



Client Telephone Guide - Calling About an Apartment

Directions: This worksheet is designed to help you determine whether an apartment would be appropriate for you and, if applicable, your family. The questions about screening are important because many landlords charge an application fee to screen for criminal history, credit history, and rental history. If you know in advance the "tolerance level" of the landlord (that is, whether the landlord will rent to people in your situation), you can decide if it would be worth paying the fee and applying for the apartment.

TIPS TO HELP YOU WITH THE CALL

- If possible, call from a quiet place so you can hear the landlord. It is also better if the landlord does not hear a lot of noise (like people yelling) in the background.
- Make sure to review the list of questions below so you are prepared when you call the landlord.
- Know when you can move.
- Write down the name of the person you talked to, his or her phone number, and the date you made the call in case you need to call back to ask more questions or to reschedule an appointment.
- Since you may have to contact several landlords to find an apartment, use the "Housing Search Tracking Worksheet" to help you remember when you have scheduled an appointment to look at an apartment, where you have submitted applications, and when and with whom you need to follow up about an apartment.

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

"Hello, my name is _____. I'm looking for a (1,2,3,4,5) bedroom apartment for (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?"

If the landlord does have a vacancy, ask the following questions. Be sure to write down the answers. If the landlord has two or more apartments, write down the answers for each unit.

Date of Call: _____

Table 1: Questions About the Apartment		
	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
What is the address of the property?		
What date is the unit available?		
Do you charge an application fee? <i>If he/she says yes: How much?</i>		
What is the monthly rent?		
How much is the security deposit?		
What utilities would I pay?		
Do you know approximately how much utilities for that unit cost each month?		
How many people are allowed to live in the unit?		
What is the minimum lease you require (how many months)?		
Do you require me to have a certain income to rent the unit? <i>If he/she says yes: How much?</i>		
Are there laundry facilities on-site? <i>If he/she says no: Is there a laundromat nearby?</i>		
Is the apartment near the bus line? Which one?		

Table 2: Screening Questions
[Ask only those questions that apply to your situation.]

	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
<i>If you have Section 8 or another rent subsidy:</i> Do you accept Section 8 or other rent subsidies?		
<i>If you've had credit problems:</i> Do you work with people who have had credit problems in the past?		
<i>If you have been evicted:</i> Do you work with people who have evictions that can be explained?		
<i>If you have a criminal history:</i> Do you work with people who have a criminal history if they've worked to improve their life?		
<i>If you have a disability:</i> Can you accommodate people with disabilities?		
<i>If you have pets:</i> What are your rules about pets?		

The landlord may ask you to explain the circumstances if you have bad credit, a criminal history, or prior evictions. They may want to know dates, places, and if you owe any money. The best response is to be truthful, take responsibility for your mistakes, and talk about what you are doing to make sure it never happens again. You may want to write some notes about your circumstances below to make sure you are prepared to answer the landlord's questions.

Here are things that might show a landlord how you are improving your life:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> employed for ___ months/years | <input type="checkbox"/> taking classes on budgeting your money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> going to school (or job training) | <input type="checkbox"/> completed treatment and sober |
| <input type="checkbox"/> working with a credit counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> working with a social worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> paying off money you owe | <input type="checkbox"/> ended a bad relationship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> established a savings account | <input type="checkbox"/> taking classes about being a better tenant |

If the landlord is willing to work with people in your situation:

- Is it possible to set up a time to see the apartment? When? _____
- Can you give me directions from [where you are living/staying]?

- Can I have your name again, in case I need to call you back? _____
- And what is the best number to reach you at? _____

Be sure to thank him or her before hanging up.

Table 3: Follow-Up		
	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
Apartment address		
Date and time of appointment		
Did you fill out an application? <i>If yes, when will the landlord be contacting you with a decision?</i>		
Did you get the apartment? <i>If yes, when is the move-in date?</i> <i>If no, what was the reason provided?</i>		