You can do a lot to improve your safety while living in off-campus housing! For starters, recognize that you represent The University of Texas at Austin even when you are not on campus. To help you do this, here are some tips for safer daily living.

- Keep doors and windows locked at all times (even when you are home). Insist your landlord repair any broken locks, windows, and doors immediately.
- Always close window coverings at night and when you are not home. Hint: Hang blinds/curtains over every window, and if your front or back door contains a window glass be sure to cover it or replace it with safety film.
- Never leave your keys under a doormat. Notice a light out in a public area such as these, notify your landlord. Make sure parking lots, garages, laundry rooms, stairwells, and hallways are well-lit.
- If you lose your keys, have your landlord change your locks immediately.
- Never leave a stranger at your door, or standing outside your door. When a visitor is outside your door, call out, “I’ll get it!” to create the appearance that other people are inside with you.

When Someone is At Your Door

- Always look through a peephole or window to see who it is before you open the door.
- If you do not recognize the visitor, ask them questions through the door so they can identify themselves.
- Demand that all servants and service personnel show official identification, and confirm with your landlord or roommates that someone actually works for the company before you allow them in.
- When in doubt, never let a stranger into your home. Demand all service/repair personnel show official identification, or window to see who it is before you answer the door.
- Never leave a note on your door or voicemail greeting implying you are not home. A digitized message saying no one is available to take the call is your best bet.
- If you make a mistake at the door, leave a well-lit phone and a radio or noise maker turned on inside at all times, to discourage burglars looking to vandalize an empty home.
- Insure your valuables with your state-issued driver’s license/identification number. Marking your property in this way makes it less valuable to potential burglars, and, if your property is stolen, insurance provides law enforcement proof of ownership. UTPD provides free engraving services.
- To prevent identity theft, destroy credit card applications, credit-advance checks, and all other mail with personal information. Never let anyone else collect or shred your mail for you.
- Never leave your keys outside under a doormat or in any other obvious place.
- Program the local police and fire department’s numbers into your mobile phone or post them by every home phone. Also, post/pre-program emergency contact numbers; label these numbers ICE (In Case of Emergency). In the event of an emergency, officials will know whom to contact for important personal or medical information.
- Get to know your neighbors. This is an excellent way to build a sense of community, as well as an extra security system. (Although your safety is primarily your responsibility, when you bond with important personal or medical information.
- Be the good citizen. You represent The University of Texas at Austin even when you are not on campus, so you are responsible for being a good ambassador for UT through all of your work and social activities in the greater Austin community. In essence, by upholding safer living habits, you always are a designated driver, and performing criminal activity to the authorities, you make Austin a safer place for you and everyone who lives there.

General Safety

- Check smoke detectors monthly to make sure they work. If you don’t have smoke detectors, ask your landlord to install one, or check if you are allowed to install one yourself.
- Know where the nearest fire extinguisher is located in your apartment complex. If your residence is not equipped with a fire extinguisher, ask your landlord to provide one, or purchase one yourself.
- Make sure ovens and stovetops are turned off after every use. Simple mistakes like this are the most common cause of fire!
- When was the last Fire Marshal Inspection?
- Marking your property in this way makes it less valuable to potential burglars, and, if your property is stolen, inscription provides law enforcement proof of your ownership. UTPD provides free engraving services.

Going on vacation?

- Temporarily stop delivery services, or have a friend collect your mail, until you return. Also, if you have a front yard, mow the lawn before you leave. A pile of mail outside your home immediately tells intruders you are not there. Use a utility timer to automatically turn lights and electronic devices on and off while you are gone.
- Do doors and windows have sturdy locks?
- Does the front door have a working smoke detector?
- For fire safety, your home must have at least one smoke detector and one fire extinguisher (they are usually located in the hallway). If the inspection is several years old, a multi-fire inspection program is a good idea.
- Do doors and windows have sturdy locks?
- The doors should have secondary locks, such as Charlie Bars or Rail Locks, and there should be set screws installed in both doors.
- Is the residence not equipped with a fire extinguisher, ask your landlord to provide one, or purchase one yourself. At the very least, you should be able to view visitors through your front door, adequate lighting allows you to distinguish the facial expressions of someone standing 10 feet away at any time of day.
- Are there shrubs and trees around the property well-maintained?
- Does the front door have a peephole/door viewer?
- This helps police, fire fighters, and EMS locate your residence in an emergency.
- You represent The University of Texas at Austin even when you are not on campus. To help you identify your home, ask your landlord to install one, or find out whether you are allowed to install one yourself. At the very least, you should be able to view visitors through your front door, and as far as possible, not just a model unit! Then, after you have reviewed the property with the current owners, complete this checklist for the specific unit.
- Before you sign the lease, complete a neighborhood survey, such as trash and crime reports, apartment appearance, sweeping to make sure they work. If you don’t have smoke detectors, ask your landlord to install one, or check if you are allowed to install one yourself.
- Make sure all blanks on the lease are filled in before you sign the lease.
- Who has access to your apartment/lease key other than you?
- Labels and address postings on your residence with a curtain as well.
- Do doors and windows have sturdy locks?
- Is the residence not equipped with a fire extinguisher, ask your landlord to provide one, or purchase one yourself. At the very least, you should be able to view visitors through your front door, adequate lighting allows you to distinguish the facial expressions of someone standing 10 feet away at any time of day.
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APARTMENT HUNTER’S CHECKLIST

