

Housing Tips for Global School Students

Getting into a new housing situation can be an experience that makes you feel simultaneously excited and nervous. You hope your Global School living situation can be the occasion for lifetime friendships, terrific memories, an opportunity for street ministry and a home away from home. But committing to a lease is an important decision. Will you get along with any roommates? Are you financially covered? Will it be a comfortable home?

The school staff wants you to have a smooth, safe, comfortable housing experience. We are offering here a few words of advice as you seek Mechanicsburg area housing to help make your housing decision a good one.

- **Use the gssmusa.com Job/Housing Forum.** Whether you're looking for a place, need roommates for one you have, or have one to offer, this is the first place we send students. We require landlords/leaseholders who advertise there to sign an agreement acknowledging the school's expectations of them. While Global School cannot ultimately be responsible for your housing or your landlord, we want to do everything we can to make things go well for you. A copy of this agreement is posted on the Housing Forum.
- **Let your ad win roommates to you.** A few adjustments to your post can save you a lot of work and draw the people you're looking for to you :
 - If there are **attractive aspects** of this opportunity, sell those! Great location? Amenities within walking distance? Utilities or features included in the rent? Types of bedroom situations at differing prices? At the same time, we ask landlords/leaseholders to be transparent about any **drawbacks** with potential renters when they communicate personally (lack of dishwasher or laundry, for example, or limitations to climate control or parking; number of bathrooms, etc.). This helps people make a free decision and saves disappointment or resentment later.
 - Ads mentioning what the **cost** is to each person lets someone know right away "That's a possibility for me"...or not. This will not waste your time or theirs having to explain everything if it's ultimately not something they can do. Also, it takes more initiative to cold-call someone when you don't know if you want what they're offering than if you've got enough info from investigating yourself to know you do. You want someone to contact you who already thinks this sounds like a good prospect.
 - Tell **who you're looking for**: "two male roommates"; "one older adult female"; "room for four females upstairs and up to three males downstairs". This lets someone know who else may end up living in their home. Pet inclusion or prohibition can be helpful too!
 - You might consider a **video call/interview** with an interested party. Just because someone wants to live with you and you need roommates doesn't mean every person (if you had met them) would be a good fit! Better to be a little patient while seeking housemates than grit your teeth through a whole year!
 - Cut and paste a link to a google- or other **map**, including the street view. If you have **photos** inside and out that increase the appeal, post them. Name attractive **amenities** nearby (grocery store, park, restaurants, Global School) and how many minutes it takes to get there. If you are open to **ride sharing** to school, this can be a big selling point to someone in need of transportation. Establish for yourself what you are and are not willing

to commit to in this area ahead of time, and think about whether you are looking for an additional fee to offset your expenses and commitment.

- **Monitor your post** for replies. Better yet, include additional **contact information** you don't mind publishing (phone, facebook, etc.) so you don't miss someone who's interested. They may move on to the next option who does actually reply to them.

In short, what would you want to know if you were looking for a place you hadn't been to?

- **Other housing sites.** You are, of course, free to secure housing for yourself through friends you know in the area or other available housing sites such as rent.com, apartments.com, 564rent.com, etc. Again, Global School cannot be responsible for your housing situation.

When Contacting a Potential Landlord/Leaseholder:

