



Office of Residential Services
Teachers College, Columbia University

**Off-Campus
Housing
Blueprint**

How We Can Assist



We Can

- Provide basic info about off-campus living
- Refer you to other housing resources
- Listen and provide personal advice

We Cannot

- Visit a rental property with you
- Legally advise you on your lease terms
- Intervene between you and your landlord
- Sign any documents
- Serve as a reference on a lease

10 Step Blueprint Summary



1. Get acquainted with TC's location and NYC neighborhoods
2. Familiarize yourself with the NYC housing market
3. Calculate your budget
4. Make list of what you're looking for
5. Search 4 weeks ahead
6. Visit all apartments you're interested in
7. Gather required documents
8. Inspect the apartment and have landlord fix issues
9. Contact moving company, cable/internet/phone, etc.
10. Settle in!



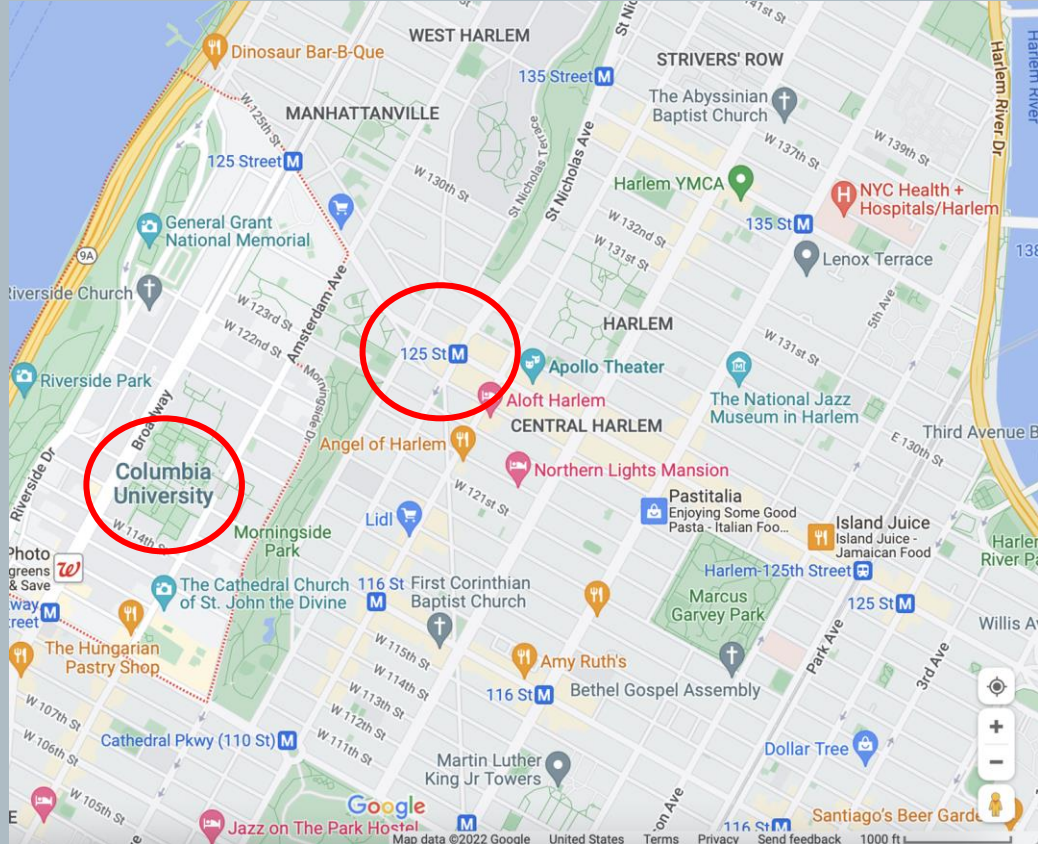
1 - Where is TC?



