Legal Considerations:

- Ensure that the landlord's contact information (address, phone number, e-mail, and full name) is on the lease. Each tenant should have a copy of the lease.
- Before signing, check over your lease for "extras," such as being required to mow the lawn, shovel the driveway, etc. If you are willing to do these things, ensure the landlord agrees, in the lease, to give you the equipment to perform these tasks (and will pay for gas for the lawnmower, plow, etc.).
- Take pictures when you move in.
- Ensure you have established the landlord's preferred contact information in an emergency, and that any promises by landlord regarding repairs or other actions are memorialized in writing (keep copies!) and signed by the landlord. Phone calls are not enough!
- Consider Renter's Insurance, since your possessions may not be covered if the premises are damaged by water, fire, etc. Insurance can be really affordable (as low as $75 per year), and outweighs the cost of replacing damaged or destroyed possessions.
- Not all landlords are required to keep security deposits in escrow accounts, but a good landlord should be willing to open one for you. The money in your security deposit should be earning you interest.
- By law, landlords cannot prevent each tenant on a lease from having one other roommate reside in the apartment. Important exceptions to this would be when the occupancy exceeds the limit created by fire or zoning codes.

And some words for the wise...

1. To say the least, it's embarrassing to get charged with "endangering the welfare of a minor," and "dealing unlawfully with a child." If you're on the lease, the police may come looking for you when a 16-year-old gets drunk at your house (even if you were in your room writing a paper), so do what you can to make sure laws are observed in your residence.

2. Do not live with unlivable conditions. Anything that can affect your health or basic needs (lack of heat, lack of hot water, plumbing, dangerous wiring) should be documented and not tolerated. When in doubt, consult an attorney--and do not put it off.

Notes

Use this space to write any questions or notes you may have about the property.

Some information in this pamphlet taken from:
http://ago.mo.gov
http://offcampusliving.org
Stephanie Cole, General Counsel, Niagara University
Questions to ask the Landlord:

Landlord’s Name _____________________________
Address _________________________________
Phone _________________________________
Rental Property Address ______________________
Monthly Rent _______________________________
Due Date _________________________________
Latest Date Rent accepted before a fee ________
Late Fee Amount ___________________________
How rent should be paid (Check, money order, etc.)
_________________________________________
Length of Lease _____________________________
Security Deposit Amount ______________________
How do I get a full refund of security deposit?
_________________________________________

Who is responsible for these problems?

- Stove quits ________________________________
- Sink or toilet gets clogged __________________
- Roof leaks _______________________________

Who is responsible for:

- Taking care of the yard ______________________
- Removing snow from sidewalk and driveway

When is garbage collected and where is it put?

- Can I hang pictures on the walls?
- Are draperies, curtain rods, or blinds included?

Questions to ask the Landlord cont’d:

- What utilities are included?
  - Heat (is the heat gas or electric?)
  - Water
  - Gas
  - Electric
  - Phone
  - Cable
  - Internet
- Are there limits to occupancy?
- Are pets allowed? Is there an additional fee?
- Are there any restrictions regarding guests, parties?
- Is parking available and is there an additional fee?
- Who do I call in an emergency?
- What do I do if I lose my key?
- Are the interior rooms and building commons areas reasonably clean?
- Are the walls in reasonably good condition?
- Is the carpet/flooring clean and in good condition?
- Are the appliances gas or electric and are they in good condition?
- Is the refrigerator clean and in good condition?
- Is there sufficient lighting? Do the light fixtures work?
- Are there enough electrical outlets? Do they all have covers?
- Does the toilet function properly and not leak?
- Do the hot and cold water faucets function and not drip?
- Do the sinks, shower, and tub drain quickly?
- Are there any signs of water damage around water fixtures or on the ceiling?
- Will my furniture fit comfortably in the apartment?
- Is there sufficient closet space?
- Are there any signs of infestation?
- Are there laundry facilities in the building?
- Is there storage space available in the building?
- Are there proper containers provided for trash disposal with clear instructions (pick-up schedule, recyclables, etc.)?
- Are porches free of furniture designed for indoor use?
- Is the exterior of the property clean and well maintained?

Safety and Security:

- Is the main building entrance door sturdy, locked, and is there an intercom or doorbell for guest access?
- Is there a private mailbox (preferably lockable) for each apartment?
- Is the building number visible and readable from street?
- Is the exterior lighting sufficient?
- Does the building have a security system?
- Does the building have a fire escape (required for 3rd or higher story bedrooms)? If not, where is the nearest emergency exit?
- Are there two emergency exits to the street? Are they kept clear and do they open outward without a key?
- Is emergency lighting provided?
- Are the hallways well lit?
- If it’s a multi-unit building, are fire extinguishers available and identified on each floor?
- Are there handrails on all stairs?
- Is the apartment door in good condition? Does it have a deadbolt lock and/or a security chain?
- Are there smoke detectors in each bedroom?
- Are the windows unbroken, functioning, and lockable? (Bars or other security features are recommended for ground floor windows).
- Does each bedroom have a minimum of one functioning exterior window?
- Is there a fire extinguisher near the kitchen?
- Are electrical outlets in bathroom and kitchen GFCI type?
- Is there a Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector present?
- Are all circuits marked on the electrical panel? Are they circuit breakers or fuses?
- Is the building number visible and readable from street?
- Is the basement free of clutter and combustible materials?
- Is there at least a 3 foot clearance around the furnace, boiler and hot water tank?

All items listed in this checklist are either suggestions, or mandates from local and state fire or building codes. If there is a question or problem with one or more items, please consult a local fire department or building inspector for clarification. Greg Colangelo, Fire Prevention Battalion Chief can be contacted at 716-286-4728. DO NOT sign a lease until these questions and problems are addressed and corrected.