

SAN MARCOS

# GUIDE TO LIVING OFF-CAMPUS

**LEARN ABOUT:** MOVING OFF CAMPUS, TIPS ON BUDGETING, BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR

# WELCOME TO THE NEXT STEP OF INDEPENDENCE!

You have made the decision to move off campus and become an off-campus student at Texas State. Off-Campus Living with the Department of Housing and Residential Life would like to welcome you to the community and introduce ourselves as your source for information, answers to your questions and information on staying involved in various activities.

This Guide to Living Off Campus has been produced to be a resource for living off campus. You will find information about tips on budgeting as well as general leasing information on how to be a successful community neighbor.

We hope you find the information in this guide helpful and valuable during your stay at Texas State University.

The Off-Campus Living staff is here to serve you! We are located in the Department of Housing and Residential Life building at 515 N. Comanche Street. Feel free to stop by and visit with us or visit our website for more information.

Thank you for choosing the Guide to Living Off Campus as your resource for off-campus living!

Have a great year!

Department of Housing and Residential Life,  
Off-Campus Living



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**Dr. Cynthia Hernandez**

Vice President for  
Student Affairs

## DEAR BOBCATS,

Texas State University works closely with the City of San Marcos, neighborhood associations, and other community stakeholders to ensure that permanent residents and students have a good experience living in our neighborhoods and apartment complexes. As a member of the local community of San Marcos, it is your responsibility to know, understand, and adhere to the information, resources, and policies to ensure San Marcos remains an enjoyable place to live. Texas State's Guide to Living Off-Campus is an excellent resource as you prepare and live off-campus. Before signing lease agreements, please use this guide to learn about city codes, apartment and housing listings, city service resources, and other important information. Should you have any concerns about your apartment complex or neighborhood, don't hesitate to get in touch with your local neighborhood association, leasing office or contact Off-Campus Living at 512.245.5595 or ([offcampusliving@txstate.edu](mailto:offcampusliving@txstate.edu)).

Whether you plan to live in an apartment or residential house, always remember to uphold our Texas State values.

Be a good Bobcat and be a good neighbor!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Hernandez'.

**Dr. Cynthia Hernandez**

Vice President for Student Affairs

# WELCOME TO SAN MARCOS

Greetings Bobcats,

The San Marcos community is vibrant thanks in no small part to the Texas State University students who call our city home.

The Guide to Living Off Campus will introduce you to housing options, recreation, entertainment, shopping and much more. If you are new to campus, I hope you will take time to explore San Marcos and discover the delights of our great Texas community.

San Marcos is a unique city with a beautiful spring-fed river, historic downtown and the greatest shopping in Texas at the largest outlet malls in the southwestern U.S. Our historic downtown, just a block from campus, features unique shops, great dining, eclectic art galleries, and live entertainment venues with Americana, country, rock and jazz music.

The city is filled with parks for picnicking and jogging, greenbelts for hiking, and the spring-fed San Marcos River for swimming, canoeing and kayaking. Our civic organizations and churches welcome you to participate in community life.

While you are in San Marcos, whether 4 years or you decide to stay longer, we want you to consider San Marcos your hometown. We ask you to join your San Marcos neighbors and preserve the exceptional environment of our Hill Country community. As Texas State University students, you are important contributors to the character, the well-being and the future of San Marcos. Thank you for helping keep San Marcos a wonderful place to live.

Welcome and have a great year!

Sincerely,



Mayor Jane Hughson



**Jane Hughson**  
Mayor of San Marcos





# WHAT IS OFF-CAMPUS LIVING?

The office of Off-Campus Living is located in the Department of Housing and Residential Life. The Off-Campus Living staff is available to provide educational information to enhance your knowledge of San Marcos city laws, rental leases, and basic move-in and move-out guidelines. The Guide to Living Off Campus was designed to help educate and assist you in your off-campus housing options. Any student who does not live on the campus in university-owned housing is considered an off-campus student.