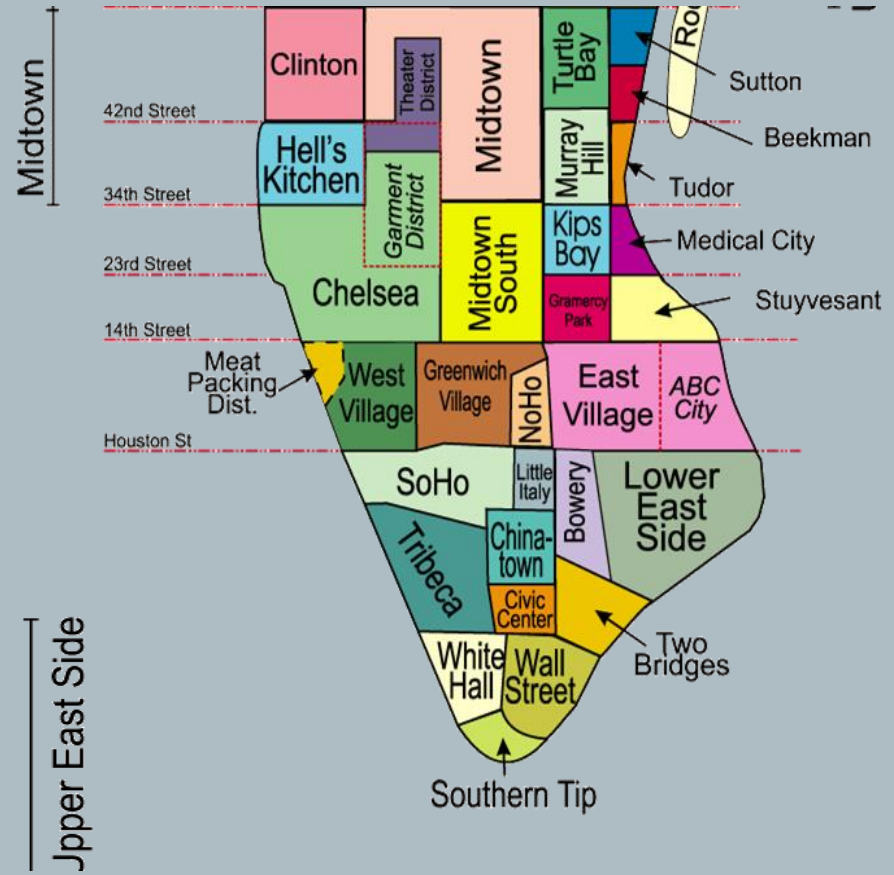
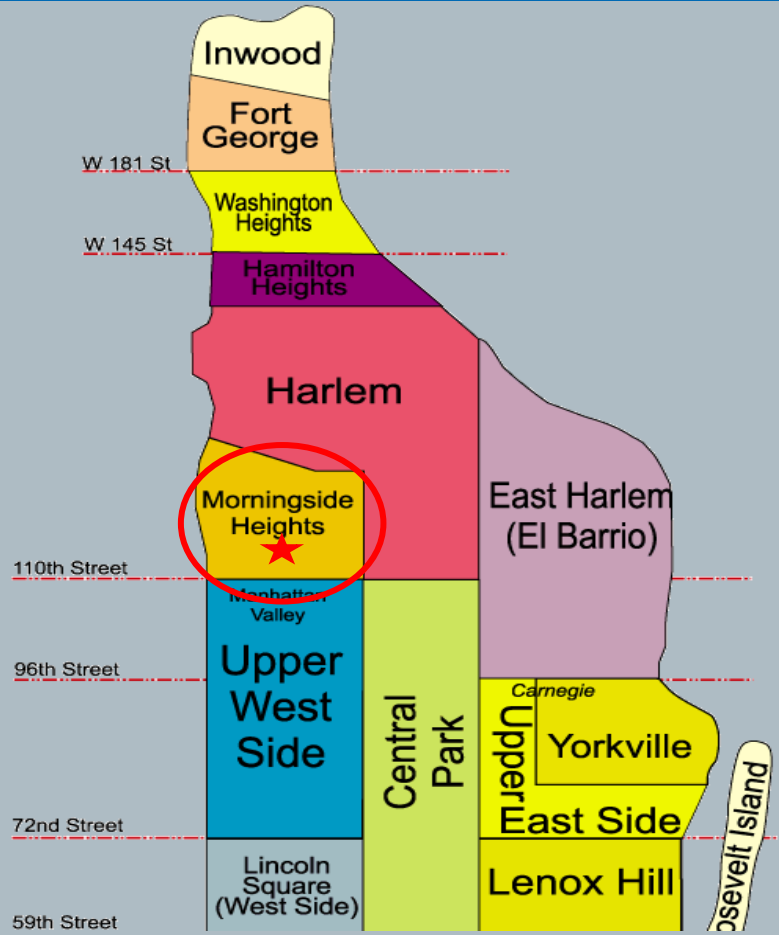
Between
120th/121st St.
Broadway/
Amsterdam

