

HARVARD COLLEGE



Off-Campus Housing Resources

Securing an apartment in the Cambridge area can be time consuming and it is important to allow yourself sufficient time to find an accommodation. *It is critical that off-campus housing is secured before arriving at Harvard.* Expect to invest substantial time and effort in your housing search and begin immediately. This is especially critical for Spring Term students. Below are some resources you may find helpful in securing off-campus housing. Please recall that all these resources are provided to aid you in your housing search, but **Harvard does not endorse any particular agency or service, and you must therefore conduct your housing search at your own risk. Be wary of scams, which have increased in recent years.** On-campus housing is not available to VUS under any circumstances for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Harvard University Housing (HUH) Office

Harvard Campus Service Center, Holyoke Center, 8th Floor
1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138
Email: huhousing@harvard.edu
Phone: 617-496-7827 or 800-252-5020 / Fax: 617-496-8278

Although HUH is not able to secure an off-campus housing placement for students, they do provide a number of online resources and can answer questions that are common for students who will be new to the Cambridge area (e.g., What residential areas are close to the mass transit system? What locations are within walking distance to Harvard Yard? What is a reasonable rental rate? etc.) The Housing Office at the Harvard Campus Service Center is open Monday — Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Eastern Standard Time or Eastern Daylight Time, as applicable. Visiting Undergraduate Students can use the Harvard University affiliate database of private market rentals and sublets. Landlords and real estate agents can also access this site to post their apartment, room, and sublet listings. This website can be accessed at:

<https://www.harvardhousingoffcampus.com/>

Additional Resources:

In addition to using the HUH website, some students use Craigslist: <http://boston.craigslist.org> Craigslist has a large range of choices, but **please be cautious in using the website** because anyone can post an advertisement and there is no built-in protection against false information. Students have been scammed using this service. Try to get to know your potential landlord or roommate, and make sure to see photos.

Some VUS have found it helpful to work with real estate agents, although an agent will often charge a substantial fee. While Harvard does not work with or endorse any specific agencies, you can find agencies by googling "Cambridge real estate agents." If you find an apartment ad on Craigslist that appeals to you, you can also contact the agent responsible and ask them to help with your search.

For helpful advice about the off-campus housing search and living in the Boston area, please see the Harvard International Office website sections under "Housing": <http://www.hio.harvard.edu/housing>

Additional Housing Websites for short-term accommodations are located at the end of this document.

General Guidelines

Since housing in Cambridge and Boston is expensive, you may wish to consider sharing an apartment or house with roommates. It is sometimes easier and less expensive to find housing as a subletter, since there are many sublet rooms available, and you can avoid paying some rental fees. Many students have found it convenient to live within walking distance of the Harvard campus or to find housing near the Red Line T (subway), which goes directly to Harvard Square. Most apartments come “unfurnished” and you will need to therefore invest additional time and expense finding furnishings such as a bed, couches, tables, desks, etc. Unless otherwise noted most apartments do come with a refrigerator and a stove. When you are performing your housing search you may therefore wish to enquire about what furnishings (if any) come with an apartment and if any “utilities” such as heat, gas, and internet are included. Ordinarily, water is included but electricity, internet, and gas are not. Some units, however, advertise as “utilities included” which is a point you will want to ask for specific clarity about—which specific utilities are included?

Housing Locations in the Harvard Area:

Cambridge and the neighboring town of Somerville are divided into districts called “squares.” The Squares are main areas with shopping, restaurants, and public transportation.

Besides Harvard Square, here are some other convenient areas in Cambridge and Somerville:

- Porter Square and Central Square are in walking distance from Harvard and also have Red Line T stops.
- Inman Square and Union Square are in walking distance and have bus connections to Harvard (no T stop). These two Squares have cheaper, more affordable housing, with many shops and restaurants nearby.
- Davis Square (Tufts University) and Kendall Square (M.I.T.) are further away, but they are on the Red Line T and near other universities.
- Allston is just over the river in Boston, and may be closer for students taking certain science courses at the Science and Engineering Center (SEC). There are MBTA buses servicing this area, the Harvard SEC and stadium shuttles are close to some residences, and it can be a reasonable walk.
- It is less convenient to live across the river in other parts of Boston, but you may choose to do so because you prefer a larger urban area.

Public Transportation:

You may find it useful to secure housing near public transportation. Several bus lines from the surrounding areas stop in Harvard Square. The Boston area’s subway system, commonly referred

to as the “T”, travels to Harvard Square on the red line route. The Harvard Square stop is between the MIT and Tufts University areas.