## OFF-CAMPUS LIVING EVENTS

We look forward to helping educate you on your off-campus living experience with our presentations and visiting with you on-campus at our Off-Campus Housing Expo. Please check out the Events page on our website for the most up to date info on events.

## RESOURCES

**Attorney for Students**  
512.245.2370  
attorney.dos.txstate.edu  
LBJ Student Center 5-1.5

**Central Texas Dispute Resolution Center (Mediation Services)**  
512.878.0382  
centexdrc.org

**City of San Marcos**  
512.393.8000  
sanmarcostx.gov

**Crime Stoppers**  
1.800.324.8477  
thetexascrimestoppers.org

**Electric Repairs / Power Failures**  
512.393.8313

**Emergency**  
911

**Garbage / Recycling / Waste**  
512.393.8026

**Off-Campus Living**  
512.245.5595  
reslife.txstate.edu/off-campus  
515 N. Comanche St

**Police Non-Emergency**  
512.753.2108

**Public Works / Street / Drainage**  
512.393.8036

**University Police Department**  
512.245.2805  
police.txstate.edu

**Utility Connect / Disconnect**  
512.393.8383

**Water / Wastewater Repair**  
512.393.8010

# WHAT ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Do you want to live within walking distance to campus, or are you OK taking a shuttle? Parking on campus is limited, so many students living off campus walk, ride a bike, or ride the Texas State Bobcat Shuttle. For more information on the Texas State bus, visit [shuttle.txstate.edu](http://shuttle.txstate.edu).

## PLAN FOR VARIOUS EXPENSES

- Will you have to put down a security deposit and/or application fee?
- Do you have to make a deposit to turn on your utilities?
- Will you need a moving truck and packing supplies?
- Do you need to buy furniture or other household items?
  - Bathroom rugs, shower curtain, toilet paper, plunger
  - Kitchen dishes and flatware
  - Food
  - Lamps, light bulbs
  - TV
  - Cleaning supplies

## AMENITIES

- Is there on-site maintenance?
- Is it pet-friendly and are there extra fees?
  - Some leases define pets as fish or insects.
  - A pet deposit and monthly pet rent is required and specific guidelines must be followed.
  - Regulations are also enforced by the City of San Marcos.
- Is yard work included?
- Are utilities included?

## BUDGETING IS KEY FOR SURVIVAL

- How much do you want to pay for rent?
- You should work out your budget before you start looking. This will help you figure out what you can afford and whether you need roommates to help you live the lifestyle you want.
- We suggest starting with the total monthly dollar amount you have to work with and then plug in your budget items.
- Use the budgeting worksheet to assist you.

## INSTALLMENT PLAN VS. MONTHLY RENT

- Most rent for individual leases are paid in installment plan.
- The total rent is divided evenly into the total number of the contracted months.
- Each installment is due on the 1st of the month, even if you haven't moved in yet.

### \*IN PLANNING, YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO HAVE:

- Good and established credit history.
- Monthly income of 3 times the rent or you will probably need a guarantor.

*A guarantor: "a person that agrees to be responsible for another's debt or performance under a contract, if the other fails to pay or perform." (legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com)*

- Your guarantor may need a good and established credit history and a monthly income of up to 5 times the rent, depending on the property.

# BUDGET WORKSHEET

Income	Daily	Monthly	Semester	Yearly
Jobs				
Family				
Financial Aid				
Misc.				
<b>Total</b>				

Fixed Expenses	Daily	Monthly	Semester	Yearly
Rent				
Food				
Car Payments				
Car Insurance				
Renter's Insurance				
Tuition & Fees				
Credit Card				
Cell Phone				
Utilities/Electric/ Water/Cable/Trash				
Other				
<b>Total</b>				

Flexible Expenses	Daily	Monthly	Semester	Yearly
Restaurants				
Clothing				
School Supplies				
Entertainment				
Gasoline				
Laundry				
Hygiene Products				
Cable/Internet				
Travel				
Savings				
Misc.				
Other				
<b>Total</b>				

	Daily	Monthly	Semester	Yearly
Total Income				
Total Fixed				
Total Flexible				



# DO YOU WANT TO LIVE IN A HOUSE OR AN APARTMENT?



## HOUSE

- Usually more spacious.
- Usually more privacy.
- Usually has a yard.
- Utilities and cable usually not included.
- City of San Marcos has occupancy restrictions: visit [www.sanmarcostx.gov](http://www.sanmarcostx.gov) and search “occupancy restrictions.”