- Is the property in a safe neighborhood?
- To research crime rates of different Austin neighborhoods, go to the Austin Police Department’s Crime Prevention website to look up crime safety facts by zip code, or even apartment complex.
- Are address numbers clearly visible?
- This helps police, fire fighters, and EMS locate your residence in an emergency.
- Are public areas well lit?
- Whether you are standing in the parking lot or outside your front door, adequate lighting allows you to distinguish the facial expressions of someone standing 10 feet away at any time of day.
- Are parking spaces marked with apartment numbers?
- In some states, it is illegal to alter the appearance of a car in a clear indicator of whether someone is home, or whether the apartment is occupied. As a result, an apartment complex might require that you paint the apartment number in your space.
- Are shubs and trees around the property well-maintained?
- Does the front door have a peephole/door viewer?
- This helps police, fire fighters, and EMS locate your residence in an emergency.
- What is the timeframe for completion of repair work?
- If you are planning a repair while you are not there, be sure to install one, or find out whether you are allowed to install one yourself. At the very least, you should be able to view visitors through your front door, adequate lighting allows you to distinguish the facial expressions of someone standing 10 feet away at any time of day.
- Does the apartment/house have an extra security system? (Although your safety is primarily your responsibility, when you bond with important personal or medical information.
- Get to know your neighbors. This is an excellent way to build a sense of community, as well as an extra security system. (Although your safety is primarily your responsibility, when you bond with important personal or medical information.
- Be the good citizen. You represent The University of Texas at Austin even when you are not on campus, so you are responsible for being a good ambassador for UT through all of your work and social activities in the greater Austin community. In essence, by upholding safer living habits, you always are a designated driver, and performing criminal activity to the authorities, you make Austin a safer place for you and everyone who lives there.
When looking for a new place to live, you consider many factors, like proximity to campus, and laundry facilities. Safety should also be a major factor you think about before renting an apartment or house.

Ask yourself: Does this home and surrounding neighborhood feel safe? It is important to trust your instincts about the general safety of a property, but there are also specific things you can look for to determine how safe a place is from crime and fire.

Make copies of this checklist and fill one out for each property you visit. This way, even if you are distracted by promises of move-in specials and Olympic-sized swimming pools, you will have a record of each property’s safety to look back on when making your decision.

### APARTMENT HUNTER’S CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergency</strong></td>
<td>911</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Emergency</strong></td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Austin Police Department</strong></td>
<td>512-974-5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UTPD</strong></td>
<td>512-471-4441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crime Stoppers</strong></td>
<td>512-472-8477; An anonymous hotline for reporting criminal activity, in exchange for a possible financial reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Auto Theft Tip Line</strong></td>
<td>512-974-5096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim Services</strong></td>
<td>512-974-5037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SafePlace</strong></td>
<td>512-267-SAFE (7233); A sexual assault and relationship violence hotline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UT Austin Counseling and Mental Health Center</strong></td>
<td>512-471-3515; Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crisis Line</strong></td>
<td>512-471-CALL (2255)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **UT Austin Legal Services for Students** | 512-472-7796; Monday thru Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. | Handles disputes involving landlord-tenant, consumer and contract laws;
|                           | Consultations by appointment only                                      |
| **UT Austin Student Emergency Services** | 512-471-5017; Provides support during an emergency or crisis situation |

### Fire Prevention Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Services</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Designs of Student Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Fire Prevention Services</td>
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