Morningside Heights
Upper West Side

Near **1** **A** **B** **C** **D**



1 - Where is TC?



1 - Off-Campus vs On-Campus



The Pros and Cons of living Off- vs On-Campus

	On-Campus	Off-Campus
Location	Close to campus, walk to class	Transportation + cost of travel
Security	24 hour security access	Doorman is more \$
Furniture	Included	Bring your own
Price	All-in-one cost	Potentially can split expenses
Utilities	Includes utilities, cable, Internet	Pay multiple bills each month
Laundry	In each building	May be off site
Policies	Student policies	Very few
Privacy	Most spaces have shared area	More privacy
Guests	Need to be signed in with limits	No limits
Pets	Only in Grant & Sarasota	Some are pet friendly
Community	Events with TC students	Make your own

*Note that Grant/Sarasota pay electricity charges

2 – Understanding NYC Housing



Broker

- A broker is someone who helps find people apartments
- Some landlords will require you to go through a broker
- Brokers always charge a fee, which is charged on the annual total rent
 - If your apartment is \$1,000/month and there's a 15% broker's fee, you will owe \$1,800 to the broker ($\$1,000 \times 12 \text{ months} \times 15\% = \1800)

No Fee Apartments

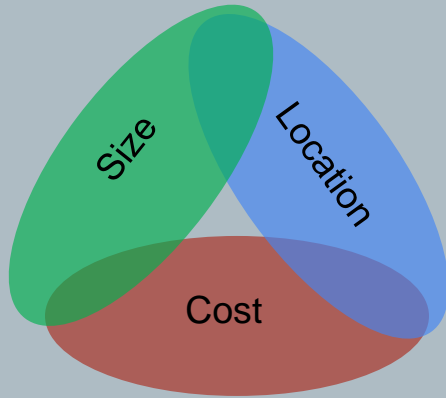
- If you want to search yourself, you can find apartments with no fee
- Sometimes No Fee means the landlord pays the broker's fee
- Usually No Fee apartments are less desirable than those with a fee