## APARTMENT

- Amenities are included.
- Maintenance is included.
- Management is on site.
- Some utilities are included.
- Usually on a bus route or close to campus.
- Community environment.
- By the bed leases available.

## SINGLE FAMILY ZONING IN SAN MARCOS

This defines family as any number of individuals living as a single housekeeping unit who are related by blood, legal adoption, marriage or conservatorship. In these areas, only one family plus one unrelated individual may occupy the dwelling.

For example, if you and your two best friends rent a home together, you may be in violation of the ordinance, subjecting you to an eviction and/or a hefty fine.

Be aware that violations of this ordinance are strictly enforced in the San Marcos Community. Courts are permitted to accept as proof of the violation that the same three or more vehicles with registrations to persons having different surnames and addresses were parked overnight at the dwelling unit a majority of nights in any 21-day period. Fines are also extremely high—up to \$900 for the first offense, and each day may be considered a separate offense. If you have a question about whether or not your unit may be in this district, check with the City of San Marcos Planning Department at 512.393.8230 or visit [sanmarcostx.gov](http://sanmarcostx.gov) and search “unrelated persons occupancy.”



# THE LEASE

## RESEARCH THE PROPERTIES

### Use Your Resources

- Ask friends or classmates.
- Read CURRENT reviews online.
- Go visit the properties.

## DON'T BE IN A HURRY TO SIGN

- Look now, but don't sign immediately.
- Know your move-in and move-out dates.
- Don't sign multiple leases at different complexes or on campus.
- Don't sign an "As-Is" Apartment Lease.
  - Follow the apartment's move-in days. This will allow enough time for maintenance repairs and for it to be cleaned.

## ATTORNEY FOR STUDENTS

The Attorney for Students (AFS) provides free legal advice to currently enrolled Texas State students. Before you sign a lease, make sure to review it thoroughly with the AFS. Anything you discuss with the Attorney for Students office is confidential and protected by the attorney-client privilege.

## MOVE-IN READY APARTMENT

- Be cautious if you are considering signing a lease on a complex that is not completely built.
- You will want to make sure a property is move-in ready for the day you want and before school starts.

## MODEL APARTMENT VS. REGULAR APARTMENT

- Model apartments may have never been lived in and may not show normal wear and tear.
- Model apartments may have different furniture, light fixtures, faucets, and/or appliances than regular apartments.
- Model apartments may be in a different area of the complex (closer to the office/front of the complex) than a regular apartment.

## LOOK AT SECURITY DEVICES

- Your residence must have:
  - Window latches on each window.
  - A keyless deadbolt and door viewer on each exterior door.
  - A lock, latch, or security bar on sliding doors.

## LOOK AT FIRE SAFETY

### Questions to Ask Yourself

- Does your dwelling have sprinklers and fire extinguishers?
- Do you have a fire escape plan?
- If you have pets or babies, is every room baby/pet proof?

### Useful Tips

- Make sure that all smoke alarms are properly working.
- Test smoke alarms every month. If they are not working, CHANGE THE BATTERIES.
- Have a fire escape plan. (You may have as little as 2 minutes to escape.)
- Never smoke inside of your apartment/house (Go outside to smoke.)
- Invest in flameless candles.
- Cook on low temperatures.

## IF A FIRE STARTS

- GET OUT, STAY OUT, AND CALL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY!
- NEVER GO BACK INSIDE FOR ANYTHING.

## TRADITIONAL OR CONVENTIONAL LEASE



**VS.**

## INDIVIDUAL OR BY THE BED LEASE



One lease for the entire apartment, which everyone over the age of 18 must sign.

Each roommate signs their own lease.

Only one guarantor.

Every person has their own guarantor.

