

Postdoc Off-Campus Housing Resources

Section 1

1. 1 Introduction

The vast majority of Mount Sinai postdocs live on-campus for the first 3 years of their employment. After that period they have to look for their off-campus options. As PEC committee we understand that it can be a hectic task to find a place in New York City that best fits the criteria of a postdoc. We also realize that apartment hunting can be even more challenging for those who are not US citizens or for those who search from outside the US.

Therefore, the goal of this page is to provide Practical resources to postdocs that are leaving the Mount Sinai housing, including websites, information on neighborhoods, potential roommates and more in order to help you develop your best off-campus housing strategy.

1. 2 Legal rights

Before you decide which apartment you are going to choose we advise you to have a look at your legal rights as a tenant in NYC. Those are explained in the following link:
<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/renters/tenants-rights.page>.

Importantly, if you have children under the age of six, you need to ask your landlord whether the apartment complies with the Lead Law. Peeling lead-based paint is the most common cause of childhood lead poisoning of young children:
<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/renters/important-safety-issues-lead-based-paint.page>

Section 2

2.1 Introduction to NYC

The curbed New York has a good **introduction article** on how to finding a place in NYC, which also includes some information about the documents you might need: <https://ny.curbed.com/2017/9/1/16081256/apartments-new-york-search-tips>

In this link you will also find information about the **individual neighborhoods in NYC**: <https://bigapplegreeter.org/neighborhood-information-profiles/>

Disclaimer: Before we suggest specific websites to help you find off-campus housing, we urge you to stay vigilant and keep on the lookout for potential housing scams. This applies especially to persons coming from overseas. In particular, many postdocs successfully use Craigslist to find housing in the US; unfortunately, this website is also highly vulnerable to fraud. Please see the following links for more information: <https://www.usa.gov/housing-scams>
<https://www.thespruce.com/apartment-rental-scam-recognize-and-avoid-155640>

Finally, many people work with a real estate agent, but you must pay a **“broker fee”** for their services. The fee varies by company and situation; in general, it is similar to the cost of rent for one month.

Section 3

3.1 List of long-term housing websites

In the following section you will find a comprehensive list of recommended rental websites to aid your next apartment hunt.

Disclaimer: The goal of the following list is not to advertise any site. We have simply put together a list of sites that various postdocs have already used in order to assist with your search.

3.1.1 Apartments

Sites with no fee apartments

www.nybits.com

www.nakedapartments.com

www.streeteasy.com

Sites with specific no fee letting agents

www.swmanagement.com

www.eberhartbros.com

www.lclemle.com

www.paleymanagement.com

www.glenwoodnyc.com

www.bettinaequities.com

3.1.2 Rooms

https://www.nakedapartments.com/nyc/rooms-for-rent-manhattan?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIoYXnjqD71wIVQkwNCh3E0QQEEAAYAAAEgLmUPD_BwE

<https://www.spareroom.com/rooms-for-rent/nyc>

https://www.trulia.com/for_rent/New_York,NY/ROOM_FOR_RENT_type/

3.2 List of short-term housing websites

“Short-term” generally refers to housing for a period less than one year, but can also mean a few days. Many of the long-term websites above also include short-term housing options. Below are additional links

- **AirBnB: *Room or apartment rental for days, weeks, or months***
<https://www.airbnb.com/>
- **Sabbatical Homes: *Academic community resource for home exchange, home rental, house sitting and sharing opportunities, in addition to finding home tenants and sitters.***

<https://www.sabbaticalhomes.com/Home-Exchange-City-New-York-State-New-York-Country-United-States-of-America-US>

3.3 Social media listings

Below is an incomplete list of Facebook groups, which are open to everyone, where you can (1) post what kind of place you are looking for and (2) search for individually-posted room openings.

- “Gypsy Housing” group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/NYC.BK.Apartments/>

- “Roomi” group:

https://www.facebook.com/RoomiApp/?hc_ref=ARReV82XKLGutBe0JE5o-OAKcyDlBIEkhLgoW3Y_ZCWX0EkJoSBIVraRet14iGHWAvE&fref=nf

3.4 Phone Apps

Section 4

Below are some pieces of information you might want to include when responding to a housing post. Also keep in mind who you will be speaking with, e.g., landlord, potential housemate, outgoing tenant, real estate agent etc. (Be sure to mention you're going to start a postdoc! Postdocs are often perceived as highly responsible, thus desirable tenants).

