

Commuter Connections

A Guide to Off-Campus Housing



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How do I get started?

Have you started thinking about your housing search for the upcoming year? The Department of Residence Life can help, not only with the resources to live on campus, but also with assisting you in your search for off-campus accommodations too! During peak seasons it is encouraged that you make an appointment with the Assistant Director for Off-Campus Housing. Our hours of operations are Monday- Friday 9-5. We will be able to help you find information in identifying your specific housing needs. With a variety of resources, such as website information, summer housing events, maps, and other useful information, the office is a great resource to help you begin your search.

Where should I live?

It is important to think about location when living off-campus. Do you want to be near campus? Will transportation be a problem? Here are some questions to ask yourself when looking into off-campus housing. You should choose a neighborhood that can best accommodate your needs and lifestyle. Many students live within walking distance to the university others may live off of the commuter rail and closer to the city. The three main streets that are near campus include South Street, Main Street, and Moody Street. These three streets form a triangle and the majority of Brandeis University students live within or around the triangle. If you have received a map of Waltham, it is helpful to outline these streets in order to figure out the proximity of potential apartments to the university. Where you live depends on your individual needs including your specific budget.

- Are stores located conveniently to your home?
- How many bedrooms are there?
- What is the cost of the rent per person?
- What type of heat (oil, gas, electric) does it use? Is heat included in the price of rent?
- Where is the house located? How safe is the neighborhood?
- What appliances/amenities are included with the house?
- Is there adequate parking?
- Who do you call in case of an emergency?
- What is the length of the lease? Are there fees involved?

What should my budget be?

Waltham is one of the more affordable suburbs in the greater Boston area. There are several large apartment complexes in Waltham and apartments are also located in multifamily houses or smaller apartment buildings. A typical apartment in this area is either a two story or three story home that has two or three apartments stacked on top of each other. When examining what your budget should be you should think about heat and other utility bills. Later in this booklet all local utility companies are listed, before you move in you can call the specific company to get a yearly average of utility costs. It is especially important to take heat into considerations as it is cold in Waltham and heating costs can be expensive in the winter.

Waltham has an excellent choice in restaurants, shops, an independent movie theatre and affordable price. Public transportation affords easy access to local shopping and cultural events as well as access to Cambridge and Boston. Undergraduates typically live within walking distance to campus. A good number of graduate students live either

in Waltham or the Porter Square, Cambridge and Somerville areas. These areas have large student populations, many local services, and are easily accessible to Brandeis and downtown Boston without a car.

If you have a car, you have greater flexibility because you will not be dependent upon renting in towns with access to public transportation. With a sticker purchased from Brandeis University, you can park in designated lots on campus (approx. \$60 for the year). You can purchase a parking pass from the Office of Public Safety when you arrive to campus. However, please be forewarned, that the greater Boston area is not very car friendly. Be sure to inquire about parking when considering any apartment.



Porter Square, located about one and half miles outside of Harvard Square, is popular with graduate students it is approximately fifteen minutes away from Brandeis and five minutes away from Downtown Boston by commuter train. The commuter train runs regularly from Porter Square to the Brandeis/Roberts Station. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) subway trains also run out of Porter Square, to Boston and Cambridge. It is important to think about your first year at Brandeis and living off-campus if you are considering living off of the commuter rail. Some things to think about include what time will your classes meet? What are your study habits and will you need frequent access to the library? Keep in mind the commuter rail has limited running times, if you know you study late at night, the train might limit the amount of time you can spend on campus.

Brandeis is located on the Fitchburg/Acton Commuter Rail train line at the Brandeis/Roberts stop. Heading towards Boston, this train stops in downtown Waltham, Waverley Square, Belmont Center, and Porter Square. The end of the line is Boston at North Station. Many Brandeis students live in the Somerville and Cambridge areas and commute via train. There is an MBTA bus stop in front of the main entrance to Brandeis on South Street which connects with other bus lines that go throughout Waltham, Belmont, Watertown, Cambridge and Boston. Visit <http://www.mbta.com> for most train and bus transportation schedules and maps.