Responsible for finding your own roommates.

Roommate matching is available at several locations.

If one roommate leaves, the others must pick up the rent costs, or find a new roommate.

If a person leaves, the management company will find a new roommate and the current roommates are not responsible for their rent.

## RELEASE OF RESIDENT

Unless there is a special provisions clause, or you fall under the military clause, you will not be released from your lease until the end of its term.

A **sublease** is an agreement in which you rent your apartment to another person with the property owner's permission. You will still be responsible for rent and damages. You are not entitled to receive your security deposit back until your lease term ends. Be sure to read your lease carefully. Many properties forbid subleasing.

A **relet** is a change to the lease to add the new tenant and delete the previous tenant. The original tenant will still be responsible for paying the rent until a new tenant is found. Once a new tenant is found, the original tenant often pays a reletting fee, which is usually 85 percent of one month's rent.

## SIGNING A LEASE

### Your Lease is a Legally-Binding Contract.

Keep a copy of everything:

- Lease
- Security Deposit Receipt
- Special Agreements / Deals
- Maintenance Communication
- Move-In Condition Form



# MOVING IN

## BEFORE YOU UNPACK

- Take pictures and videos of the apartment and email it to yourself, and your guarantor, so it will be date stamped.
- If the lease states management is responsible for pest control, make sure the place has been exterminated recently.
- Be detailed and specific when completing your apartment condition form.
- Return your apartment condition form within 48 hours of moving in. Make sure to keep a copy for your files.

### Report all maintenance requests separately

- Always keep a copy.
- Send requests in writing through the United States Postal Service (USPS). This is the only way Texas law recognizes your request.
- Never withhold rent if maintenance items are not fixed.
- Have the manager sign and date the apartment condition form and keep a copy.

**Make sure all utilities (water, electric, gas, etc.) are turned on and in your name. Consider using a utility sharing service when setting up utilities with your roommates.**

## GET INSURANCE

The landlord generally has insurance that covers the building, but not your belongings. Inquire about renter's insurance, general liability insurance, personal injury, and flood insurance. Renter's insurance is very affordable and you may be able to bundle it with your parent's homeowners' policy.

- Talk to your insurance company about getting insurance that will cover the following scenarios:
  - Your belongings are damaged due to water, smoke and/or fire.
  - An electrical power surge damages your computer, TV or other electronic equipment.
  - Accidental damage to another person's property, including the apartment complex.
  - Someone sustains an injury in your apartment.
  - Flooding if you are in a flood zone.





## ROOMMATES

Living with roommates can be rewarding and challenging. Sharing a living space with another person is an option for many off-campus students. Some benefits of shared living include dividing the cost of living expenses and having someone to share your college days. While benefits exist, one should also consider the drawbacks of living with someone who may have different cleaning, sleeping, and studying habits as well as different views on religion and politics. Being someone's roommate can be the beginning of a very influential relationship. It is important to remember that your roommate is not a mirror image of you, and it is OK if roommates are not best friends. Learning to accept each other's differences without infringing on one another's freedoms can be a valuable part of your education.

- How many roommates are you looking to have?
- Will you live with friends, or utilize roommate matching services?
- Create a roommate agreement to establish standards for everyone to sign.
  - Cleanliness
  - Quiet Time
  - Space
  - Groceries
  - Visitors
  - Respect
- Examples of roommate agreements can be searched online.

If you have a roommate conflict, try to handle it at the onset, before it gets worse. For minor problems, talk with your roommate. Listen to the other person's side, and work together to come up with a solution. If needed, put the solution in writing. If your landlord assigned your roommate, you can ask your landlord for assistance. If the problem escalates, you may want to try mediation.

### MEDIATION

- Informal, private, peaceful, and confidential.
- Impartial and seeks to help you explore and evaluate your options.
- Designed to help you find different ways to have your needs met.

**Central Texas Dispute Resolution Center**  
512.878.0382  
[centexdrc.org](http://centexdrc.org)

# EXAMPLE OF ROOMMATE AGREEMENT

Apartment Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Roommate Agreement

Now take the time to review each other's response verbally. After each of you has shared your responses, fill in, and sign your agreement.

