HOME

Start with safety

Do these before unpacking everything.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

FIRST-HOUR WALKTHROUGH

Photograph every room, appliance, meter, stain, crack, and missing item with the date visible. Test smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms using their test buttons; do not disable them. Find the electrical panel, water shutoff, exits, and building contact information.

- [ ] Save the landlord or manager, maintenance, and emergency numbers in your phone.
- [ ] Check that exterior doors and accessible windows lock; report problems in writing.
- [ ] Run each faucet briefly and look under sinks for leaks.
- [ ] Keep a small bag accessible: phone charger, medication, water, flashlight, keys, and lease.

EXAMPLE

Message: ·Hello, I moved into unit 3B today. I documented a slow leak under the bathroom sink and a damaged bedroom blind. Please confirm receipt and next steps.·

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What must be repaired before it can cause damage or limit safe use?

Where will I keep keys so I can leave quickly in an emergency?

This guide is general household information, not legal, financial, medical, or safety advice. Follow your lease, local rules, product instructions, and building emergency procedures. Contact qualified professionals or local emergency services when needed.

HOME

Set up essential services

Make the apartment usable without buying everything at once.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

UTILITIES AND CONNECTIONS

Confirm which services are included and which accounts must be opened in your name. Record account numbers, start dates, provider contacts, and any equipment return terms in one place.

- [ ] Ask the provider how to report an outage and whether autopay is optional.
- [ ] Locate internet equipment where it has ventilation and a reliable outlet.
- [ ] Label the circuit breaker only if the building permits it; never alter wiring.
- [ ] Update your mailing address with employers, schools, banks, insurers, and government agencies through their official channels.

EXAMPLE

Decision rule: if an internet appointment is later than your move date, schedule it first and use a temporary hotspot only if its data cost fits your plan.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Which bills are due monthly, and which require a one-time setup fee?

What proof of address might I need this month?

HOME

Buy in a useful order

Prioritize function, safety, and sleep.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

THE FIRST-WEEK LIST

Start with items that let you sleep, wash, eat simply, clean a spill, and leave the home safely. Delay décor and specialty tools until you know the space.

- ☐ Sleep: mattress or bed, bedding, pillow, curtain or temporary privacy solution.
- ☐ Kitchen: drinking cup, plate, bowl, fork, knife, pan, can opener, food container.
- ☐ Cleaning: all-purpose cleaner suitable for surfaces, cloths, broom or vacuum, trash bags, toilet brush.
- ☐ Safety: flashlight, fresh batteries if required, basic first-aid supplies, fire extinguisher only if appropriate for your home and maintained as instructed.

EXAMPLE

A $90 budget can cover bedding, a towel, soap, basic food, trash bags, a pan, and cleaning supplies; a lamp can wait if overhead lighting works.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What can I borrow, buy used safely, or postpone?

Which item solves more than one daily problem?

HOME

Make a simple kitchen

Build routines before collecting gadgets.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

FOOD AND STORAGE BASICS

Choose a short menu you can make with one pan and a pot. Put dates on leftovers and refrigerate per food-safety guidance. Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat food and clean hands and surfaces after preparation.

- [ ] Stock three low-effort meals, two shelf-stable backups, and breakfast items.
- [ ] Store knives out of reach of children and never leave a burner unattended.
- [ ] Check that the refrigerator is cooling; use the appliance manual or manager if it is not.
- [ ] Take trash out before pests have a reason to stay; seal food in containers.

EXAMPLE

Three-meal rotation: oatmeal with fruit; eggs, vegetables, and toast; beans, rice, and salsa. Make enough for one planned leftover lunch, not a week of uncertain storage.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What meal can I cook when tired without ordering food?

Where will dry food, dishes, and cleaning products live?

HOME

Clean and maintain

Small resets prevent overwhelming chores.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

A 20-MINUTE WEEKLY RESET

Put a repeating time on your calendar. Work from high-touch surfaces to floors, and report building problems early rather than attempting repairs outside your skills or lease permissions.

- [ ] Empty food waste and wipe kitchen counters.
- [ ] Clean the toilet, sink, and shower with products used as labeled; ventilate the room.
- [ ] Check for new drips, unusual odors, pests, or alarm chirps.
- [ ] Clear dryer lint before each use if you have access to a dryer; do not improvise vent repairs.

EXAMPLE

Sunday reset: 5 minutes trash and dishes; 5 minutes bathroom; 5 minutes floors; 5 minutes check calendar, supplies, and maintenance notes.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What is the smallest repeatable cleaning routine I can keep?

Which issue needs a written maintenance request today?

HOME

Share space clearly

Prevent common roommate misunderstandings.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

AGREE ON THE BASICS EARLY

Have a short, calm conversation before frustration builds. Write down agreements about shared costs, guests, cleaning, noise, food, parking, pets, and how to raise concerns. Check the lease before adding occupants or animals.

- [ ] Use a shared list for recurring supplies and a clear reimbursement method.
- [ ] Assign tasks by frequency, not assumptions: trash, bathroom, kitchen, floors.
- [ ] Set quiet hours and a guest notice expectation.
- [ ] Keep personal documents, medicine, and valuables private and secure.

EXAMPLE

Script: ·I want our home to feel easy for both of us. Could we choose a trash schedule and agree to text before overnight guests?·

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What does ·clean enough· mean in this home?

How will we revisit an agreement that is not working?

HOME

Plan money and next steps

Keep housing costs visible without guessing.

FIRST APARTMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE

THE MONTHLY HOME CHECK-IN

List rent, utilities, internet, transportation, groceries, household supplies, and a small moving-aftercare category. Use actual statements and receipts; do not rely on memory. If you are worried about a bill or lease obligation, contact the provider, a tenant organization, or a qualified professional early.

- [ ] Set reminders several days before due dates.
- [ ] Keep rent receipts, lease, move-in report, and maintenance messages together.
- [ ] Compare prices using unit price and return policy, not only the sale label.
- [ ] Build purchases over time: first replace what breaks daily, then improve comfort.

EXAMPLE

Review question: ·The electric bill rose by $18. Is this a one-time setup period, a usage change, or a question for the provider?·

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

What is one expense I can plan for before it becomes urgent?

Which document should be backed up today?