Typical Rental Rates (monthly)

# of Bedrooms	Boston	Waltham	Cambridge
1	\$900-\$1300	\$850-\$1200	\$900-\$1200
2	\$1300-\$1700	\$1100-\$1600	\$1200-\$1700
3	\$2000-\$3000	\$1700-\$2000	\$1700-\$2000

Before you begin making calls to realtors or landlords it is advisable to figure out how much you want and can afford to spend on housing. You should create a budget for yourself including rent, utilities, books, transportation, and other expenses that might arise during the year.

Other costs that you may have to pay include first month's rent, a security deposit of one month's rent, and a last month's rent equal to one month. If you find your apartment through a realtor you may also have to pay a realtor fee less than or equal to one month's rent.



Example

If your portion of the rent is \$675.00:

1st month's rent \$675.00

Last month's rent \$675.00

Security Deposit \$675.00

Your total needed to secure the apartment would be $\$675.00 \times 3 =$
\$2025.00.

Remember this is an estimate of total fees needed to secure an apartment some fees are negotiable depending on the landlord and situation. Please be prepared with funds to secure an apartment.

Need help finding a roommate?

Sometimes it is too expensive to live by yourself in the Boston Metro area.

Having a roommate can cut costs dramatically and also help keep you connected to campus events and activities.

If you have an apartment to share or if you would like to find a roommate to share an apartment with, please contact our office by going to www.brandeis.edu/reslife to find out how to list your information.

How do I choose a roommate?

Living with a roommate can be one of the most difficult and rewarding experiences while in school. The key to living with someone is to remember that everyone has the right to live in a safe, clean, and healthy situation which allows them to pursue academic and personal endeavors. With that in mind, we have included some suggestions in hopes that your experience leads to a successful, healthy roommate relationship.

- Create a roommate contract when you move in with your roommates. It can help your roommates and you remember and clarify what was discussed and agreed upon. Take your time to find the right situation.
- Be honest and open about your needs, concerns and expectations.
- Get to know the person before you pass judgment.
- Share all the basic information, like hometown, major, family, and interests.
- Discuss how you would set the apartment up and then do it together.
- Discuss what is shareable (food, computer, appliances, etc).
- When a problem arises talk about it with that person first.
- Establish guidelines about the following:
 - Cleanliness, cooking and housework
 - Study time, work schedules, privacy and guests
 - Financial stability: bills, rent, food and phone

Remember it is important to be as open and honest about who you are. It is also important to think about using a roommate contract. For samples please visit our office or the forms section of our website.

Subletting

You should be aware that majority of leases are for 12 months. If you are signing a 12 month lease you should be

aware of the sublet section of your lease. Many leases will be very clear in what sublet policy is for that apartment. Subletting works in two ways. You may be able to lease all or part of the leased premises to another person and retain some right to the original lease. The second option is you may relinquish your portion of the lease completely to the person you sublet to. In this situation the person you sublet to would pay the landlord directly. You must check with the landlord, in most cases, the lease will have a provision for subletting with their permission. The original tenant is responsible for the actions of the sub-tenant. To avoid any confusion, enter into an arrangement carefully and obtain a written sub-lease.

Local realtors

A realtor can help you locate accommodations that a landlord has listed with them. You may be required to sign a contract that holds you responsible for payment of the an agent's fee. This fee should be paid only after you have actually signed a lease for an apartment referred to you by that agent. Some agents do require the fee, deposit, and initial rent deposit upon application for a specific apartment. If this is required, do not relinquish money unless you are certain you want the apartment if the application is approved. Many landlords require initial payments of first and last month's rent and a security deposit. If a realtor helps you find an apartment, expect to be charged a fee equal to one month's rent (i.e. if one month's rent is \$600, expect to put down \$2400 for the apartment).

For more information in regards to leases and pricing, contact the Office of Residence Life at offcampus@brandeis.edu.

The Nuts and Bolts

A lease is a "legally binding contract between a tenant and a landlord." Any terms or conditions not prohibited by law may be included in the agreement. If either party fails to abide by the terms of the lease, the offended party may be entitled to certain concessions, including the possibility of termination of the agreement. It is strongly advisable to obtain everything in writing, including your lease.

