

## TIPS FOR LOOKING AT APARTMENTS

When looking for an apartment or house in the United States the first step is to call the landlord or property agent and set up an appointment to view or tour the property. On the day of your tour make sure to arrive at your scheduled time (landlords will appreciate arriving on time for appointments as they may have other viewings scheduled that day). During your property tour you will have a chance to walk through the apartment or house and ask any questions you may have.

### Your questions may include:

1. How much is the **rent\*** per month?
2. Does the rent include any **utilities** (ie electric, natural gas) ? Who is responsible for the cost of water, garbage collection, and sewage?
3. What is the length of the **lease?\***
4. What day of the month is the **rent due**?
5. What is the closest bus stop to the property? (An important question if you do not plan on having a car)
6. Is a **security deposit** required? If so, how much is it and under what conditions is it held?
7. When is the property available?/ When can you move in?
8. Is the property **furnished** or **unfurnished**?
9. How is maintenance handled? How is emergency service handled?
10. Is there laundry onsite? If not, where is the closet Laundromat?

*\*All words in **Bold** are defined in the glossary at the bottom of the page*

*\*\* Most leases will be for one year. Some properties may offer "Month to Month" rentals. These are short term rental agreements that last for only one month. Month to month rentals may give you more flexibility; however, rents may be higher than one year leases. It is important to note that with month to month rentals the cost of rent is only guaranteed for 30 days and could potentially increase from one month to the next, in addition, your landlord could decide not to renew your contract which will leave you with just 30 days to find a new home.*

### Things to look for and consider while touring the apartment:

1. Type of property- **studio**, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, etc. Are you planning to have a **roommate/s** or live by yourself?
2. Look at the closets/ storage spaces. Make sure there is enough room to store your belongings.
3. Do you feel there are enough windows for natural light and ventilation?
4. If you are viewing a property that comes with an outdoor space ask the landlord who is responsible for maintaining the grounds. (ie cutting the grass, trimming the hedges).
5. Make sure that all of the appliances work and that the sinks/ shower have enough water pressure. Do not worry turning on the facets is not considered rude!

### After the tour:

If you are interested in the property but are not ready to make a decision you may be able to leave a small deposit (1/5 of rent is enough), and ask the landlord to hold the property for you for a few days to a week. (Make sure you ask for a receipt). *If you decide not to rent that apartment you will lose the deposit.*

### Deciding:

Once you have decided which property to rent contact the building's property manager or landlord. They will schedule a time for you to come to their office and sign the lease. Make sure to read through the lease carefully and ask the landlord any questions you may have *before* you sign. Your signature will legally represent your agreement to live under any rules written in the lease. These rules will include (but are not limited to) the cost of the rent and the length of your **tenancy**.

*For Example- If the lease is for one year, you will be responsible to pay the rent for 12 months. If you wish to break your lease and move to another property before the end of the year you may have to pay a penalty fee or continue to pay the rent until you or your landlord finds a replacement **tenant**. Breaking your lease or violating any of its terms or conditions may also cause you to forfeit your security deposit.*

## Getting your new home ready for you!

Once you have signed your lease and you are ready to move into your new home the first thing you will want to do is open your electric and natural gas account. The electric and natural gas company for Binghamton and the surrounding area is **NYSEG**, 1-800-572-1111. If necessary, make an appointment to have your services turned on. *NOTE: If your utilities are covered in your rent they may already be turned on. If you are not sure call and ask your landlord.*

You may want cable TV and/or Internet access in your apartment. If so, please see the list of area providers at the bottom of this page. *NOTE: Satellite TV hookups often require your landlord's permission.*

Many students also like to have a mobile/cell phone. The two most popular types of mobile phones in America are:

1. Contract phones:
2. Pay as you go phones: Also known as prepaid cell phones. With these phones you pay for only the days and minutes you choose to use. For example- If you buy a 20 minute or airtime card you are allowed to talk as long as you have minutes left. *It is important to note that you will be using your minutes during both incoming and outgoing calls.* Once you have used all the minutes you pre-purchased, you may still be able to make phone calls; however, these calls will be charged at a much higher rate so it is more economical to buy additional minutes before you run out. Pay as you go phones and additional minutes are available at a variety of local stores including Target and Wal-Mart.

