Recommendations before signing a residential lease

- Look for an apartment in a safe neighborhood.
- When discussing a lease with a potential landlord, you should insist that s/he show you the actual unit you may be renting, NOT a "model apartment."
- Ask current residents how they feel about the management of the complex. Be sure to ask if the landlord makes effective repairs quickly.
- Check around the complex for obvious maintenance problems.
- When you sign a lease, understand that it is a binding contract, and you will be responsible for rent until the end of the lease term. Moving out of town due to a new job, change in student status, etc., will not relieve you of this obligation.
- If the landlord makes verbal promises not reflected in the written lease, ask the landlord to put such promises in writing.
- Make sure that all blanks in the lease are filled out correctly.
- Keep a copy of the lease and any other documents you have signed.
- Obtain a Move-In Inventory form from the landlord—if the landlord says s/he doesn't have one, you may obtain the form from the UT Legal Services for Students office.
- Before you actually start putting your belongings in the apartment, thoroughly fill out the Move-In Inventory form, noting ALL damages/problems with the apartment that existed prior to your move-in. Additionally, take high-quality photographs of the entire apartment, paying particular attention to the damages/problems you noted on the Move-In Inventory Form.
- Provide copies of the Move-In Inventory Form and photographs to the landlord for his/her files. Have the landlord acknowledge receipt of these copies by asking him/her to sign and date the originals, which you will keep.

You must retain the original move-in inventory form and photographs. Do not trust the landlord to keep these documents for you.