

I COMMUTE: OFF-CAMPUS AND COMMUTER STUDENT HANDBOOK



STUDENT ACTIVITIES & UNION SERVICES

For questions or for special needs, please contact us:
Student Union 211 • 845.257.3025 • saus@newpaltz.edu
www.newpaltz.edu/saus



New Paltz
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Welcome, Off-Campus and Commuter Students!

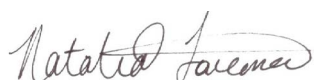
Let's be real: being a college student is no walk in the park. As an off-campus/commuter student, you will most likely run into obstacles that are different from those faced by resident students. While trying to balance coursework, commuting, working, and having a social life may prove to be difficult, the Office of Student Activities and Union Services is here to help make your experiences as a SUNY New Paltz student as invigorating as possible. It all begins here.

Our office provides an array of services and resources specific to the off-campus and commuter student population. Our office is on the second floor of the Student Union in Room 211. The Student Union is the heart of our campus, and an environment for campus entertainment, activities, and information on how to get involved in campus life. The Student Union also houses many services for Off-Campus and Commuter Students, including the Commuter Lounge on the 1st floor, and Commuter Lockers on the ground floor.

We have created this handbook to serve as a convenient resource regarding off-campus living. Whether you live at home with your family, or in an apartment in town, this handbook offers general guidance about issues that relate to you—the commuter student. We can help you find a roommate if there is extra room in your apartment, you are looking to move somewhere new, or seek a roommate instead of living on your own. While we cannot actually find an apartment for you, we can provide the basics to get you started on your journey with apartment rental guides and an online bulletin board to seek out new housing as well as apartment-mates.

If you have any questions, feel free to drop by our office (**Student Union 211**) **Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:30am-5pm** or give us a call at **(845) 257-3025**. You can also email me directly at **nforeman@newpaltz.edu**.

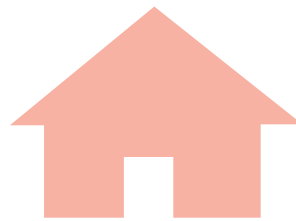
Natalia Foreman



*Graduate Assistant for Off-Campus and Commuter Students
Student Activities and Union Services*

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOUSING



Living with Family

Many of our students choose to live at home and commute to New Paltz for their classes. The reasons for living at home are different for everyone. For some, it makes best financial sense, while for others their families depend on them. Regardless of your reasons, living at home and commuting to college is a big transition! Here are some things to consider with the hopes of making the transition as simple as possible for you and for those who live with you.

“*Follow these tips to ease your transition into becoming a college commuter!*”

Commuting from Home Tips:

Boundaries:

If you're living at home with your family, talk about how your life will change now that you're a college student. What do you expect from them regarding your privacy and your personal space? It can be challenging for college students living at home to feel like they have independence and autonomy—discuss it! Now!

Study Time:

It's important to have a place to do your schoolwork. Talk to your family about setting aside space for studying, and discuss some study expectations (noise, interruptions, etc.). Don't forget to utilize the spaces on campus like the library, the Commuter Lounge, or various computer labs.

Curfew:

If you live with your parent/guardian, it's important to discuss expectations regarding your social life. Do you have to be home at a certain time? Check in with family? What are the rules now that you're in college? Don't forget that many of our activities take place in the evenings!

Money:

You are probably saving some money by living at home, but what are the expectations regarding your finances? Talk to your family about gas money, paying for books, etc. Also, will you be expected to contribute “rent” money to your parents? Be honest and upfront with your family regarding how taking college courses will impact your finances!

Meals:

If you live with your parents, are you still expected home for dinner at night? If you're the head of household, are you still expected to cook meals for your family? Talk about how meals will change as you start taking college courses. Also, consider getting a Commuter Meal Plan or Hawk Dollars so that you can eat meals here.

Getting to Campus:

There are many options available to get to campus if you can't drive or carpool. If you're local, you can take the New Paltz Loop for free with your student I.D. A UCAT bus also runs from Poughkeepsie. If you do drive, make sure you purchase a campus parking permit and adjust your schedule accordingly!



Renting an Apartment:

First things first, what is a lease? A lease is a legally binding agreement between the landlord and tenant(s) that outlines the rights and responsibilities of both parties. The lease holds an abundance of information that is extremely important for the tenant(s). It details rules the landlords and tenants agree to follow. Most leases are for a full calendar year. Before signing a lease, make sure you understand it and agree to the terms listed. If you are interested in an apartment, ask the landlord for a copy of the lease in order to gain perspective of the responsibilities and expectations required of you. Sample lease documents are available on the pages that follow.

