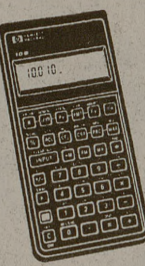


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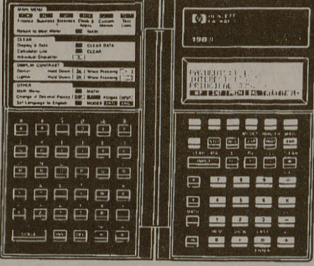
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# Off-campus living lessons learned early

**The Office of Student Life Programs offers help to students for signing leases and preventing roommate problems.**

By Courtney Walker  
THE BATTALION

Starting early and asking questions are the keys to getting a good apartment, say the staff members of the Office of Student Life Programs, said Victor Romero, lease specialist for the Office of Student Life Programs, suggested that students visit apartments personally and ask residents if they like living there and if the management is good. Students have many things to consider when looking for the ideal apartment. Apartment features to look for include

proximity to campus, safety, living environment and cost. Dr. Joyce Cavanagh, a family economics specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, said students need to decide what meets their personal requirements and pocketbook before looking for an apartment. Kristy Cook, a junior elementary education major, said she contacted a former A&M student and asked for a list of ten reasonable apartment complexes, then narrowed down the list to her individual preferences. However, some students may need professional assistance, which is available on campus. The Office of Student Life Programs has price lists, a roommate referral service, Bryan and College Station maps, survival guide catalogs, roommate contracts and an availability board of local apartments that is updated every three weeks. Romero said a new program

called Rent Lines will be available by the end of the semester. The 24-hour phone line allows people to add their vacancies on a list. Students looking for available apartments can call to get names and phone numbers from the phone line. Cavanagh said signing leases can be another problem when renting a new apartment. A common problem associated with lease signing is when one roommate moves out before the lease is up and leaves the other one with rent payments. "I don't recommend one person signing a lease because if one leaves the other is stuck," Cavanagh said. "But if both roommates sign, then the one leaving is responsible for finding a replacement or paying their part of the lease." Romero said another idea for preventing conflicts is a roommate contract, which is available in the Office of Student Life Programs.

The contract covers separate shopping trips and will be paid, overnight rules and study hours. "They are just things mates do not usually do until the moment, saves everyone a lot of frustration," Romero said. Landlords who never find tenants and never return to another common complaint. "The most important thing to understand the terms lease agreement and be carefully before signing there are no surprises moving out or rent is due," vanagh said. Proof is always the best, Cavanagh said, and should get in writing exactly the landlord will fix. "Sometimes tenants are responsible for the first \$50 worth of minor repairs," she said, "so new tenants to be sure to find out who are responsible for."

# Safety precautions part of successful semester

**The University Police Department offers phone lines for campus safety, and the Corps offers an escort service for students walking across campus.**

By Michelle Lyons  
THE BATTALION

Becoming aware of crime on campus is a way for students to prevent being victimized, University Police Department officials said. Lt. Bert Kretzschmar, with the UPD Crime Prevention Unit, said campus crime is something all students need to be aware of, especially at the beginning and end of the academic year. It is at these times when the theft of bicycles, backpacks and books is at its highest, Kretzschmar said. The majority of thefts are opportunity crimes, he said, because students leave themselves open to be victimized, and criminals take that opportunity. Students often leave personal items unattended while moving in. Belongings should be supervised if they are in a car, on a sidewalk or in a yard. Leaving items in the open for any length of time, gives thieves an opportunity to strike.

Though theft is highest at the beginning of the semester, incidents continue often in September and October. Students often leave bikes unlocked and books, purses and backpacks unattended. The library is a perfect place to be a target for crime. Students may leave to get books and return to find their belongings missing, Kretzschmar said. Students also should keep doors and windows locked, he suggested. Students usually are not well acquainted with neighbors, especially at the beginning of the semester, and should not take for granted that they can be trusted. It is a good idea to keep doors locked, he said, even if just taking a quick journey down the hall. Another problem plaguing college campuses across the nation is sexual assault. Sgt. Betty Lemay, with the UPD Crime Prevention Unit, said people should be careful when walking across campus, especially at night. "Don't isolate yourself from people,"

Lemay said. "Stay in well-lit areas and always try to travel in pairs." The Corps of Cadets offers an escort program to students who wish to have a company when walking around campus. Mike Daniels, a junior in the Corps, the Corps Guard Room has escorts 24 hours a day to accompany students across campus. "On weekends, there are generally people that call for escorts, though they are usually no more than two or three a night," Daniels said. "I think a lot of students just don't know about it." Students can reach the guard room at 845-6789. Emergency phones are available across campus to connect students with UPD help will be dispatched. Recently, emergency phones have been approved for installation. UPD offers two phone lines designed to keep students safe and informed. The Crime Line (845-6500) offers safety and reports on campus areas where there has been unusual activity. Students can report any campus area that may need repairs on the Light Line (845-4448). UPD officers are on duty 24 hours in case of an emergency. "Our mission is to protect lives and property," Kretzschmar said.



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NEWS: The Battalion news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University, a Division of Student Publications, a unit of the Department of Journalism.  
The Battalion (UPS 045-360) is published daily, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and Monday through Thursday during the summer sessions (except University holidays and exam periods), at Texas A&M University. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77840.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.