



HUH vs. Private Market

Tips to avoid online scams in the private market during your housing search

HUH apartments are only leased through our applicant portal, which is linked on the home page of our www.huhousing.harvard.edu website. If you see an HUH apartment listing on an external site and would like to verify it with our staff, you can always reach out to leasing@harvard.edu for assistance.

The Off Campus Partners website, www.harvardhousingoffcampus.com, is a site for private market listings to be advertised to the Harvard community. While this can be a great place to get started to find an apartment in the private market, it's important that you know these listings are not managed, verified, endorsed, or affiliated with Harvard University Housing.

ALWAYS VERIFY WHO YOU ARE WORKING WITH

It is highly recommended that you take the precautions to verify external listings in the private market before engaging in any lease agreements or payment exchanges.

FOR EXAMPLE:

A private rental agent can only charge a finder's fee if they are a licensed real estate broker or salesperson. Additionally, the broker must provide a written notice to prospective tenants with information about the fee, and whether or not it is paid if a tenancy is not created. If the rental agent is also the landlord, the law may prohibit them from charging a finder's fee. That's why it's important to verify if they are a licensed rental agent – you can check for yourself online at: www.mass.gov/how-to/check-a-professional-license

COMMON RED FLAGS

- The advertised price is much lower than that of similar properties.
- Ads for the property have grammatical and spelling errors, or overuse capital letters.
- You can only work with an agent. The agent says that the owner is too busy, out of the country, or otherwise unavailable to handle the rental.
- The owner or agent requires you to sign the lease before you can verify the rental property.
- The owner or agent is unable to verify the home or apartment through ownership documentation, a valid Google Maps address, or charges you a fee to view it.
- The owner or agent uses high-pressure sales tactics. They may urge you to make a payment quickly before someone else gets the property.

ACTIONS TO AVOID

- Do not wire money as a deposit or payment for the first and last month's rent. Wiring money is the same as giving cash; you can't get a refund, even if you find out the offer was a fraud.
- Do not give in to high-pressure sales tactics.
- Do not give your personal information or Social Security number to a property owner without verifying their identity.
- Do not rent a property that you are unable to legally verify before signing the lease agreement.
- Do not pay a security deposit, fee, or first month's rent before you've signed a lease.