

TEN THINGS TO ASK YOUR PROSPECTIVE TENANTS...

1. Why Are You Moving?

This question can tell you a lot about the tenant, so listen closely. You want to look for legitimate reasons such as [changing jobs](#) or wanting more room. Beware of red flags for moving, such as being evicted or the tenant keeps getting into arguments with their landlord/superintendent/neighbor.

2. When Do You Plan on Moving-In?

This can tell you a lot about the tenant as well. If they want to move-in tomorrow, they may not be the most responsible person. If they were previously renting, most landlords require 30 days notice to terminate a lease, and if this tenant wants to move-in tomorrow, something may be off. Obviously special circumstances do apply such as a pay cut, a sudden job transfer or [domestic abuse](#), but in general, responsible tenants will start their search for an apartment well in advance, at least a month, of their anticipated move-in date.

3. What Is Your Monthly Income?

This question can help you determine if the prospective tenant will be able to afford the apartment. You will want to look for a tenant whose monthly income is no less than two and a half times the monthly rent. For example, if the monthly rent is \$1,000, you will want the tenant to make no less than \$2,500 a month. Keep in mind that the monthly income may not tell the whole story. Additional information, such as how much debt they have will impact their ability to pay on time. The amount of debt can be discovered by running a credit check.

4. Will You Have the Security Deposit and First Month's Rent Available Upon Move- In?

This will speak to their financial situation. If they do not have enough money up front and ask to pay the [security deposit](#) a week after move-in, a little each week or similar, this trend will continue down the line until they can no longer afford their monthly rent. You do not want to start a tenant relationship where the tenant already owes you money. You should never allow a tenant to move-in who does not pay you this full amount before they move-in. Do not negotiate or make exceptions to this rule. Always require the full amount before move-in. The security deposit is essential to you in case the tenant becomes a problem or causes damage.

5. How Many People Will Be Living in the Apartment?

You will want to look for a maximum of two people per bedroom. The fewer people in the apartment, the less wear and tear there will be on your property. Additionally, most municipalities and fire departments limit the number of people that can legally rent and reside in an apartment. Overcrowding can be a health and safety risk.

6. Can You Provide References From Your Employer and Former Landlord?

If the prospective tenant hesitates or makes excuses as to why they cannot provide references, they most likely have something to hide. [References from an employer](#) will help verify income and stable employment. You will want references from a former landlord because their current landlord may not tell you the whole truth because they may just be trying to get the tenant off of their hands. It is often prudent to obtain this information on your own to prevent forgery.

7. Will You Sign and Consent to a Credit and Background Check?

If you require these checks and the prospective tenant will not consent to them, this will eliminate them from your prospective tenant pool immediately. You must have the prospective tenant sign a form giving their permission to run these checks. Verbal consent is not binding.

8. Have You Ever Been Evicted?

While the prospective tenant may not tell the truth, it is still worth asking. Directly asking the prospective tenant if they have been evicted will give the tenant an opportunity to explain the situation. Good people can fall on hard times and the eviction may be one blip in their lives and not a measure of who they truly are financially. If the eviction was for causing damage or excessive noise, these behaviors are not likely to change.

9. Do You Have Any Pets?

If you have a "no pets" policy, a prospective tenant with a pet will be a deal breaker. It is best to know right away, so you do not waste any more of your time interviewing them.

10. Do You Have Any Questions?

This will give the tenant their chance to ask questions about the apartment, location, screening process, or anything else that comes to mind. This is important because even if the tenant has answered all of your qualifying questions to your satisfaction, the tenant also has to be satisfied to want to live in your property. If there is a feature of your property or something that is unappealing to them about the screening process, you will most likely be wasting your time showing them the property.

Here is the link for Pa. Magistrates Court and cases filed there...

<http://ujsportal.pacourts.us/>

Click Docket Sheets then Magisterial Districts to search by name and county. Search several surrounding counties especially those ones where the tenant may list they have lived.