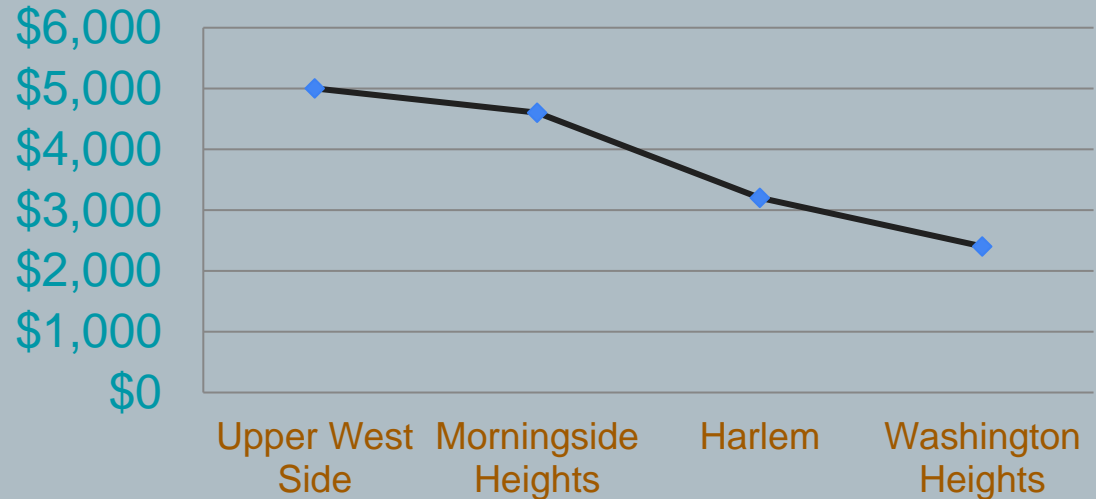


3 - Calculate Your Budget

- Draft a budget Sheet
- Additional expenses: utilities, transportation, cable, moving
- Factor in Renters insurance - protection against loss
- Size, Location, Cost



Average Rent by Neighborhood





3 – Sample Budget Sheet

Outgoing Cash Flow

- Academic Expenses
- Apartment Expenses
 - Rent
 - Utilities
 - Cable
 - Internet
- Personal Expenses
 - Cell phone
- Transportation Cost
- Flexible spending
 - Social outings
 - Entertainment
- **Total spendings**

Incoming Cash Flow

- Scheduled monthly salary
- Part-time job income
- Scholarship
- Loans
- Grant
- Other
- **Total spendings**





4 - What are you looking for?

Make a check-list of what you are looking for in an apartment:

- Number of bedrooms/bathrooms
- Doorman
- Elevator or walk-up building
- Central air
- Security
- Appliances
- Utilities included and NOT included
- On-Site Laundry
- Length of lease- 1 year, 9 mo. etc
- Trash disposal (who takes care of this)
- Recycling
- Security Deposit needed
- Brokerage fee
- Total fee to move-in
- Monthly Rent
- Application/Credit Check fee
- Building manager lives on site
- Proximity to schools (If you have children)
- Proximity to restaurants
- Closest transportation means
- Safety of neighborhood
- When is the apartment available
- Monthly maintenance fee
- Proximity to TC campus
- Number of electrical outlets per room
- Is there adequate ventilation/windows
- Pet policy and is a fee required
- Termination- Type of notice and when?
- Can you add your own locks to the door
- Noise (Neighborhood and building)
- Safety(deadbolt on doors, intercom system, peep-hole)
- Lease renewal clause
- Can rent be increased without notice

4 - Types of Apartments



Apartment

1 Bedroom apartment is a private unit with separate bedroom and living room.

4 - Types of Apartments



Studio



One room space with full bathroom. Kitchen may be separate room on one wall of studio.

4 - Types of Apartments



Share

2 to 4 bedroom apartments have private bedrooms with shared living room and bathroom.



5 – When to Search



Leases starts **1st** or **15th** of the month.

Generally search no more than 4 weeks ahead.

It typically takes 3 to 5 days to find an apartment.

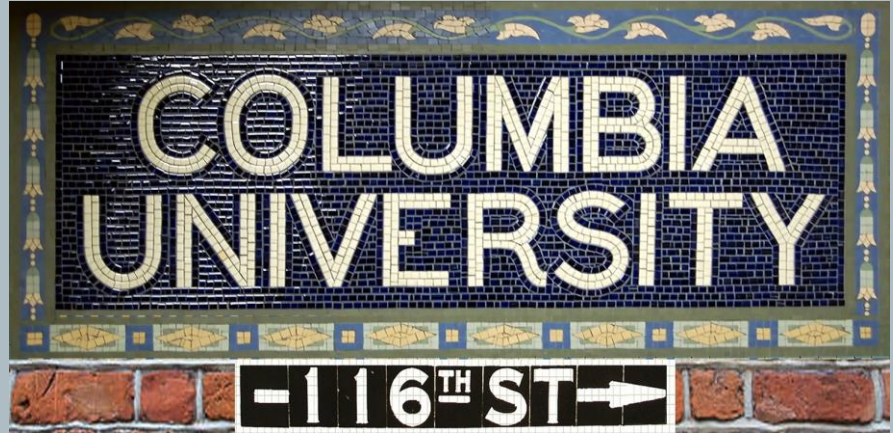


5 – Apartment Hunting



Online Resources

- [Rent.com](https://www.rent.com)
- [Craigslist.org](https://www.craigslist.org)
- [Apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com)
- [RentHop.com](https://www.renthop.com)
- [StreetEasy.com](https://www.streeteasy.com)
- [PadMapper.com](https://www.padmapper.com)