First email

- ✓ Bio information: age, gender, nationality
- ✓ Workplace info: job location, start date, contract length, schedule
- ✓ Education background
- ✓ Hobbies and interests
- ✓ Experience living in shared spaces
- ✓ What you are looking for in roommates/housemates
- ✓ Include basic contact information

Subsequent email

- ✓ "It was nice meeting you", "Thank you for your time"
- ✓ Logistical info: furniture, move-in timeline

Section 5

Suggested Questions for Landlords:

- Do you take checks from all tenants in the apartment/house, or just one check from the group?
- How much is the security deposit and what should I do to receive as much of my deposit back as possible?
- What utilities are included in rent? If none, what is an estimate of monthly cost?
- Is Wifi available? If not, what is the estimated cost?
- How many parking places are available to the apartment and is there a monthly charge? Will I have to sign a parking contract for 12 months?
- If the last month of the lease is not a complete month, will the rent be prorated?
- If there is not a washer/dryer in the unit, where is the laundry facility? If there is a laundry room, is it coin-op or is there an electronic payment system? How many washers/dryers are in the laundry room?
- Is there a maintenance person on call 24/7? What is the emergency phone number?
- Is there any security in the building or in the area? How does security differ on weekdays and weekends? During holidays/breaks?
- Are there exterior lights and are they working?
- When will I be expected to renew the lease?
- For a house – who is responsible for grass cutting and snow removal?
- Do all bedrooms have smoke detectors? Are they hard wired or battery operated?
- Does the house/complex have a sprinkler system? Who pays for it?
- How much is the sublet fee? What is the sublet process?
- If no one is in the apartment for the summer, can the utilities be turned off?
- Where is the nearest bus stop?

Section 6

House Condition Checklist

Housing Search Comparison	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3
Location:			
How accessible is it to work?			
Will you have convenient access to necessary conveniences (grocery store, shops, parking, parks and recreation)?			
Layout: Is the space adequate for your needs?			
Bathrooms (number, size, shower/tub/closet?)			
Bedrooms (number, size, layout?)			
Closets (location and size?)			
Storage Space (location and size?)			
Laundry Facilities (location, cost?)			
Kitchen Appliances (what is provided?)			
Are pets allowed?			
Condition:			
Is the carpet or flooring in good condition?			
Does the thermostat work properly? Test both heating and air conditioning.			
Do all faucets work properly? Check the hot and cold settings.			
Do all light fixtures work properly?			
Cost & Lease Information:			
How much is the monthly rent?			
Are any utilities included in the rent? What is the average cost of utilities?			
What are the move-in/move-out fees and deposits required?			
Are sublets allowed and, if so, is there a fee?			
When does the lease begin and end?			
What are the fees associated with terminating the lease early?			
When do you have to give notice to renew or move out?			

Safety and Security			
Check windows and locks to make sure they work properly. Are there bug screens on the windows?			
Check the locks in the apartment. Are there locks on the bedroom doors? (a possible consideration if you are living with roommates)			
Do all smoke detectors work properly? Who is responsible for changing batteries in the detectors?			
Do all doors completely close and lock?			
What is the feedback from current tenants? (if possible)			

Section 7

How to find the right roommate

In major US cities, it is common and more affordable to share a house or an apartment with other people. Although choosing a roommate isn't exactly as important a decision as choosing a PI, but the decision has similar ramifications in the short term: The way you live, work, eat, relax, and plan financially can be directly affected by the person with whom you live.

Therefore, we have created a collection of potential questions to ask:

20 QUESTIONS TO ASK A POTENTIAL ROOMMATE

What do you do for a living?	How do you feel about friends hanging out... or staying for a few days?
What's your schedule like?	Do you smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs?
How do you think we should handle buying shared supplies like toilet paper, garbage bags, etc.?	How do you envision the whole kitchen / refrigerator / meals thing working? How do you think we should handle the chores, like cleaning the common areas and washing the dishes?
What do you think is the best way to handle paying the rent and utilities?	Which room are you interested in?
Do you have a way to pay for unexpected expenses or emergencies?	What are challenges you've faced in past living situations?
Have you lived with a roommate before? What did you like/dislike about that experience? Why are you leaving your current place?	Do you like the apartment temperature more on the chilly or warm side? Or Do you like to keep the windows open?
Do You Have A Pet? 	What's on your arrest record?
Are you allergic to anything?	How do you relax at home in your free time?
How do you like to eat and how will food be shared?	What are you looking for in a roommate?
Will you be having overnight guests? (Are you in a relationship, and if so, how often do you see each other? What do you like to do together?)	Anything else you'd like to ask me, know about you?

Section 8

8 Weeks Before

- ☐ Walk through every room decide what to take to your new home. Make a list of “keep” items that will require special packing or extra insurance coverage.
- ☐ Donate items you no longer want or host a yard sale.
- ☐ Research moving companies.
- ☐ Contact your children’s school. Notify the school that you’re moving and obtain copies of your children’s records. Contact new schools for enrollment and record-transfer procedures.

4 Weeks Before

- ☐ Make travel arrangements. Book hotel stays if you’ll need lodging on the road or before your new home’s ready; book any necessary flights.
- ☐ Order packing supplies. Purchase standard boxes in various sizes; bubble wrap; packing paper; packing tape; and specialty containers, such as wardrobe and dish-pack boxes.
- ☐ Contact your doctors. Obtain copies of medical records for all family members, or have the records sent to your new physicians.
- ☐ Find out whether your move necessitates changes in your medical, dental, vehicle or personal property insurance.

