

# Common Off-Campus Terminology

university of toronto mississauga  
off campus housing initiative

---

## Lease Agreement

A lease is a legal contract between you and your landlord. It can be in writing, or it can be a spoken (verbal) agreement. Landlords generally request an initial 12-month lease agreement. However, landlords who advertise with our service may offer month-to-month, 4, or 8 month leases. They can even offer a week-to-week lease.

Quick tip: Never sign anything without reading it thoroughly. Understand what you are signing and what your responsibilities will be. If you have questions or concerns, seek advice from the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations. Visit their website: <https://torontotenants.org/> for resources or call 416-921-9494. At the end of a set term lease (eg. 12 months), it automatically converts to a month-to-month lease, unless you give your landlord two months' notice or agree to sign a new lease agreement. A month-to-month lease is one where you can leave at any time, so long as you give two months' notice.

---

## First and Last

To secure a place, your landlord may ask for "First and Last" which refers to your first and last months' rent. Legally, your landlord:

- is only able to ask for one month's rent as a deposit, which will be used as payment for your last month of tenancy.
- can ask that you pay your first month's rent up front.
- may ask for a key deposit, which should not exceed the value of replacing the key

### Quick tip:

It's recommended that you pay your deposit or rental payments by personal cheque or online transfer, not by cash. Always request a receipt that includes your landlord's name, phone and signature, and the address of both your landlord and the unit you are renting.

---

## References/Guarantors

Some landlords will request references or guarantors before entering into a rental agreement. A "Reference" is someone who can speak on your behalf to confirm that you will be a reliable tenant. Potential references can include past landlords, employers, and academic officials such as Deans, Registrars, Faculty, etc.

### Quick tip:

A) It may be helpful to get a letter from your department or college confirming the duration of your study, including any funding you might be receiving.

B) If you are unable to obtain references or guarantors, you may want to open a bank account and obtain a letter from your bank detailing the date the account was opened and the available funds.

A "Guarantor" is someone that will guarantee your rent will be paid every month. A guarantor must have an account or credit history with a Canadian bank. The guarantor is financially liable to cover your rent if you miss rent payments

---

## **Residential Tenancies Act (RTA):**

The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) sets the rules for rent increases, evictions, repairs, and many other issues that affect tenants.

### **Quick tip:**

If you share a kitchen/bathroom with your landlord, you may not be covered by the RTA. CLEO's online tool at [www.cleo.on.ca/roommates](http://www.cleo.on.ca/roommates) can help you find out if you are covered.

---

## **Subletting:**

If you want to move out of your unit for a specific period of time, you can sublet your place. This involves finding a subtenant to move in and pay the rent for that period. During a sublet, your name remains on the lease, and you remain legally responsible for the rent. In most cases, the subtenant would pay you the rent and you would then pay the landlord. You are allowed to sublet your unit at any time during the duration of your lease, but you must inform your landlord about your plans. The owner cannot refuse to allow you to sublet the unit, but can refuse a specific sublettee if there is a valid reason.

## **Tenants' insurance:**

The cost of tenants' insurance is approximately \$300 per year to insure about \$20,000 worth of goods and can provide the following protection:

- Fire, theft, and water damage from plumbing problems.
- Replacement of personal property such as computers, furniture, clothing, etc.
- Coverage in the event that you are found liable for loss of property because of personal negligence, or for accidental loss/damage of jewelry or other property outside your home.
- Temporary stay in a hotel while your unit is being repaired after fire, flood, etc.

### **Quick tip:**

Be sure to take photos of valuable items and store them outside of the apartment in a safe place. Also keep receipts and a list of serial numbers in case you need to make an insurance claim. Consider insuring items individually if they aren't covered for their total value under basic plans. Make sure you have the contents of your apartment covered for their replacement.

## **UTM Student Housing & Residence Life**

**E-mail:** [resdesk.utm@utoronto.ca](mailto:resdesk.utm@utoronto.ca)

**Phone:** 905.828.5286

Oscar Peterson Hall, Suite 120  
3359 Mississauga Road  
Mississauga, Ontario L5L 1C6