Important Things to Look for in a Lease:

- Names and addresses of all parties listed.
- The cost of rent, when it is due, how it should be paid, and whether there are late fees.
- The beginning and ending dates of the lease.
- Security deposit amount and expectations.
- Who is responsible for paying what utilities.
- Whether or not pets are allowed.
- Who is responsible for maintenance and repairs.
- Who is responsible for disposing trash and maintaining the property (mowing grass, shoveling snow, etc.)
- Limits on the number of persons allowed in the rental unit

Security Deposits:

A **security deposit** is money that protects landlords against damage beyond normal wear and tear, and provides a remedy for unpaid rent and cleanup funds for the rental. Almost every landlord will require you to pay a security deposit **in addition** to your first month's rent. It can be anywhere from 1 or 2 times your monthly rent.

Protecting your security deposit:

When moving in, the best way to protect your security deposit is to complete a detailed checklist of all the damages already present in the unit. Note things as small as the cracks in the windows, chipped floors, and stains in the carpet. Be sure that your landlord is present when you are assessing the condition and have them sign the checklist. If your landlord is unavailable for a walk through, be sure to take pictures and arrange to show them to your landlord when acquiring their signature on your checklist. When you move out, you should conduct the same kind of inspection with your landlord with the results recorded in writing. A sample move in/move out checklist is available on the pages that follow.

Did You Know:

- Landlords owning buildings with six or more apartments are required to place your security deposit in an interest-bearing account.
- As a tenant, you must be informed in writing of the bank's name and address and the amount of the deposit.
- The landlord is obligated to return the security deposit whether or not the tenant asks for its return if there is no damage to the rental unit.
- When problems arise regarding security deposits, tenants should first try to resolve them with the landlord before taking other action.



The Lease Signing Checklist:

Renting an apartment is a very important decision that involves a lot of money. Before you sign a lease, take some time to read through it with a professional to make sure the following are included and that you agree to the terms.

RENT

- ☐ Amount due
- ☐ Due Date/ Payment Schedule
- ☐ Penalty for late payment
- ☐ Can rent be raised? Under what conditions?

SECURITY/DAMAGE DEPOSIT

- ☐ Amount
- ☐ Apartment condition inventory at move in
- ☐ Conditions/date for security deposit return
- ☐ Pets

TERMINATION

- ☐ Ability to sublet? Under what conditions?
- ☐ Ability to terminate lease? Under what conditions?

INSPECTIONS

- ☐ When and by whom
- ☐ How is notification given
- ☐ Pre/Post use of rental inventory

DAMAGES

- ☐ Responsibility for damages
- ☐ Assessment of damages
- ☐ Who makes repairs
- ☐ Who notifies the repair person

LAUNDRY

- ☐ Location and cost
- ☐ Ability for tenant to install machines

PARKING

- ☐ Location: on or off street
- ☐ Limitations/Fees

CHANGES IN AGREEMENT

- ☐ Process for changing agreement

OWNER

- ☐ Name and address of property owner
- ☐ Emergency contact information
- ☐ Landlords right to enter apartment

RESTRICTIONS

- ☐ Smoking
- ☐ Noise
- ☐ Storage of property
- ☐ Conduct, house rules, parties
- ☐ Alterations to apartment

TIME OF OCCUPANCY

- ☐ Exact dates
- ☐ Moving notification
- ☐ Max. & min. number of occupants

ADDITIONAL COSTS

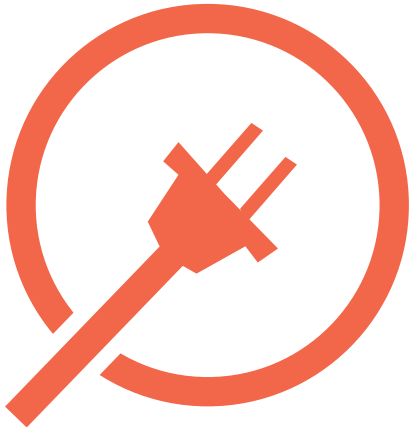
- ☐ Who pays utilities: gas, electric, etc.
- ☐ Charge/deposit for pets
- ☐ Overnight or weekend guests
- ☐ Parking
- ☐ Furnishings: is the apt. furnished?
- ☐ Snow removal
- ☐ Lawn care
- ☐ Cleaning

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- ☐ Smoke detectors
- ☐ Window locks
- ☐ Deadbolts on exterior doors
- ☐ Carbon monoxide detectors

Obtaining Utilities:

(For village & surrounding areas)



To have your electric and/or gas activated, contact Central Hudson at (845) 452-2700 or visit them online at www.centralhudson.com

Fix leaky faucets and running toilets to save money on your monthly bills!