## Enjoy your new neighborhood:

Now that you have moved into your new property it is time to explore! Take some time to get a feel for your neighborhood. Familiarize yourself with public transportation (buses & taxis), local stores and restaurants. Always be safe and never walk alone late at night until you have learned your way.

*Note: Unlike buses, taxis will not have scheduled pick-up points. A taxi can be hired by calling one of the local taxi cab companies (a list is provided below) and telling them: your current location, your destination, how many people will be traveling with you. If you are traveling within Binghamton's city limits, the price that will be quoted is known as a flat rate (as opposed to a meter charge). It is important to note that the flat rate is per person, not per ride.*

## Glossary

**Budget Billing Plan:** When you choose a budget plan with NYSEG, your utility payments are balanced by predicting future usage based on the prior year's bills, that is, your winter heating bills will be spread over the year. This is best way to know your bill will be the same each month (depending on your use).

Example 1 - A person who chooses a monthly billing:

The utility bill varies from month to month (ex \$80 in August and \$ 250 in January).

Example 2 - A person who chooses a budget plan instead:

All the utility bills are the same price every month (ex \$140).

*Note: prices are just estimates and will vary considerably from person to person.*

**Furnished Property:** Equipped with furniture. This usually includes: kitchen appliances, 1 bed per bedroom, a study desk, a sofa, a dining table. An **Unfurnished Property:** Will only have a refrigerator and a cooking range.

**Lease:** A rental contract prepared by the landlord/ property manager. The lease will contain the length of your residency (usually one year), the rent and any other terms and conditions of the property. When you sign a lease, you agree to live by the terms and conditions it stipulates.

**NYSEG:** The utility company that serves Binghamton and the surrounding area. They will provide your electricity and natural gas.

**Month to Month Lease:** A month-to-month lease states that the renter may leave after one month or the landlord can choose not to renew the lease after one month. If neither party objects, the lease can be renewed after each month is over.

**Rent:** Cost of the apartment you pay to the landlord or management company.

**Rent Due:** Most rent payment are due on or before the first day of the month unless otherwise specified by the lease. Failure to pay the rent on time will result in a late charge. The late fee varies (usually from \$25 to \$50), the exact amount will be stated in the lease. Some landlords may have a "grace period" where they will not charge you the late fee if you make your payment before the fifth of the month. However, it is important to always try to pay your rent on or before the rent due date.

**Roommate:** A person or the people (Roommates) who share your property. Having a roommate/s is a personal preference. Some students like to have roommates to split the cost of rent and utilities with, others prefer to pay more and live alone.

**Security Deposit:** Money provided by the tenant to the landlord at the beginning of the lease. The amount of the security deposit is usually equivalent to one month's rent. The security deposit will be given back to you when you move out, provided you do not violate the terms and conditions in the lease and there is no damage to the apartment.

Example - The rent is \$600 dollars per month plus a security deposit:

At the time of signing a lease, you will pay the landlord your first month's rent (\$600) plus your security deposit (\$600). You only pay the security deposit with your first month's rent. After the first month, you will only pay the rent (\$600) for the remainder of your lease.

**Studio:** A small apartment with a combined living room and bedroom area, a bathroom and a small kitchen.

**Tenant:** A person who rents and occupies an apartment, a house or the like. (You will be the tenant!)

**Tenancy:** The period of the tenant's occupancy.

**Utilities:** Electric and natural gas. If utilities are included in the rent, you do not have to pay for those bills out of your pocket. When they say "heat and hot water" included, it means your landlord pay for gas only, the electricity bills are your responsibility. The cost of water is included in most rents.



# OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION IN THE APARTMENT SEARCH

## Utilities

### Service Provider

NYSEG	1.800.572.1111	<a href="http://www.nyseg.com">www.nyseg.com</a>	Electricity and Natural Gas
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## Residential Phone

### Service Provider

### Package

AT&T	1.800.288.2020	Home Phone - \$2.99 Monthly Fee + 10 cents per minute Dial-up Internet Service - Starting at \$22.95/month
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Verizon	1.800.837.4966	Phone + Internet + TV Starting at \$79.99/month for 1 year
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## TV, Internet, and Home Phone

### Service Provider

### Package

DIRECTV	Order Direct TV: 1.888.777.2454 Customer Service: 1.800.531.5000	Satellite TV - Starting at \$29.99/month High-Speed DSL Internet and Phone <a href="http://www.directv.com">www.directv.com</a>
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DISH Network	1.800.823.4929	Satellite TV - Starting at \$14.99/month High-Speed Internet - Starting at \$49.95/month DSL, Home Phone & Wireless <a href="http://www.dishnetwork.com">www.dishnetwork.com</a>
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Time Warner Cable	New York area: 315.634.6000 Binghamton area: 607-798-8001	HDTV/Cable TV Road Runner High-Speed Internet & Home Phone Three Services Starting at \$99.85/month <a href="http://www.timewarnercable.com">www.timewarnercable.com</a>
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## Furniture & Electronics

### Store/Location

### Price

Aaron's 201 Main St Binghamton	607-729-4961	Rental	Sales & Lease Furniture and Electronics <a href="http://www.aarons.com">http://www.aarons.com</a>
Bed Bath & Beyond Parkway Plaza 3120 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-770-8858	■■■■	Home Furnishing Store Cookware Bedding Small appliances. Furniture <a href="http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com">http://www.bedbathandbeyond.com</a>
Best Buy 3209 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-777-1489	■■□□	Electronics Computers Cell phones TVs Appliances <a href="http://www.bestbuy.com">http://www.bestbuy.com</a>
Boscov's in Downtown 13-23 Court St Binghamton	607-722-4220	■■■□	Department Store Furniture Electronics Apparel Small appliances Bedding <a href="http://www.boscovs.com">http://www.boscovs.com</a>
Home Depot 798 Main St Johnson City	607-785-8614	■■■□	Home Improvement Store Appliances Electronics Paint Wall Tools Flooring Garden. <a href="http://www.homedepot.com">http://www.homedepot.com</a>
Home Goods	607-785-5534	■■□□	Home Furnishing Store

Town Square Mall Vestal			Decorative accessories, Clothes, Furniture, Bedding, Buffet, AMC theatre movies.
Kmart 33 West State St Binghamton 527 Endicott Plaza Endicott	607-772-6618 607-754-5920	■□□□	Clothing, Small appliances, Bedding, Electronics, Furniture, Groceries. <a href="http://www.kmart.com">http://www.kmart.com</a>
KOHL'S Parkway Plaza 3208 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-766-6070	■□□□	Department Store Clothing Small appliances Furniture <a href="http://www.kohls.com">http://www.kohls.com</a>
Lowe's 1318 Upper Front St Binghamton 225 Sycamore Rd Vestal	607-762-1000 607-770-9800	■□□□	Home Improvement Store Appliances, Paint, Tools, Building materials. <a href="http://www.lowes.com">http://www.lowes.com</a>
Macy's Oakdales Johnson City	607-797-4990	■□□□	Department Store Apparel Fragrance Small appliances <a href="http://www.macys.com">http://www.macys.com</a>
Oakdale Mall Johnson City	607-798-9388	Varies	Shopping Mall Over 100 stores and shops
Department Stores: Bon Ton Burlington Coast Factory JC Penney Macy's Sears			Hours: Monday - Saturday 10AM - 9PM Sunday 11AM - 7PM
Olum's 3701 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal 95 Main St Johnson City	607-729-5775 607-729-3600	■□□□	Home Furnishing Store Furniture Appliances Bedding Electronics <a href="http://www.olums.com">http://www.olums.com</a>
Pier 1 imports Across from Town Square Mall 2540 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-729-2100	■□□□	Home Furnishings and Décor Decorative accessories Furniture <a href="http://www.pier1.com">http://www.pier1.com</a>
RadioShack 1250 Upper Front St Binghamton 33 West State St Binghamton 109 Oakdale Mall Johnson City 3712 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal 1001 North St Ste1 Endicott	607-722-3124 607-724-5178 607-798-0301 607-729-1525 607-785-7695	■□□□	Electronics Cell phones TVs Computers Games <a href="http://www.radioshack.com">http://www.radioshack.com</a>
Raymour & Flanigan Across from Oakdale Mall 220 Reynolds Rd Johnson City	607-797-2214	■□□□	Furniture 3-Day Delivery <a href="http://www.raymourflanigan.com">http://www.raymourflanigan.com</a>
Rent-A-Center 10 Glenwood Ave Binghamton 33 W State St Binghamton 42 Washington Ave Endicott	607-770-1100 607-723-8544 607-754-6935	Rental	Rent-to-own Furniture and Electronics <a href="http://www.rentacenter.com">http://www.rentacenter.com</a>
Target Parkway Plaza 3112 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-729-6611	■□□□	Clothing, Electronics, Cell phones Groceries, Kitchen, supplies, Bedding. <a href="http://www.target.com">http://www.target.com</a>
TJ Maxx Town Square Mall 2413 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-770-7031	■□□□	Outlet Store Clothing Bedding Household items <a href="http://www.tjmaxx.com">http://www.tjmaxx.com</a>
Wal-Mart Town Square Mall 2405 Vestal Pkwy E Vestal	607-798-1011	■□□□	Discount Department Store. Open 24 hours Groceries Clothing Furniture Electronics Cell phones Computers Small appliances Tire & Lube shop Bank Pharmacy Cosmetics Optical center Photo shop Hair salon Food court <a href="http://www.walmart.com">http://www.walmart.com</a>