2 Weeks Before

- ☐ Start packing. Begin with items you use only rarely or seasonal, save items you use frequently until just before moving day.
- ☐ Label, label, label. Mark each box with its contents and the room it’s destined for in the new house.
- ☐ Inventory. Keep a running list of each packed box, its contents and what room it belongs in. Later, you can match this against your moving company’s inventory sheet.
- ☐ Ensure that all of your belongings can make it out of your old home and into your new one so there are no surprises on moving day.
- ☐ Update your computer. Download any necessary software updates and ensure that all of your files and photos are backed up to an online cloud storage service or an external hard drive that you’ll carry with you.
- ☐ Make arrangements for pets. Book a pet sitter or care facility for moving day

1 Week Before

- ☐ Contact the moving company and double-check your plans. Make sure the insurance in place is enough to cover your valuables.
- ☐ Clear out. Empty out storage units, safe deposit boxes and any other off-site storage spots.
- ☐ Take time off. Evaluate how many work days you’ll need to make the move, and then request time off from your employer.

2 Days Before

- ☐ Confirm the movers ... again. Triple-check arrangements with the moving company. Verify how much you'll owe on moving day, and what forms of payment are accepted. Ask for a cellphone number for the day-of contact and confirm the crew's arrival time. Prepare written directions to your new home and hand them to the movers on moving day.
- ☐ Get the keys. Arrange to receive the keys to your new home or schedule the realtor or landlord to meet you on moving day.
- ☐ Donate food. If you'd rather move fewer boxes, donate nonperishables to a local food pantry.
- ☐ Disassemble furniture. Place screws, brackets and fasteners in a small plastic storage bag, and label it. Even better: Tape the bag to the furniture's underside.

Moving Day

Old House

- ☐ Say goodbye. Take time to say a proper "so long" to your old house before things get hectic. Walk through the house recalling fond memories you have, and talk about what fun you'll create in your new home.
- ☐ Meet the movers. Greet the moving crew and ensure that all workers are representatives of the moving company you hired. Be sure the moving truck's U.S. Department of Transportation license number is the same as the number on your estimate.
- ☐ Supervise the load-in. Assign a helper to watch the moving crew stack your belongings inside the truck, keeping an eye out for damage.
- ☐ Clean the old house. Tidy up rooms as the moving crew empties them, or consider hiring a cleaning service.
- ☐ Keep valuables with you.
- ☐ Make a final walk-through. Lock your old home's windows and doors, turn off lights and ceiling fans and make sure nothing's left before you leave for good.

New House

- ☐ Show the moving crew around. Point out specific rooms so boxes end up where they belong.
- ☐ Watch for damage and missing items. Your movers will make an inventory sheet, called the "bill of lading," that notes the condition of your items, including damage to any boxes or furniture.
- ☐ Pay the movers.
- ☐ Before the movers leave, sign the inventory sheet — and make sure the mover in charge signs it, too. Get a copy for your records.
- ☐ Do an initial clean of your new place.
- ☐ Assemble furniture and start unpacking. If you notice any damage to your boxes, set them aside until the moving company can return to inspect them. Take photos of the damage for your records.

Section 9

Credit score

You should be aware that the landlords will most likely run a screen for their potential tenants background, credit score and eviction reports. You should check what is the minimum credit score they will accept (for some landlords the minimum credit score on decent housing is about 550)

Section 10

Moving Companies

- <https://nycgreatmovers.com/his>
- **Roadway Moving:** <https://www.roadwaymoving.com/> For Mount Sinai employees 10% discount on both Local and Long Distance moves with the referral code MOUNTSINAI.
- **FlatRate Moving®:** <https://www.flatrate.com/> All-inclusive, one-price move. Dedicated rates for Mount Sinai employees.
- **Scanio Moving & Storage:** <https://www.scaniomoving.com/> 10% discount on local moves and 5% discount on long distance moves for Mount Sinai employees

This a useful site to get information about moving companies:

<https://www.homeadvisor.com/cost/storage-and-organization/hire-a-moving-service/>

Section 11

Furniture

Whether you are looking to buy new or used furniture there are many options available. Keep also in mind that Sinai Postdocs often shell stuff through the postdoc mailing list. Most of them are in very competitive prices.

New Furniture

To create a space you will love to live with new furniture please search online or go to some local stores

Used Furniture

You can find online a huge variety of used furniture. Keep also in mind that Sinai Postdocs often shell stuff through the postdoc mailing list. Most of them are in very competitive prices.

Note: While purchasing used furniture is good for the environment, it is also creates the potential for inviting bedbugs into your home. We urge you to use extreme caution if purchasing used bedding or furniture, especially futons, couches and upholstered chairs. Should you find a bedbug once furniture is in your unit, please call the Property Management Office immediately. Do not attempt to dispose of the furniture on your own.

Furniture Rentals

There are many local companies that rent furniture. Please search online to see which one best fits your needs.