

Your Off-Campus Housing Handout of Potentially Useful Information

Abbreviations related to housing

BR = bedroom, BA = bathroom	W/D = washer/dryer	pkg = parking
A/C = air conditioning	Util. = utilities (gas/electricity)	Util. Incl. = utilities included
PG&E = a gas/electric co.	MID = a local electric company	W/S/G = water/sewage/garbage
furn. = furnished	unfurn. = without furniture	balc. = balcony
pvt = private	F/P = fireplace	Sq. ft. = square feet (area)
"3BR/1.5 BA" = 3 bedrooms, 1 full bath, and a ½ bath (just a toilet and sink, but no shower)		

What's usually included:

Rental houses and apartments ("apts") in California almost always include a refrigerator, dishwasher, and a 4-burner stove that is either gas or electric. All here have heating and A/C. Many homes and most apartments have carpeting. Closets are built in, so freestanding wardrobes are not needed.

What to consider when looking

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| 1. safety | 4. CatTracks | 7. floor space | 10. kitchen storage |
| 2. parking | 5. access | 8. wall space | 11. electrical outlets/ceiling lights |
| 3. noise | 6. closets | 9. appliances & plumbing | 12. laundry room |

Costs to expect

- **Rent:** \$550-800/month for a room in a house is common in Merced now (2024). Find out what's included. The room might be furnished (bed, desk, etc.) or not. It might include utilities or not. It might have a private bathroom, or one that is shared with other residents. Ask.
- **Security deposit:** This amount is usually the same as one month's rent. If everything is in good condition when you finally move out, you should get all or most of this money back.
- **Last month's rent in advance** (Not everyone requires this, but "first, last & sec. dep." is common.)
- **Utilities:** gas, electricity, cable, and *possibly* the city trio: water/sewer/garbage; expect to pay a deposit on all of these. Other possible costs: gardener, cleaning service, bottled water. Costs: gas is cheap (\$10-90/month for a house), electricity more – esp. in summer, and cable maybe \$80/mo.
- **Food, transportation, extras** (e.g. laundry money)

Understanding a rental agreement

Term of the lease – one year, six months, or month to month? Some agreements begin as one-year leases, and change to month-to-month leases after one year.

Sublet clause – If you have to move out, can you sublet (rent) your room/house to someone else?

Cancellation terms – Does the lease explain the terms of cancellation? (e.g. 30-day written notice)

***Late fees** – How much will the landlord charge you if your rent is late? How many days late?

Automatic Renewal – Many leases renew automatically at the end of the term, or become month-to-month when the original term is up.

Security deposit – Be sure it's clear exactly what is required to get your full deposit back.

Utilities included? Which? – Usually the water/sewer/garbage trio is included. The others vary.

Painting policy – Does it say you are not allowed to paint the walls? What about posters/pictures?

Roommates & overnight guests – Some leases state the maximum number.

Landlord's access – By law, the landlord has access to the house/apt. with reasonable notice.

Pets – Generally, no pets are allowed unless the lease says they are. When in doubt, check. Some apartment complexes and houses allow pets for an extra security deposit and a little more rent.