Columbia Off-Campus Housing Assistance (OCHA)

- This office will help you find an apartment - your #1 resource
- 401 West 119th St (between Amsterdam and Morningside)
- [Database of available rooms – Housing Registry](#)
- Off-Campus Housing Assistance: <https://residential.columbia.edu/ocha>
- Roommate search amongst other Columbia students. They may have relationship with brokers

6 – Visiting Apartments



How to Visit

1. Look at the unit in person - never trust pictures
2. Take pictures so you can review them later
3. Visit with a friend to get a second opinion
4. Don't sign or give money unless you are certain
5. Ask questions
6. Is it right for you?





What Landlords May Require

1. Tenant earns 40-50x monthly cost of unit
2. Letter from employer or previous landlord
3. Rent application
4. Credit check, paystubs, bank statements or proof of income
5. Security Deposit to be held until you move out





Credit Check

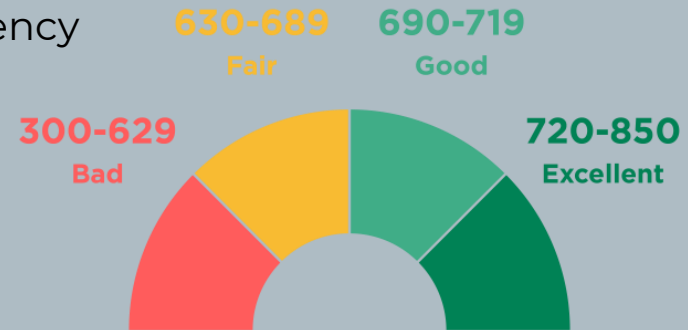
- Run on every applicant for credit history and it may cost fee
- **Bad:** high account balances, missed payments, collections
- **Good:** many accounts, low balances, consistent payments

What if You Have No Credit? – Ge a Guarantor (Co-Signer)

- May be required if you have no income
- Guarantor is legally obligated to pay if you cannot
- Will require proof of income, usually 80x monthly rent
- If not a relative, landlord may require local residency

International Student or No Guarantor?

- Without guarantor, you may have to pay 6-12 months up front
- Sublet or apartment share is a good option





7 – Subleasing

What's a Sublease?

- Short-term rental where you pay the person on the lease
- Subletting is not always allowed & needs landlord permission
- Typically month-to-month
- May not be a credit check or require as much up front



Things to Keep In Mind

- You shouldn't be paying more than 10% over the actual rent
- Make sure there is a written signed agreement
- Look for red flags like rent that is far too cheap
- Relationship with person on lease is very important



7 - The Lease

Lease

- Read entire lease word for word
- Focus on length of lease, amount to pay, when to vacate and how to pay
- Have someone else read
- Fix repairs before signing
- Ask for a copy

Do Not Sign If:

- Landlord has access to apartment without notice
- You plan to leave before the end of the lease
- You have not seen the actual apartment
- There are still details to be worked out





8 – Apartment Inspection

Do a Unit Inspection upon signing lease

1. Take notes on anything that is missing or damaged
2. Take pictures for your records
3. Make sure all appliances work
4. Check that toilet flushes, faucet works, drains aren't clogged
5. Ensure Smoke Detector works & Fire Extinguisher is present
6. Inspect for evidence of leaks
7. Check that window guard is installed correctly
8. Ensure radiator is working in preparation for winter weather



9 – Preparing to Move



- Find reputable moving company. Watch them load and unload your belongings
- Call utility/cable company 3 weeks in advance to schedule an appointment
- Look at parking to unload your belongings
- Contact ConEdison to set up electricity
 - www.coned.com





Now That You Have a Home:

- Redo your budget now that you know your rent
- Get to know your neighborhood
- Meet your neighbors
- Decorate one room at a time
- Map out your commute to TC
- Sit back and relax!





Office of
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Q&A