Your landlord is required to provide you with a trash receptacle, but you may be responsible for the removal service.



The Move-In Checklist:

Apartment Name & Address: _____
 Landlord's Name and Phone Number: _____

The purpose of this checklist is to record the condition of the apartment at the beginning of your lease. Examine each item in the apartment and record by checking the appropriate column (G= Good, NG = Not Good). If there is an issue, be sure to describe it on a separate sheet and attach to the checklist. Be sure to sign and date all sheets.

LIVING ROOM	G	NG	DINING ROOM	G	NG	KITCHEN	G	NG	BATHROOM	G	NG	BEDROOM	G	NG
Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—
Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—
Windows	—	—	Windows	—	—	Floor	—	—	Windows	—	—	Windows	—	—
Floor	—	—	Floor	—	—	Walls	—	—	Floor	—	—	Floor	—	—
Rug/Carpet	—	—	Rug/Carpet	—	—	Ceiling	—	—	Walls	—	—	Rug/Carpet	—	—
Walls	—	—	Walls	—	—	Closets	—	—	Ceiling	—	—	Walls	—	—
Shades/Blinds	—	—	Ceiling	—	—	Sink	—	—	Closets	—	—	Ceiling	—	—
Ceiling	—	—	Closets	—	—	Stove/Oven	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—	Closets	—	—
Closets	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—	Hood/Fan	—	—	Outlets	—	—	Bookshelves	—	—
Light Fixtures	—	—	Outlets	—	—	Refrigerator	—	—	Fan	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—
Outlets	—	—	Tables	—	—	Dishwasher	—	—	Mirrors	—	—	Outlets	—	—
Fireplace	—	—	Chairs	—	—	Microwave	—	—	Towel Racks	—	—	Bed Spring	—	—
Sofa	—	—	Cabinets	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—	Medicine Cabinet	—	—	Mattress	—	—
Lounge	—	—	Drapes/Curtains	—	—	Shades/Blinds	—	—	Drawers	—	—	Bed Frame	—	—
Chairs	—	—	Shades/Blinds	—	—				Bathtub	—	—	Headboard	—	—
End Tables	—	—							Shower	—	—	Shades/Blinds	—	—
Coffee Table	—	—							Shower Tiles	—	—	Night Tables	—	—
Lamps	—	—							Shower Door	—	—	Lamps	—	—
Bookshelves	—	—							Drapes/Curtains	—	—	Mirrors	—	—
Drapes/Curtains	—	—							Shades/Blinds	—	—	Dressers	—	—
												Chairs	—	—



The Move-Out Checklist:

Apartment Name & Address: _____

Landlord's Name and Phone Number: _____

The purpose of this checklist is to record the condition of the apartment at the beginning of your lease. Examine each item in the apartment and record by checking the appropriate column (G= Good, NG = Not Good). If there is an issue, be sure to describe it on a separate sheet and attach to the checklist. Be sure to sign and date all sheets.

LIVING ROOM	G	NG	DINING ROOM	G	NG	KITCHEN	G	NG	BATHROOM	G	NG	BEDROOM	G	NG
Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—	Doors	—	—
Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—	Screens	—	—
Windows	—	—	Windows	—	—	Floor	—	—	Windows	—	—	Windows	—	—
Floor	—	—	Floor	—	—	Walls	—	—	Floor	—	—	Floor	—	—
Rug/Carpet	—	—	Rug/Carpet	—	—	Ceiling	—	—	Walls	—	—	Rug/Carpet	—	—
Walls	—	—	Walls	—	—	Closets	—	—	Ceiling	—	—	Walls	—	—
Shades/Blinds	—	—	Ceiling	—	—	Sink	—	—	Closets	—	—	Ceiling	—	—
Ceiling	—	—	Closets	—	—	Stove/Oven	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—	Closets	—	—
Closets	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—	Hood/Fan	—	—	Outlets	—	—	Bookshelves	—	—
Light Fixtures	—	—	Outlets	—	—	Refrigerator	—	—	Fan	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—
Outlets	—	—	Tables	—	—	Dishwasher	—	—	Mirrors	—	—	Outlets	—	—
Fireplace	—	—	Chairs	—	—	Microwave	—	—	Towel Racks	—	—	Bed Spring	—	—
Sofa	—	—	Cabinets	—	—	Light Fixtures	—	—	Medicine Cabinet	—	—	Mattress	—	—
Lounge	—	—	Drapes/Curtains	—	—	Shades/Blinds	—	—	Drawers	—	—	Bed Frame	—	—
Chairs	—	—	Shades/Blinds	—	—				Bathtub	—	—	Headboard	—	—
End Tables	—	—							Shower	—	—	Shades/Blinds	—	—
Coffee Table	—	—							Shower Tiles	—	—	Night Tables	—	—
Lamps	—	—							Shower Door	—	—	Lamps	—	—
Bookshelves	—	—							Drapes/Curtains	—	—	Mirrors	—	—
Drapes/Curtains	—	—							Shades/Blinds	—	—	Dressers	—	—
												Chairs	—	—