- **Ask to see photos.** You can look up Google's street view yourself but you'll need help with the inside. If you already have a close friend in the area, ask them to do an inspection for you and send some photos of what you want to know...and give you their honest opinion. If you decide to go with an inner city location for price or ministry opportunities (many students do so deliberately), just be sure it's a situation you and your family can feel safe about for you.
- **Do a Skype or speaker phone call with Landlord.** You want to feel comfortable with them and they want to feel comfortable with you. If family members are involved on your end with responsibility for this commitment, include them and their questions on the call.
- **Terms of the lease.** How long are you obliged to pay rent? When is it due? What are the consequences of paying late or moving out early? Is there a deposit and are you entitled to any of it back? *Be very clear what you're agreeing to* and how flexible the landlord is working out something in unforeseen circumstances. **Global School requires landlords to spell these things out in writing for renters.** Verbal contracts may seem like an expression of "good faith", especially between Christians, but experience shows that misunderstandings or conflicts are best resolved when there is an objective agreement to refer to. Ask for a copy of the terms of the lease.
- **Ask about summer/winter temperatures (what they set the thermostat to).** Ask how the temperature is controlled in your living space—Air conditioning? Window units? Box fans? How about heat? Do you have any say or control? If it's a group living situation, what are the norms, both for the purposes of getting along and economic reasons?
- **What is included in the rent?** Are utilities included, divided or prorated? If not all residents are students, what about when students are away 10 days at a time on ministry trips or breaks? What about cable or internet? Is there good wifi? Do you have your own bathroom (and do you have to buy bathroom tissue!)? It may be a good idea to ask plainly, "What's not included in the rent?"
- **Are there additional household policies?** This can vary whether you're the sole occupant, living in the landlord's family home, or with other renters. Global School requires leaseholders advertising with us to disclose to you in writing any policies they expect you to adhere to *before* you enter a lease—ask to see it. This prevents tenants from being stuck with conditions they didn't know about ahead of time and prevents a rental agreement—and its potential income—from falling through for the landlord at the last minute. A lack of clear boundaries should give you pause. Issues may include but are not limited to:
 - curfews and house access

- noise levels, quiet hours, and respecting any other residents
- damages/repairs, responsibility for them, and how they will be rectified between residents
- policies regarding alcohol
- shared community space, appliances or supplies
- parking and snow removal
- housekeeping, meal preparation or regular expected chores
- guests--in particular, overnight policies
- usage of existing property (garage, tools, snow removal equipment, sports equipment, electronics, etc.). Get answers about refrigerator, freezer, and pantry usage.

You will also want to know what happens if you (or roommates) don't follow the house policies.

- Tenants sometimes work out their own arrangements but we discourage asking a renter to be responsible for a landlord's family or other **personal responsibilities**, such as after-school pick-ups, home business or babysitting unless this is explicitly desired by the renter or compensated work. If so, this should be clearly expressed and agreed to in writing.
- Living with others is a training school for grace and generosity. Because we are a ministry school, though, it is very important to us that no student end up financially beholden to a living situation that subjects them to **moral compromise**. These issues include things like other renters exercising lifestyle choices for insobriety, sexual immorality, a propensity for confrontation or threats, theft, or illegal activity. We have no illusions about our students being engaged with "the real world"—we demand it as part of our curriculum! However, renters have a reasonable right to expect personal security and freedom from the stress of constant conflict. If you will have roommates, particularly who may not be Global School students, you may wish to ask the landlord what their approach is to behavior issues and what actions you can expect them to take in the event of an ongoing problem.
- A Student Life intern is part of school staff in part to help resolve living situation **conflicts** between students in or out of school. However, *Global School cannot ultimately be responsible for extra-curricular conflicts of our students with roommates or landlords, whether financial or personal*, and should not be thought of as such. While the school staff may be apprised of any demonstrable ongoing illegal or immoral activity by a current student, *we will not entertain unsubstantiated allegations against a student nor against a landlord*. Disputes should be resolved in their proper context and through appropriate channels.
- Students may not be required to provide to landlords or other roommates **benefits and privileges** of being Global Students such as visitor passes or bookstore discounts as part of the terms of the living arrangement.
- We encourage the landlord to give some kind of **emergency contact information** for the well-being of their tenants, particularly if they are sharing with you their personal residence. This would include the ability to reach them in case of emergency on the property (burst pipes, fire, etc.). If you are living with the landlord, it might also include emergency contact on your behalf with school staff and your family. *Family contact information, however, is not to be used by the landlord as a resource to resolve a dispute with a tenant*. As a legal adult, you are considered responsible for your own actions and obligations.