.edu/commuters/off-campus/legal-resources/

Communication
The most important tool for making this arrangement a happy, supportive one for all concerned is communication. Keep up a dialogue with your tenant so you have a relationship with him/her. This creates an atmosphere of openness where mutual respect and consideration can grow. If you have an ongoing dialogue with the student, such as exchanging daily pleasantries, then when you ask the student to do something
like clean up the kitchen after himself/herself, or turn down the radio, or be quieter when coming in late at night, you will have a friendly context for these requests.

If something bothers you, be sure to discuss it as soon as possible rather than let it build to the point where you and your tenant cannot resolve what may have started as a troublesome, but small, item. Keep channels of communication open and you will usually find yourself more tolerant of the student's needs and occasional failings and he/she will be more considerate of your needs and wishes.

**Rental Agreements**

*Month-to-Month:* This type of agreement may be verbal or it may be written down. For a Lease Signing Checklist please see [http://studentlife.biola.edu/commuters/off-campus/off-campus-resources/](http://studentlife.biola.edu/commuters/off-campus/off-campus-resources/), and for a Sample Lease Agreement and other resources please see [http://studentlife.biola.edu/commuters/off-campus/legal-resources/](http://studentlife.biola.edu/commuters/off-campus/legal-resources/).

The landlord and tenant should both sign and date a lease agreement, and both should keep a copy. A month-to-month rental agreement may be the most satisfactory arrangement for renting out a room in your home. It is an agreement that the tenant may rent for a month at a time, and the agreement is automatically renewed for one more month each time the tenant pays the rent. This situation allows the landlord or tenant to terminate the arrangement, with proper notice, if the situation becomes unsatisfactory to either party.

If you wish to use a month-to-month agreement, avoid making promises to a tenant that he/she may stay for a semester or a year, or you may be held to that promise. Instead, you may wish to say, "My expectation is that you may stay for a semester (or a year), but this will be a month-to-month tenancy so that if either of us becomes unhappy we may terminate it at the end of any rental month, given proper notice".


**House Rules**

A student who rents a room in your home will become part of your household even if all he or she does is sleep, bathe, and dress at your house. It is important before you select a tenant that you think through how you feel about certain things and what your own household's needs are. Here are some things to consider:

1. May the tenant use the house as a family member? Just his/her room? Just the "family room"?
2. May the tenant have his/her friends over? May they use the house or just the tenant's room? May they stay overnight?
3. How do you feel music? What if it is confined to the tenant's room?
4. If there are kitchen privileges:
   - Are there certain meals that the tenant may fix, but not others?
- Are there certain hours of the day they may use the kitchen or times they must stay out of it?
- Do they have a certain space in the refrigerator or cabinets?
- May they fix meals for their friends?
- May they use your food? Must they replace it or get permission? Just inform you afterwards?

5. If there are laundry privileges:
- Are there certain times they may use the washer/dryer?
- Will they use their own detergent (and other supplies)? Can they borrow yours?

Discuss these and other items you wish to consider with your prospective tenant so that he/she will know what is expected. This way you can both decide whether you can accommodate each other. After you accept a tenant, write these "house rules" down. Both of you should mutually agree upon these rules, keep a copy, and agree to talk with the other person if he/she wants to change them.

The "house rules" are not laws—they are guidelines so that everyone knows what is expected. Do not make them too restrictive or difficult to conform to, just include those things, which if not regulated, will make your household truly unhappy. Please remember that you are not the student's parent; you are merely establishing ground rules that will make your household operate harmoniously.

**Miscellaneous Tips**

*School vacations:* If a student has been a good tenant and is leaving at the end to a school year (or semester) but is intending to return at the end of the break to rent again in your home, ask him/her to write to you by August 1 (or January 1) to confirm his/her intent to return and rent from you again. It would also be a good idea to get his/her vacation. If the student is not returning, this will give you sufficient notice to get another tenant.

*Storage tips:* If a student will be gone for an extended period of time (like the summer) and requests you to store his/her belongings, you may be willing to do this. However, it is a good idea to have the student pack them in mailable boxes and have him/her move them to an appropriate storage place in your home before leaving. Then collect a deposit from the student that will be sufficient to cover the cost of mailing these belongings if the student does not return. Set a date that you will mail them if you have not been contacted before then, and get an address where you can send them. When the student returns, return the deposit. You may wish to sign an agreement that if he/she returns but does not move back in with you, all or part of the deposit may be kept by you as a fair storage cost.

*Information in this document is, in part, revised from “How to Rent Out a Room in Your*
Home,” Colorado State University, Off-Campus Student Services. www.ocssral.colostate.edu