**We agree on the following: (Be specific on times, amounts, conditions, etc.)**

**Cleaning Issues:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Security Agreement:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Study Times/ Quiet Hours/ Sleep Times:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Visitors and Guests:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Social Behavior:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Possessions:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**When we disagree or are in conflict:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Another thing we might have to compromise on is:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If you approach me with a concern (check all that apply):**

- I will listen carefully and respond politely.
- I will try to understand your concern even if I don't agree.
- I will ask for clarification if I don't fully understand.
- I will try to act positively to improve the issue.
- I might be defensive and angry.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# LIFE OFF CAMPUS

## BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Texas State University and the City of San Marcos work together to make students more aware of city codes and common violations. The goal is to make San Marcos a more enjoyable place to live for everyone. Remember these common courtesy rules and do your part to be a good neighbor.

### Introduce yourself to your neighbors.

- Exchange phone numbers, if you feel comfortable.
- Neighbors may be more likely to watch your residence when you are away.
- Neighbors could contact you directly if there is a problem.

### Let neighbors know in advance when you are having a gathering.

### Be respectful when having guests over.

- Make sure visitors park in guest parking.
  - Not on the grass, nor reserved spots.
  - Not in front of a neighbor's house/apartment.

## BE A SAFE BOBCAT

- Sign up and use the Bobcat Guardian app.
- Lock your doors.
- Know your surroundings.
- Let someone know when you are leaving, and when you will return.
- Don't go out at night alone.
- Wear bright/reflective clothing when walking or running when it is dark.

## BE A RESPONSIBLE BOBCAT

### Any noise heard outside your residence is too loud.

### Follow all rules and make timely payments to AVOID EVICTION.

- A property owner may evict a resident for violation of conditions specified in the lease, major destruction of property or nonpayment of rent.
- The manager must give the resident 24 hours written notice (depending on the lease) of his or her intent to evict for nonpayment of rent.
- If the resident refuses to move, the manager may file an eviction lawsuit in the Justice of Peace Court to forcibly evict a tenant.

## RENEWING OR MOVING

### Call the City of San Marcos to schedule a bulk waste pick up—do not leave it at the curb.

As your lease is ending, are you planning on staying at your current apartment complex, or do you want to move elsewhere?

Many individual leases end in July and a new lease at a different complex will usually begin the middle of August.

If you renew your lease and stay at your current apartment complex, you will be able to continue living in your current apartment, without moving out.

If you decide you want to change apartment complexes, plan ahead if there is a gap in dates between leases.

- Where will you live during the time between leases?
- Where will you store your belongings?

## TWO WEEK GAP

Be aware of any gaps between leases.

## Disclaimer Statement

Welcome to Off-Campus Living (OCL). We are a student-focused unit within the Department of Housing and Residential Life (DHRL) at Texas State University. We are a resource for the entire University community and provide general educational materials, presentations about living off-campus, and a listing of various properties in the San Marcos community area. The information contained herein is provided as a public service with the understanding that Texas State University makes no warranties, either expressed or implied, concerning the accuracy, completeness, reliability, or suitability of information, property or services. Nor does Texas State University warrant that the use of this information is free of any claims of copyright infringement.

Please note, all properties listed on our website and on any materials provided by OCL/DHRL are not University endorsed/approved. Off-campus housing information is provided only as a courtesy. Rental property owners are solely responsible for reporting information fairly and accurately.

Texas State University is not affiliated with any of the properties listed on our website, as they are privately owned entities.

Texas State University, the Department of Housing and Residential Life, and Off-Campus Living do not inspect, endorse or assume any responsibility for any properties, accommodations, or other housing options or websites and expressly disclaim any and all responsibility for any problems that may arise in connection with your use of the service.

Individuals are strongly advised to investigate, compare and inspect any properties, accommodations, or other housing service options thoroughly before making final arrangements.

Texas State University web pages for Off-Campus Living do not endorse any commercial providers or their products.

Rev 10/2017

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