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First Apartment Checklist

Everything a first apartment actually needs, room by room, with nothing you will regret hauling up the stairs. It is written for renters: no drilling, deposit-safe, and sized for a small place. Tick things off here (your ticks are saved on this device) or print it.

Before you move in

- [ ] Measure the front door, hallway turns and the elevator before buying any furniture
- [ ] Measure each room wall to wall, plus window height and under-window space
- [ ] Photograph every wall, floor, appliance and existing mark, then email the photos to yourself (your deposit record)
- [ ] Read the lease rules on nails, adhesive hooks, paint and curtain rods
- [ ] Set up electricity, gas and internet for move-in day
- [ ] Get renters insurance (many leases require it)
- [ ] File a change of address and update your bank and employer
- [ ] Test the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

Bedroom

- [ ] Mattress and bed frame (note the under-bed clearance for storage bins)
- [ ] Mattress protector
- [ ] Two sets of sheets
- [ ] Pillows and pillow protectors
- [ ] Duvet or comforter with a washable cover
- [ ] Curtains or a blackout shade on a tension rod
- [ ] Bedside lamp or clip-on light
- [ ] Nightstand, wall-free shelf or bedside caddy
- [ ] Under-bed storage bins
- [ ] Full-length mirror (leaning or over-the-door)

Closet and clothes

- [ ] Slim hangers (one style, so everything hangs evenly)
- [ ] Hanging shelf organizer for folded clothes
- [ ] Over-the-door hooks for bags, robes and tomorrow's outfit
- [ ] Shoe rack or over-the-door shoe pockets
- [ ] Lidded bins or vacuum bags for off-season clothes
- [ ] Laundry hamper that fits the closet floor or a corner
- [ ] Freestanding garment rack if the closet is tiny or missing

Kitchen

- [ ] Plates, bowls, glasses and mugs for four
- [ ] Forks, knives and spoons for four
- [ ] Chef's knife, paring knife and a cutting board
- [ ] Frying pan, saucepan with lid and a sheet pan
- [ ] Mixing bowl and colander
- [ ] Spatula, wooden spoon, tongs and a can opener
- [ ] Measuring cups and spoons
- [ ] Food storage containers that stack
- [ ] Dish rack, sponge and dish soap
- [ ] Kitchen towels and an oven mitt
- [ ] Trash can with a lid, plus bags
- [ ] Cabinet shelf risers to double a shelf
- [ ] Drawer organizer for cutlery
- [ ] Small kitchen fire extinguisher

Bathroom

- [ ] Shower curtain, liner and rings
- [ ] Bath mat
- [ ] Two bath towels and two hand towels per person
- [ ] Toilet brush and plunger (buy the plunger before you need it)
- [ ] Shower caddy that hangs or stands (no drilling)
- [ ] Small lidded trash can
- [ ] Toilet paper, hand soap and a spare of each
- [ ] Freestanding or over-the-toilet shelf
- [ ] Basic first-aid kit

Living area

- [ ] Sofa or loveseat that fits through your door (check the measurements first)
- [ ] Coffee table or storage ottoman
- [ ] Floor or table lamp (rentals rarely have enough overhead light)
- [ ] Rug sized to the seating area
- [ ] Curtains on tension or adhesive-hook rods
- [ ] TV stand or media shelf
- [ ] Surge-protector power strip
- [ ] Throw blanket and a couple of cushions
- [ ] Storage baskets for remotes, chargers and clutter

Entryway

- [ ] Over-the-door or adhesive hooks for coats and bags
- [ ] Shoe tray or slim shoe rack
- [ ] Key dish or adhesive key hook
- [ ] Doormat
- [ ] A spot for umbrellas and reusable bags

Cleaning and laundry

- [ ] Vacuum, or a broom and dustpan
- [ ] Mop or spray mop
- [ ] All-purpose cleaner and glass cleaner
- [ ] Microfiber cloths
- [ ] Laundry detergent
- [ ] Folding drying rack
- [ ] Caddy or door rack to keep supplies in one place

Tools and safety

- [ ] Hammer, screwdriver set, pliers and an adjustable wrench
- [ ] Tape measure and a small level
- [ ] Flashlight and spare batteries
- [ ] Extension cord
- [ ] Folding step stool
- [ ] Assorted adhesive hooks and picture-hanging strips
- [ ] Felt furniture pads (they protect the floor and your deposit)
- [ ] Spare light bulbs
- [ ] Spackle and a putty knife for move-out touch-ups

Month two: make it yours

- [ ] Wall art hung with strips, not nails
- [ ] One or two easy plants
- [ ] A large mirror to bounce light around
- [ ] Peel-and-stick touches the lease allows
- [ ] Warm bulbs and a second lamp for the evening

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