Please carefully review all the terms of a lease or tenancy at will agreement. Discuss any provisions or special circumstances before signing the lease. Any item that may need further clarification should be discussed before signing. Every party involved should have and keep a copy of the signed lease agreement.

Students should utilize the Office of Residence life when reviewing the terms of your lease. A guide to tenant's Rights and Responsibilities is also available at on the Massachusetts Attorney General's website under the Housing section.

Some important Definitions:

- **Common Areas:** All exterior and interior areas contiguous to a rental unit or units but not within the aforementioned nor under tenant control by mutual consent.
- **Dwelling:** a structure or part thereof consisting of one or more units and used as a household for living purposes.
- **Household:** a family and/or one or more unrelated persons who share the same dwelling unit.
- **Landlord:** the owner or lessor of a given dwelling unit or any person authorized to manage or otherwise per-

- form the owner's or lessor's obligations on his/her behalf.
- **Owner:** one or more persons holding legal title to a dwelling or exclusive rights to use or administer the same. Term also applies to a mortgagee, such as a bank, which has taken the legal possession of a dwelling.
- **Rental Agreement:** an oral or written lease agreement establishing certain terms, conditions, rules, and regulations concerning the use and occupancy of a dwelling unit.
- **Security Deposit:** a deposit of money required by a landlord from a tenant that must be returned within thirty days after a tenant vacates a unit unless the unit is damaged or back rent is owed. In either of these cases an appropriate deduction is made and the remainder, 5 percent interest and an itemized listing of deductions, must be sent to the tenant.
- **Tenant:** any person or head of household occupying a dwelling for living purposes who assumes responsibility by making a rental agreement with the landlord; plus those other occupants of the unit making up the tenant's household at the time such agreement is made or at any time thereafter with the landlord.



Again please carefully read over all provisions in the lease, including the sublet section if you are planning on staying for less than 12 months. Be sure to keep a copy signed by all parties. You should save all receipts, records, and correspondence with your roommates and landlord until you have moved out of the apartment and your security deposit has been returned. Do not sign a lease that does not have all of the information filled in especially the payment schedule, price, contract length, and any other things you have agreed upon ahead of time.

Now you are in the apartment what to do?

The Office of Residence Life is continually looking for ways in which to make living off-campus easier for our students so that they can focus on their learning experience. Some of the programs we offer are:

Mediation

Not everyone is a great communicator, so when necessary, the Assistant Director of Residence Life for Off-Campus Housing will work with students to get the lines of communication flowing and to collaborate on creating a roommate contract that is manageable and realistic. There are many resources available to our students both on campus and off-campus. The first step is to check in with the Office of Residence Life to discuss the situation.

We offer mediation programs for roommates and tenant/landlord disputes. Although, we cannot offer extensive legal advice, we can guide you through effective communication strategies and resolution of the problem.

Tenants' rights workshops

Being a tenant and a good neighbor comes with certain rights and responsibilities. Know what your rights are before you sign a lease or confront a landlord. The Office of Residence Life offers multiple opportunities to attend workshops and meet with experts.

Getting Started in your new home: Here are some useful numbers to get you started.

Keyspan (gas)

Customer Service: 800-539-7726

Emergency Gas Safety: 800-233-5325 (24 hours)

www.keyspanenergy.com

Verizon (telephone, internet)

Customer Service: 800-870-9999

www.verizon.com

NSTAR (electric)

Customer Service: 800-592-2000

www.nstaronline.com

Comcast (cable, internet)

Customer Service and Sales: 800-266-2278

www.comcast.com

MBTA

(Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority)

For information on subway, bus,
commuter rail schedule, maps, and fares.

Customer Service: 617-222-5218

www.mbta.com

Need to sublet your apartment?

The Office of Residence Life offers many workshops on 'How to Sublet Your Apartment.' The workshops are free and open to all. For those of you who are living off-campus and thinking about studying abroad, this workshop would be beneficial.

Get Connected/Stay Connected

Typically, the day after you move into your apartment is when you realize that you are not connected - something is missing. You may need contact information for a utility company, a campus card, a locker, and maybe even a student ID card. We host a "Get Connected" social to connect you to each other, to various offices around campus, and to the services that Brandeis has to offer you. Look for dates and times in your student handbook.

