

Housing and Rental Frauds

Students who are looking for off-campus housing might find unique offers at an attractive price. We want to help you understand how frauds work and give you some advice.

What is a Housing Scam?

Housing Scam or **Rental Scam** is when a person tricks someone into sending money to rent a house, apartment, or room, which does not exist.

What does it look like?

You may notice odd behavior when dealing with scammers:

- They do not want to meet with you in person.
- They do not want you to see the property.
- They want you to move-in immediately.
- The price for the property is too low.
- The listing might have typos, poor grammar, or excessive punctuation.



How to avoid being defrauded?

Here are a few tips on how to check the rental ad and not fall for a scammer:

- Make sure the listing has pictures, ask for the address and google it. See if someone else has posted an ad with the same property.
- Do quick research: check the contact information in this ad, google the name, there might be reviews or articles about this person already.
- View the apartment in-person **before** you pay any money.
- They may ask you to use cash or e-transfer as payment. This is the easiest way for them to get your money and disappear. **Bank check is a good idea.**
- Make sure that the person you will be renting from provides you a **contract**. Do not rent accommodation without a written agreement. If you are unsure about a contract, ask someone close to you or a lawyer for advice. **Do not sign a contract before you see the property.**
- At the start of a tenancy, a landlord can ask for a security deposit (or **damage deposit**) – it cannot be **more than half of the first month's rent**.
- Under residential tenancy laws, once a landlord accepts a deposit, a tenancy is generally considered to have been established.
- When you move out, **take photos of the property**, walk-through the property with the owner and **make sure you have not left any damage**. **They must return the damage deposit to you.** The landlord has the right to keep the damage deposit when the premises need fixing.

Airbnb. Can I use this platform for long-term rentals?



Airbnb is a service that lets property owners rent out their spaces to travelers looking for a place to stay, houses mostly. It's basically a good option if you can't or you don't want to stay in a hotel. Of course, Airbnb has apartments for rent. **But the price you see on the website – it's a price for one night.**

You will pay much more than if you rent a place from an official landlord. It's important to mention that Airbnb has their own rules, terms and policies. They don't use a BC rental contract, because property owners are not landlords.

It's a good platform to look for accommodation when you're travelling and need a place to stay.

Ask for help if you've been scammed!

If you feel like something went wrong, you can always ask for help.

- Contact your bank immediately if you've made a payment through your bank account.
- Report the situation to special organizations:
 1. Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre
 2. Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre
 3. Vancouver Police Department

The best way to avoid being scammed is to be prepared

Here are some resources to learn more about renting, contracts, and payments:

1. BC Housing and Tenancy
2. Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre
3. Housing Policies | City of Vancouver

What resources can I use to find accommodation?

Remember: Always check all the information and spend some time doing research.

Online listings:

1. Places4Students
2. Craigslist
3. Kijiji
4. Rent Seeker
5. Off-Campus Housing 101

Facebook groups:

6. Facebook: Vancouver Rentals & Roomates
7. Facebook: Vancouver Student / Roomate Rentals

