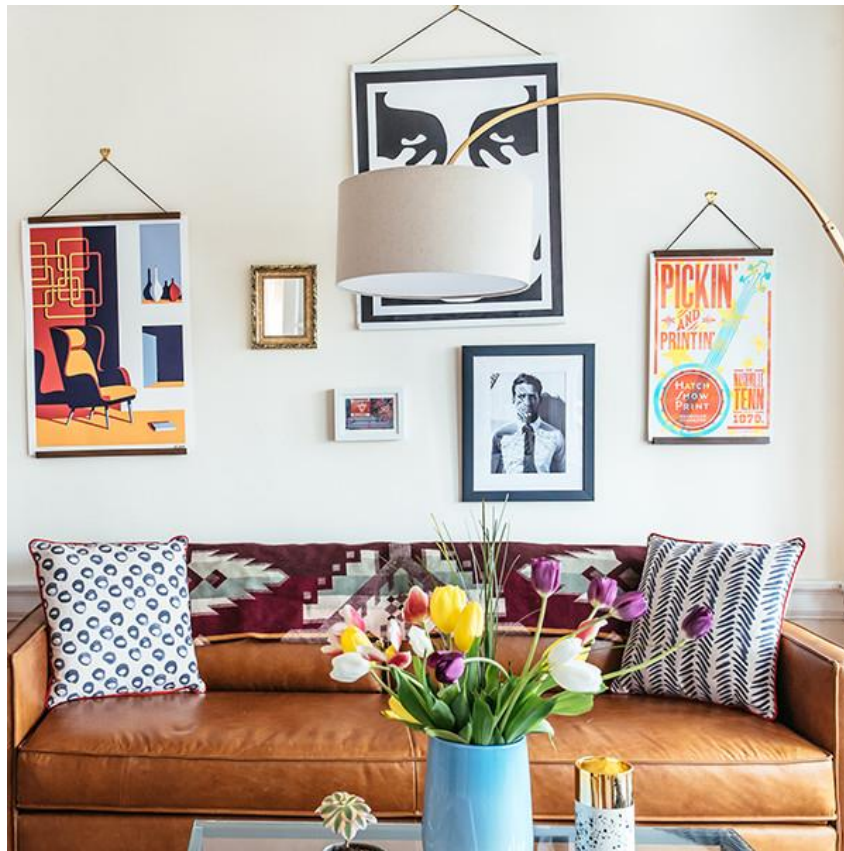




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## **Apartment-Hunting Rules Everyone Should Know**



(Source: Photographed by Ana Kamin.)

Perhaps the rudest awakening we've ever had is learning apartment shopping is nothing like an episode of *House Hunters*. From scrolling through dozens of listings, to winning a bidding war, to learning what a guarantor is *and* if you even need one, the whole thing is a complete headache.

Apartment hunting will never be easy — no matter how many times you move — but learning some insider tips will make the process more manageable. Here, eight realtors share tips every smart renter should know.

### **Set A Budget — And Stick To It**

“All renters should calculate their targeted budget,” says Andrea Wells, an agent at CORE in New York City. “Whether you’re living alone or with a partner or roommate, divide the annual combined income by 40. That number will be your maximum rent.”

### **Prioritize Your Must-Haves**

“Ask yourself what you absolutely can't live without,” adds Wells. “Some people can't or won't do walk-ups, so they need an elevator. You can do a search based on your perfect apartment, but keep an open mind. The perfect apartment may come in a different package than you originally expected!”

### **Get The 411 On The Landlord**

“Ask how you'll be communicating with the landlord,” says Wells. “It's smart to ask whether the landlord takes digital payments and how can you contact them should you need help. There are certain things that you can't ask — including details about school districts and neighborhood make-up — but this is a great opportunity to learn everything about the building before you commit.”

### **Safety First**

“Survey the safety of the building and unit,” stresses Wells. “Is there a doorman? Are there security cameras? Does the door lock properly? From there, check for smoke and carbon monoxide detectors as well as window guards. Generally, these safety items are mandated by the city. Also make sure the appliances are in good working condition.”

### **Be Yourself**

“Co-op boards want to know that you're going to be a well-qualified, agreeable, friendly addition to their community,” says Wells. “When they interview you, brag about yourself a little bit and let your well-rounded self shine! Answer their questions and keep any additional commentary to yourself. Interviews are usually painless. Oh, and when they ask about your hobbies, you may not want to mention you play electric guitar in a band.”

### **Get All Your Paperwork Beforehand**

“Make sure your paperwork is in order before you begin looking,” Wells says. “Have your tax returns, bank and investment statements, and pay stubs in a file. Also, ask your boss for an employment letter because they can take time to create. Same goes for the personal and professional reference letters.”

### **Always Follow The Rules**

“Never illegally sublet your apartment,” Wells warns. “You can absolutely lose your lease.”