Thinking of Getting a Roommate?

Splitting the expenses can be a great way to save money, especially as a college student. However, when considering living with roommates, it is important to ask yourself some key questions that can keep your life at home as stress-free as possible. Discussing things like the lease, finances, and lifestyle habits in the beginning of your search process can make for a successful living situation.

Before committing to a roommate, consider the following questions:

- Can you really afford the rent?
- How will the utilities be divided?
- How will food be divided?
- How will shared purchases be divided at the end of the year? I.E. furniture jointly purchased for the apartment.
- What is your definition of “cleanliness”?
- How will the chores be divided?
- Do you have/want a pet?
- Are you a morning or night person?
- How many guests are permitted at one time?
- What is the maximum stay for visiting guests?
- Can your relationship handle it?
- When are the “quiet/study hours”?
- Are you comfortable with smoking and/or drinking?

This may seem like an overwhelming amount of things to consider but it is important to have these conversations with potential roommates in order to have the most beneficial living arrangement for everyone included in the agreement. A simple and effective way to get your roommates on the same page is to sit down and fill out a Roommate Agreement. Seems juvenile right? Wrong. Roommate Agreements can be legally binding documents and also serve a great purpose for having these conversations with your living mates. This is a great document to have access to if you ever need to refer back to your agreement throughout the year. A sample Roommate Agreement is provided on the following page.

Roommate Tips!

Respect:

Treat your roommate how you would want to be treated. Even if you think they won't mind you borrowing their stuff, they might. It's always a good move to check with them first.

Study Time:

If you like to study in a group or with music and your roommate needs complete silence, you might want to discuss alternating who gets the room and who goes to the library.

Guests:

You should discuss with your roommate the frequency and amount of guests you are both comfortable with in the room.

Conflict:

If something that your roommate did is bothering you, they should be the first to know. It's best to calmly discuss things as they come up, instead of holding back and letting it build up over the course of a semester.

Change:

The truth is, things may not always go as expected. Sometimes things will come up, and you and your roommate will have to adjust the "rules" and be flexible as time goes on.

Clarity:

The BEST thing you can do to make sure your relationship with your roommate goes well is to be clear and address everything in the beginning. Take the time to discuss your likes and dislikes, and make sure you are both aware of each other's expectations.



Sample Roommate Agreement

We have signed a lease/rental agreement for (address of unit rented) on (date of agreement to begin). It is expected that all roommates will equally share all responsibilities of renting. Therefore, we have prepared and are willing to sign this document.

TERMS

This agreement will remain in effect from ___ to ___. If for any reason a roommate should move out before the date shown under the lease/rental agreement, the departing roommate will be held responsible until a replacement is found. If a substitute roommate is found, the remaining roommate(s) must approve of him/her. The departing roommate is expected to notify the landlord as well as the other roommate(s) within 30 days so that proper arrangements can be made. The roommate who is leaving is still obligated to the landlord in terms of the lease and is accountable to find a new roommate to be responsible for the duration of the lease/rental agreement. The following roommates are included in this agreement:

RENT

Rent amount is \$____. Amount each roommate is responsible for: \$____.

Rent is due on the ___ of every month.

DEPOSIT

Roommates have a deposit of \$____ each, totaling \$____. Each roommate is responsible for his/her share of the charge associated with damages. If the cause cannot be determined, the roommates will split the cost evenly.

HOUSEHOLD SUPPLIES

A single ledger will be kept of all supplies purchased by each roommate. Supplies include things as paper towels, toilet paper, cleaning fluids, dish detergent, foil, trash bags, scrubs, and any other goods needed for the home that will be shared by all roommates.

