

Off-Campus Housing Service “Leaving for Break” Checklist

Like many Rutgers students, you may leave your residence for winter, spring or summer break. To help ensure that your residence remains safe, use this checklist to assist you in taking some necessary precautions to safeguard your property and your possessions.

This document is intended as a guide for assessing measures that should be taken before leaving your home for an extended period of time, and is not all-inclusive. If you check “no” to any item, it could be an indication of an area in need of attention.

***Lock up:**Yes No

Make sure all of your windows and doors are locked. Basement windows are an easy target for break in, since they’re low and usually well hidden. In order to secure your residence, firmly wedge a piece of wood or a metal bar across windows. You can install a metal grate across windows, with the landlord’s written approval.

***Don’t let mail pile up:**Yes No

Ask a trusted neighbor or friend to retrieve your mail and paper for you when you’re gone or have the post office and paper carrier stop delivery.

***Enlist a caretaker:**Yes No

Have a trusted friend check on your house from time to time.

***Consider the electricity:**Yes No

If the power goes out while you are gone, you could come home to spoiled food and frozen pipes. It may be wise to have someone make checks on this for you while you’re away. You should also unplug major appliances, TV’s, computers, and all extension cords, to safeguard your belongings against power surges and to eliminate potential fire hazards.

***Turn off the hot water heater:** Yes No

Consider turning your hot water heater down or off while you are gone, to conserve energy.

***Pay your bills:**Yes No

Avoid any late fees by paying your bills before you leave or bringing them with you to pay by mail while you are away.

***Don’t forget your pets:**Yes No

If you have pets, make arrangements to have them looked after by a friend or take the pet with you.

***Clean up outside:**.....**Yes** **No**

Secure all trash cans and lawn furniture. A storm or animals can damage items left outside.

***Take out the trash:****Yes** **No**

Make sure all of the trash is taken out of the house to be picked up to discourage household pests from taking up residence. Empty ash trays and throw out food that might spoil while you're gone so that your place will be sweet-smelling upon your return.

***Protect your valuables:****Yes** **No**

Don't leave valuables where they can be seen from a window. If you don't want to hide everything, close your draperies or blinds. Make a valuables inventory and keep a record of your expensive and personally-significant items. It is also wise to keep pictures or a video of these possessions. This is helpful for both the police and the insurance agency, if you have a homeowner's policy or renter's insurance, to identify stolen goods.

***Check your appliances:****Yes** **No**

Make sure appliances like the dishwasher or washing machine are not running and that toilets have stopped filling. Never leave appliances, such as clothes dryers or air conditioners, running when you leave the house.

***Talk to your neighbors:****Yes** **No**

Let neighbors know your departure date and expected return date. This will insure that if neighbors see anyone entering your house, they will be sure to take note of something odd or call the police.

***Make the house look lived in:****Yes** **No**

If you can't install an alarm, it's a good idea to make the house look lived in to deter people from entering. One way to do this is to keep a radio playing and lights on. You can also use timers for these items so that, from the outside, it looks like someone is home.

When you get back, check the interior and exterior of the house to make sure that nothing has been disturbed. If you find any signs of a break-in, such as a door or window open, do not enter the house. Call the police and have them enter the house before you do.

After checking the house for security, restore services that have been discontinued. Plug in appliances and run water through every faucet to flush out lines and drains and make sure they work. While doing this, check for leaks. Also, let your neighbors or caretakers know you're home.

Rutgers Off-Campus Housing Service wishes you a safe and fun break!!