

# LIVING OFF-CAMPUS

## SAFETY FEATURES AND TIPS

Use this guide as you review the available safety features when selecting an apartment and as a general resource for safe, off-campus living.

### SAFETY FEATURES TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU RENT:

- Does the apartment have metal or solid core wooden entry and exit doors? Are these doors equipped with deadbolts or shielded doorknob locks? Are the locks and strike plates mounted securely?
- Have the locks been re-keyed since the last tenant moved out? You have the right to ask your landlord to change or re-key the locks to your unit before you move in. You never know who may still have a key.
- Can visitors be observed without opening the apartment door either through a door peephole or window? If your front door does not have a peephole, consider having one installed (check with your landlord). Check to see who is at the door before answering, especially when home alone.
- Does the complex have a code of conduct policy that holds residents accountable for violations and disturbances?
- Are all first floor, fire escape, or other accessible windows equipped with locks? If equipped with security gratings, can they be opened from the inside for emergency exit?
- Do any trees or bushes block doors or windows from public view? Does the vegetation provide places of concealment at entrances and along walkways?
- Is there adequate lighting at the building entry doors and along walkways? Are the outer doors kept locked at all times?
- Does the apartment have a smoke detector and at least two emergency escape routes?
- Does the apartment have provision for the installation of a telephone?

### EXTENDED LEAVES

Take these extra precautions to protect your home if you will be away for an extended period of time:

- Make sure all doors and windows are securely locked.
- Close all blinds so strangers can't peek inside.
- Hide electronics/other valuables or take these items with you.
- Disconnect power cords and electrical appliances that will not be in use.
- Try to make your home look occupied by leaving a few lights on or setting up lamps on a timer.
- Have your mail and/or newspaper delivery temporarily held while you are away. Visit [holdmail.usps.com](http://holdmail.usps.com) to schedule this service with the local post office.
- Have a trusted friend or neighbor check on your property. Make sure they have a phone number to contact you in case of an emergency.



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### QUESTIONS?

Contact the Dean of Students Office at (813) 974-6677 or visit us at [f/USF Dean of Students](https://www.usf.edu/deanofstudents).

Information provided by the University of South Florida, the Police Department, and the Crime Prevention Unit.

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## SAFETY FEATURES AND TIPS

### SAFETY TIPS FOR OFF-CAMPUS LIVING:

- Keep windows and doors locked at all times, especially when you are alone, sleeping or the apartment is left unoccupied (even if only for a few moments, eg. when taking out the trash, collecting mail, etc.). Most burglaries involve unlocked doors, so locking up is the single most effective action you can take to reduce theft. If a lock in your residence is broken, contact the landlord immediately.
- Secure sliding glass doors with a safety bar, which can be placed in the door track to prevent the door from being forced open.
- Do not allow strangers into your building or apartment. Observe visitors through your door peephole or window prior to opening the door. Ask for proper identification from repairmen, utility workers or strangers and confirm their presence with the person requesting the service. Don't be afraid of asking – if they are legitimate, they won't mind. Delivery persons should remain outside to await the person requesting the delivery. Never give keys to repairmen or delivery persons.
- Don't place your full name on the mailbox or apartment directory; use first and middle initials instead.
- Never hide an extra key under a mat, in a flowerpot, or any other easily accessible place – criminals know all the hiding places. Instead, give your key to trusted neighbors or friends.
- Do not put your name or address on your key chain. If keys are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the police, and have your locks changed. At night always have your keys ready before you get to the door.
- Close your curtains or blinds at night to prevent strangers from seeing that you are alone. Leave lights on in two or more rooms. Never reveal to a visitor or telephone caller that you are alone. Call out in a loud voice, "I'll answer it!" when there is a visitor at the door to imply that you are not alone.
- Maintain good lighting at all entrances and keep porch lights on at night.
- Keep a list of your valuable property in case anything is stolen from your house or apartment. Include the make, model, serial number and date of purchase of each item. Consider purchasing renter's insurance to protect your belongings.
- Be aware of deserted laundry rooms, common lounges, basements, parking garages, and elevators, especially late at night. Consider using or entering these areas when others are around.
- Try not to enter elevators with a stranger. Stand next to the control panel. If confronted by an assailant, push the emergency alarm and as many floor buttons as possible (do not push the stop button).
- Develop a "buddy" system with your neighbors. Be alert for suspicious-looking strangers, sounds, or actions in the hallways and notify the police at once.
- If you live in an apartment building, do not enter or leave the building if you notice strangers loitering in the entranceway. Don't hold the door open or allow others to follow you inside unless they live in the building or have permission to enter from a tenant.
- If a stranger asks to use the telephone, do not permit him/her to enter your home. Offer to summon emergency assistance or make the call yourself.
- If you come home and find signs of forced entry, don't go inside. Instead, go to the nearest phone and call the police.
- Report all obscene or harassing phone calls to the police. If someone calls with the wrong number, never give the caller your name, address, or number that they have called.