In addition, the Office of Residence Life has a "Stay Connected" information table located in the Commuter Student Lounge in the Shapiro Campus Center on a regular basis to provide you with all the vital resources you need to be successful. Have questions? Need Answers? Not sure how to connect? Stop by and see us!

How to get involved

The Office of Residence Life cosponsors many events with different groups and departments around campus. The office sends out emails to commuter students and frequently asks for their input as well as ideas for future programs. Some of our programs were generated by feedback from parents and students! If you have program ideas, please send them to offcampus@brandeis.edu.

For undergraduates the commuter student lounge on the 3rd floor in the Shapiro Campus Center is also a great way to meet other commuter students or just take a break in between classes. For graduate students you can stop by the Graduate Student Center located in the Kutz building. At both locations you will have access to computers, tv, and other helpful resources.

Moving In/ and Out

You always want to plan ahead for moving. Listed are a few reminders before moving in and moving out. If you have used furniture for sale or you would like to purchase used furniture, please go to www.my.brandeis.edu.

Before moving in:

- Do not move into an apartment if the condition is unacceptable.
- Arrange utilities before you move in. Try to set up phone lines and/or cable in advance.
- You need to display your name on the mailbox to receive your mail.
- It is better to ask the landlord or neighbors about the trash disposal schedule before you throw away your garbage.

Before moving out:

- You must give a 30-day notice to your landlord if you are planning to move out, even if your lease expires.
- Before you move out, be sure to clean your apartment thoroughly. You can be charged for additional cleaning if the condition of the apartment does not meet requirements.
- Make an appointment with your landlord and jointly inspect the apartment. The security deposit may not be refunded in full if there is any damage in the apartment. Be sure to return the keys to the landlord.
- Change your address with school and local post office.

Being a good neighbor

The neighborhoods in the Waltham area are made up of a tight knit group of residents, business owners, and students that all work hard to create a sense of community. As a student at Brandeis you are expected to act responsibly as a community member. Many areas have active neighborhood associations as well as neighborhood watch groups in relation with the Waltham Police Department. Brandeis encourages students to become active positive members of the community at large and in which they live.

Steps to being a good neighbor

Be neighborly; it is not required that you introduce yourself to your neighbors, but being friendly helps in building relationships.



Simple gestures in the community will provide for a more comfortable setting and a pleasant experience.

Observe reasonable hours for noisy activities in order to remain supportive to being a good neighbor. Remember buildings are older and noise travels, as well as the proximity of buildings to one another.

Local accommodations

Marriot Hotel Newton
2345 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, MA 02466
617-969-1000

Holiday Inn Express
385 Winter Street Waltham, MA 02451
781-890-2800

The Westin Hotel Waltham
70 Third Avenue Waltham MA, 02451
781-290-5600

Doubletree Guest Suites
550 Winter Street Waltham, MA 02451
781-890-9097

Alternative Housing Arrangements

Friendly Crossways:
247 Littleton Country Road Harvard, MA 01451
978-456-9386 Website: www.friendlycrossways.com
Provides reasonable rates for short term accommodations.

Student Housing Exchange: Offers students the opportunity to live with a Boston area family, receiving room and board at no charge in exchange for 15-18 hours of work per week of household services, babysitting, light household chores, cooking, homework supervision.
617-926-4800 Website: www.studenthousingex.com

Global Immersions Inc.:
102 Marshall Street Watertown, MA 02472
Provides home-based housing placement services for all lengths of stay. (fee charged)
888-924-2712 Website: www.globalimmersions.com

Boston Homestay Inc.:
48 Taylor Street Needham, MA 02494
A homestay placement service for international students and professionals. (fee charged)
781-449-9733 Website: www.bostonhomestay.co





Disclaimer: The Department of Residence Life for Off-Campus Housing provides information to Brandeis University students as a courtesy service to help with finding suitable housing for students attending the university. The information is for the use of Brandeis University students and is only updated periodically. Brandeis University accepts no responsibility for the reliability of the information provided or those listing with the Department. Contact with persons listed herein will be conducted independently of the University. Brandeis University will not be involved in any negotiations between you (the leaseholder) and any landlord, property owner, student, prospective student or realtor.