

Energy and Water Efficiency Checklist for Renters

Energy Efficiency

- Insulation/Weatherization:** Check for strong drafts or any holes or gaps around the doors, windows, pipes or fixtures. Rentals that are well insulated and sealed use less energy to heat and cool.
- Heating and cooling systems:** Investigate the age and condition of the unit's heating and air conditioning systems. Older HVAC and heat-pump systems are often less efficient and more costly. Check the condition of the air filter. If it is very dirty, that could be an indicator of the condition of the coils as well. Dirty coils in the air handler will greatly reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of an HVAC system.
- Thermostats:** Check to see if the thermostat is level, free of dust and firmly attached to the wall. If not, ask the landlord if he or she would be willing to repair or replace it with a programmable thermostat before you move in. Proper use of a programmable thermostat is one of the easiest ways to save energy and money.
- Appliances:** Ask about the age of and maintenance routine for the major appliances, such as the refrigerator, dishwasher, washer/dryer, room air conditioners, stove and water heater. Older models or those in poor repair will use more energy than newer ENERGY STAR® models.
- Water Heater:** Ask the landlord what the temperature is set to in the water heater. Not only will a setting above 120° Fahrenheit cost more, the hot water could also scald you.
- Lighting:** Check to see if Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) are used in the unit. If not, ask the landlord to change them out or if it is okay for you to do it. Although CFLs are more expensive than standard light bulbs initially, they cost much less to operate and last 10 times longer.

Water Efficiency

- Low-flow fixtures:** Faucet aerators, low-flow showerheads and other kitchen and bathroom efficiency fixtures are generally inexpensive and one of the most cost-effective water conservation measures. Ask the landlord if these fixtures are already installed. If not, ask if he or she is willing to install them before the lease is signed.
- Leaky fixtures and pipes:** Take notes of any leaks in the fixtures, faucets, showerheads, pipes, or toilets. Have the landlord fix them before the move-in date. Leaks can waste significant amounts of water, could lead to mold or mildew issues and cause higher utility bills or overages of the utility allowance.

Safety and Other Considerations

- Carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide detectors:** If the rental unit uses natural gas service, make sure there is a carbon monoxide detector installed that meets Underwriters Laboratory standards. Detectors should be tested monthly.
- Other:** Check for the presence of a fire extinguisher, and make sure there is no loose carpeting, loose sockets, exposed wiring or damaged walls, cabinets or fixtures.