Wegmans  
650 Harry L Dr  
Johnson City

607-729-7782

■ ■ ■ ■ Supermarket, Pharmacy. [www.wegmans.com](http://www.wegmans.com)  
Open 24 hours

### Taxi Cabs

A-1 Courtesy Cab  
(607) 723-2000

Checker Cab Service  
(607) 722-2227

City Cab  
(607) 722-2422

Owl Taxicab Service  
(607) 722-3447

Star Taxi  
(607) 722-7827

Whalen's Taxi  
(607) 723-8388

Yellow Cab  
(607) 722-2322

1-800-Taxicab  
(800) 829-4222

### Cell Phones

AT&T  
Starting at 450 min for \$39.99/month  
with unlimited mobile to mobile  
Prepaid options available  
[www.wireless.att.com](http://www.wireless.att.com)



Reception  
★★★★★

Sprint  
Starting at 200 min for \$29.99/month  
with unlimited nights & weekends  
Prepaid plans are available in stores  
[www.sprint.com](http://www.sprint.com)



Reception  
★★★★

T-Mobile  
Starting at 300 min for \$29.99/month  
with unlimited weekend/night  
Many other options available  
including prepaid plans  
[www.t-mobile.com](http://www.t-mobile.com)



Reception  
★★★★★

Verizon Wireless  
Starting at 450 min for \$39.99/month  
with unlimited mobile to mobile and  
unlimited nights & weekends  
Prepaid options available  
[www.verizonwireless.com](http://www.verizonwireless.com)



Reception  
★★★★★

### Other Phones

BlackBerry  
Smartphones  
Offered by major carriers  
Available in retail stores  
[www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com)



Boost Mobile  
Sprint Nextel Group  
Pay as you go  
Starting at 10¢ anytime minutes  
\$50 monthly unlimited plan  
[www.boostmobile.com](http://www.boostmobile.com)



Reception  
★★★★

iPhone  
Apple Inc  
Through AT&T Network  
Available in retail stores  
[www.apple.com/iphone](http://www.apple.com/iphone)



Net10  
TracFone Wireless Group  
Pay as you go 10¢ always  
or 150 minutes for \$15/month  
Unlimited Calling for \$79.98/month  
[www.net10.com](http://www.net10.com)



Reception  
★★★★★

TracFone  
Prepaid Phone Carrier  
Monthly Plans  
Starting at 50 minutes for  
\$9.99/month  
Other plans available  
[www.tracfone.com](http://www.tracfone.com)



Reception  
★★★★★

Virgin Mobile USA  
Prepaid Phone Carrier  
Pay as you go (no annual contract)  
Starting at 200 minutes for \$20/mo  
Totally Unlimited Calling \$49.99/mo  
Other plans including contract plans  
[www.virginmobileusa.com](http://www.virginmobileusa.com)



Reception  
★★★★