In general, other areas relatively close to Harvard and also near public transportation routes are Cambridge, Somerville, Allston, and Brighton. Many college students from area schools live in these areas.

For complete information, including schedules and routes, please visit the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority’s (MBTA) website at <https://www.mbta.com/>. Please note that Harvard College does not participate in the student discount program, although you may buy discounted passes directly from the MBTA.

Tips:

It is also recommended that you familiarize yourself with general terms often associated with renting an apartment:

A **Tenant with a Lease** is one who signs a lease to rent a particular apartment for a specified period of time. Under this tenancy, the landlord cannot increase your rent until the end of the lease, and cannot attempt to evict you before the end of your lease, unless you violate the lease agreement. You are legally obligated to pay your rent until the end of the lease. Leases in the area tend to be 1 year long and tend to start on June 1 or September 1. However, if you need or choose to move out before the end of the lease, in most circumstances the landlord has a duty to mitigate his/her loss by looking for another tenant to replace you. Some, but not all, leases will let you “sublet” the apartment to another person if you will not be able to occupy the apartment for the full lease period, but you would remain responsible for the costs if the subletter did not pay.

A **Tenant at Will** is one who occupies a rented apartment without a lease, but pays rent periodically (typically monthly). The agreement for the Tenancy at Will may be either written or verbal. Either the landlord or you may terminate this arrangement at any time by giving written notice of 30 days or one full rental period in advance, whichever is longer. No reason is required to terminate a Tenancy at Will. If your landlord wants to raise your rent, s/he must send you a proper legal notice terminating your tenancy, and then make you an offer to remain in the apartment for the increased rent.

Fees Associated with Renting an Apartment: It is common for a landlord to ask for a security deposit and first and last month’s rent at the time you sign the lease. A security deposit is usually equal to one month’s rent and is refundable in the event that the apartment is vacated in the same condition as it was when a tenant moves in. It is helpful to conduct a full inspection of your apartment when you move in and notify your landlord in writing if there are any conditions of damage (e.g., chipped paint, holes in wall, etc.) so that you are not held responsible at the time you move out. A landlord is required to keep your security deposit in an interest-bearing account and the interest is due to you with the return of the security deposit. It is also common for a landlord to ask for last month’s rent “up front” or at the time you sign the lease. In this case your last month’s rent will be paid ahead of time and you will not need to pay it again. **Please remember to always pay with a check, not cash. Some electronic forms of payment like Zelle and Paypal**

Friends and Family have no payment protections if you are a victim of fraud, you are encouraged to use an electronic payment option with fraud protection.

The following is a list of general questions that you should ask a landlord before you sign any type of document. Make sure that you fully understand any document you are signing.

- Are you providing a lease or a tenant at will contract?
- Are there any utilities included in the price of rent?
- Do you require a security deposit? Do you require first and last month's rent?
- Is a refrigerator included with this apartment?
- Are there washing machines and dryers (for clothing) in the building? If not, where is closest laundromat?
- Is this apartment on public transportation? If so, is it close to a bus stop or "T" stop?

The Description of Tenant and Rights and Responsibilities can be found on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' website: <https://www.mass.gov/renting-in-massachusetts>

Additional Short Term Housing Options (not endorsed or vetted by Harvard - updated for 2024-2025)

ESL Apartments

<http://esltownhouse.com/>

12 Hemenway Street Park Drive

Boston, MA 02115 Boston, MA 02115

857-250-2785 857-350-3556

Hosteling International Boston

<http://bostonhostel.org/>

19 Stuart Street

Boston, MA 02116

617-536-9455

888-464-4872

International Fellowship House

<http://www.ifhboston.org/>

386 Marlborough Street (Men Only)

Boston, MA 02116 Boston, MA 02115

617-267-0877

STARS of Boston

<https://www.starsofboston.com/>

1583 Beacon Street

Brookline, MA 02446

617-855-9576

info@starsofboston.com

J.E. Furnished Rentals Quincy
33 Furnace Avenue
Quincy, MA 02169
617-479-4110

The Upton
<https://theuptonboston.com/>
617-266-0011

Back Bay Suites
<http://www.backbaysuites.com/>
269 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, MA 02116
617-266-0071

Boston Homestay Inc.
<http://www.bostonhomestay.com/>
48 Taylor Street
Needham, MA 02494
781-449-9733

Our Home, Boston
<https://www.ourhomeboston.com/>
48 Taylor Street
857-302-0151

<https://www.sublet.com>

A sublet searching database, includes many cities, some listings are available for free, but many of them are not.

Bed and Breakfast Associates Bay Colony
<https://bostonextendedstay.com/>

9flats.com

Blueground
<https://www.theblueground.com/>