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HOW TO NEGOTIATE A BETTER LEASE

By dan the roommate man

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Is it possible to negotiate better terms on your lease? It could be worth a try. What do you have to lose? Here are a few tactics to try:

- * Ask the landlord how many vacant units are in the building.
- * Bring a competitors ad with you when you view the apartment.
- * Ask for a "move-in special" if the building is ne or under construction.
- * Ask for a two or three year lease (if you need a longer than a typical one year lease) with the current rate locked in for the duration of the entire lease. Be careful of this. Some two year leases can come up for an increase at the end of the first year.
- * Point out needed repairs in the apartment. This is the time to mention that you feel that you could live with it for a reduction in rent.
- * If the landlord will not give on the rent, then ask for the utilities to be included or new carpet and paint.

Remember that the law of supply and demand does come into play here. If you are searching in the New York or San Francisco area, the landlord will not feel the need to negotiate. But you may find that there are areas of town which are not in the trendy sections of these high demand areas. Take note of how long units stay on the market in these sections of town. Those landlords may be willing to make concession to you for a fast move-in.

DAN THE ROOMMATE MAN www.roommateexpress.com

Not all apartment leases are created equal

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Before signing any lease:

- * Take a walk through the unit that you are renting to make sure it is in good repair.
- * Be sure to read the lease completely. All leases are not the same.

What should be included in your lease:

- * All verbal promises should be reduced to writing within the lease.
- * Are there provisions for a job transfer within the lease?
- * How and when do you give notice to move? Must you give notice even when the lease expires and you wish to move? Can you go month to month at the expiration of your lease?
- * How long does the landlord have to return your security deposit once you have moved.
- * Who is responsible for the repairs to the apartment? If you move into an apartment complex, there are usually maintenance people to take care of all needed repairs. On the other hand if you are renting from a private landlord, you may be responsible for part or all of the repairs.
- * Are late fees addressed in the lease?
- * Who is responsible for the utilities?
- * What happens if you cause damage to the apartment?

If you want to make a change to the lease, cross out the clause in question. Then both you and the landlord must initial the change for it to be binding.

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