FOOD AND GROCERY SHOPPING

Food expenses shall be shared by all roommates. Preparation of meals shall be determined by an attached schedule or food is to be bought by each roommate. There will be NO borrowing of food.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

All roommates agree to refrain from borrowing roommates personal items without prior approval. Exceptions to this should be clearly stated with the roommates reserving the right to change their minds about sharing their items and updating this agreement. Property that is borrowed will be used respectfully and returned in the same condition, and if not the roommate responsible for damage will be held liable.

CLEANING

All roommates agree to share the responsibilities of cleaning and maintenance. The roommates have decided to develop a schedule, which is attached. It states when each roommate will complete cleaning and maintenance jobs.

KITCHEN CLEANUP

Each roommate agrees to do his/her own dishes. A schedule of kitchen cleanup may be attached.

ADDITIONAL TERMS OF AGREEMENT

In addition to these items mentioned above, the following items have been known to cause conflict between roommates. If you foresee any of these as a problem, write out and attach any additional agreement.

- Smoking / Alcohol / Drugs
- Parties / Guests
- Quiet hours for studying / sleeping
- Parking
- Use of a sound system
- Compliance with landlord rules
- Shared areas
- Overnight guests
- Keys/locking doors
- Behavior of guests

UTILITIES

ITEMS	ACCOUNT UNDER NAME	AMOUNT OF DEPOSIT	DEPOSIT PAID BY	HOW BILL IS SHARED	ROOMMATE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT
Gas/Electric					
Water					
Trash					
Television					
Internet					
Other					

SIGNATURE OF ROOMMATES

The parties have executed the agreement on _____ (date)

Sign and Date _____

Sign and Date _____

Sign and Date _____

Sign and Date _____

Managing Your Finances

Unfortunately, paying rent won't be your only expense when living off campus. Setting up a personal budget will be helpful in tracking your money throughout the school year. It is also great to know how much you will be able to afford on rent when you know your income and other expenses. There are five simple steps that you can complete to set up a monthly budget:

01

Record all sources of income (paychecks, refund checks, allowances, etc.)

02

Create a list of monthly expenses.

03

Split your expenses into two categories: **FIXED** (not likely to change) and **VARIABLE** (not so consistent).

Fixed

Rent
Utilities
Renter's Insurance
Credit Cards
Phone Bill
Cable and Wifi

Variable

Cleaning Supplies
Toiletries
Clothing
Entertainment
Pet supplies
Food and Groceries

04

Total your monthly income as well as your monthly expenses

05

Ask yourself: are your expenses more than your income? If the answer is yes, it's time to reevaluate some of those variable expenses!



On Campus Resources for Off Campus Students

The Office of Student Activities and Union Services provides resources specific for our off-campus and commuter student population.

Office of Student Activities and Union Services:

We approve student events, support student clubs, oversee Fraternity and Sorority life, manage leadership programs, and run the Student Union, the heart of campus life. Check us out to learn about upcoming activities and events on campus and how to get more involved in student life!

www.newpaltz.edu/saus

Student Union 211

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm

Phone number: 845-257-3025

Like us on [Facebook](#) for updates on programs happening on campus!

Graduate Assistant for Off-Campus and Commuter Services:

Located conveniently in the office of Student Activities, the Graduate Assistant oversees everything related to off-campus and commuter services. The office provides programming, transportation resources, and an open door policy for all off-campus and commuter services to voice any questions or concerns.

Phone number: 845-257-3011

E-mail address: nforeman@newpaltz.edu

We have a [Facebook](#) page specific to off-campus and commuter events happening on campus!

Commuter Lounge:

The Commuter Lounge is located on the first floor of the Student Union in room 100S. It was designed specifically for off-campus and commuter students as a place to hang out in between classes. It is equipped with microwaves, a television, comfy couches, a printer, charging stations, and desks.

Commuter Assistants:

The Commuter Assistant Program connects new off-campus and commuter students with “seasoned” off-campus and commuter students who provide support and camaraderie during the new students’ first year. Commuter Assistants are campus leaders who are dedicated to helping other students have a great college experience. Our Commuter Assistants hold office hours in the Commuter Lounge (located in the Student Union 100S) and host programs throughout the year that specifically meet the needs of our off-campus and commuter students.

Visit our Commuter Assistant [webpage](#) for more information!

**Brought to you by the Office of Student
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