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UA12/2/1 Housing Guide

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Easing the transition to living off campus

By EMILY ULBER & MARIANNE HALE
diversions@chherald.com

Both of us took a partial leap into adulthood this year by deciding to rent houses off campus. Looking back, there are a few things we wished we’d known going into it. Here’s a bit of friendly advice to make your transition to off-campus housing go smoother.

Start early
Think about when you want to start your lease and start looking as far in advance as you can. Waiting until the last minute could leave you with some unneeded stress.

Look at classifieds, call realtors, check Craigslist and ask around. Chances are some of your friends might know places that will be up for rent soon.

Give yourself enough time to look at the house, meet the landlord and find reliable roommates.

Remember, it’s location, location, location
Get your priorities in order when it comes to location. Decide what’s more important: living within walking distance to campus or living somewhere cheaper. Know what you really want out of your future home’s location before you start looking.

Also, head to the local police department or look at local papers to see what kind of crime is happening in your would-be neighborhood. It’s not a bad idea to check out the National Sex Offender Registry at www.familywatchdog.us either.

Look out for indicators of road construction, too. You might not want to move into a construction zone.

Get to know your landlord
Does your landlord seem like the kind that will be “just dropping in” all the time? If you have wild parties, you might not want that.

On the other hand, if your landlord seems a bit hands-off, it might be harder to get in touch with them to come over and fix your broken oven.

So it’s important to get a sense of who this person is before you agree to rent a place.

Don’t be afraid to ask previous tenants about their experience with the landlord, either.

Hidden fees
If you’re living in a college-style apartment, your utilities and cable and Internet charges will likely be included with your monthly rent.

But if you’re renting a house, you’ll probably have to put down a deposit for rent and pay start-up fees for utilities, cable, Internet and gas, among other things. You might even have to set all of this up yourself, which will mean some time on the phone with Bowling Green Municipal Utilities, Insight and Atmos Energy.

Oh, and don’t wait until December to turn on your heat. Yes, it saves money, but you will also freeze.

Don’t forget the furniture
It could be up to you and your roommates to furnish your new home, which may seem like a daunting task.

First, make a list of what each of you already has. You’ll need to come up with a couch or two, beds for everyone, and things like a kitchen table, a coffee table and a microwave. And don’t forget about odds and ends like silverware, curtains, etc.

Once you figure out what you still need, divide up the remaining items among your roommates. Walmart and Target have pretty good home sections, but don’t be afraid to try a consignment shop to save money.

Lay some ground rules
By this point, you’ve already lived in a dorm, so you know what it’s like to have to share your personal space.

But off-campus, there’s more pressure to pick roommates you can rely on, especially if you depend on them for rent payments. Make sure everyone has their finances in order before deciding to get a place together.

Between work, class and your social lives, each roommate will probably have a completely different schedule. Try to be respectful of one another. If one roommate has a test the next day, don’t have a bunch of friends over the night before. Also ask about boyfriends and girlfriends — will one roommate have a significant other who basically lives with you? It’s important to sort this stuff out from the beginning so you don’t run into problems down the road.

While this may seem like a lot, we can both guarantee that living off-campus is a blast — well worth the added responsibility. So have fun, and happy hunting. ■
Family photos are propped up against empty water bottles instead of hanging in mahogany frames. The dishes don’t do themselves, which means they might not get washed until there’s nothing left to eat with. It’s probably a lot different from the homes they were raised in, but for many students, Bowling Green is home.

“I think of Bowling Green as home, and it has a lot to do with the relationships I’ve made with people here,” Winchester freshman Austin Lanter said.

Lanter, a member of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, feels at home within his brotherhood.

“They obviously won’t replace my family, but I have those people I’m close to, and I can walk around campus and see someone and stop and talk to them, and it’s just good to have relationships like that,” he said.

Union freshman Tony Wanick also finds himself at home within the sense of community Lanter described.

“I love the people here,” Wanick said. “Everyone is just so friendly. Even if I don’t know someone in the area, I feel like there’s an atmosphere here that I could just go up to anyone and give them a great big hug and it wouldn’t be awkward.”

Community may be born from the number of students adjusting to the change of scenery Bowling Green offers.

“In Northern Kentucky, people speak like they’re from Ohio and have a more Midwestern accent,” Wanick said. “I feel more at home with the allure of a country accent. It’s like I can hear my momma calling me in for a supper of biscuits and gravy. It’s great.”

For others, the size of the city, which holds the fourth largest population in Kentucky, is a defining difference in the way they relate to Bowling Green.

“I come from a town of about 3,000, and finding things to do there was always hard,” Beaver Dam senior Travis Taylor said. “But living in a place like Bowling Green, there is always something to do, whether it’s running out with friends to make a GADS run or even late night stops at Waffle House.”

Alex Jacobs, a freshman from Jeffersonville, Ind., also enjoys the number of commercial features Bowling Green offers, but he likes the way it retains tradition as well.

“Bowling Green is bigger than my hometown, and in some areas it still has a sort of rustic feel with all of its independently owned and operated businesses and town square,” Jacobs said.
Lexington junior Carly Weber, however, sees many similarities between her hometown and Bowling Green, though she still calls Bowling Green home. “All the activities and living in Bowling Green feels the same as Lexington,” she said. “The difference with Bowling Green is that it is the hometown that I have created for myself with my own schedule, rules and life.”

While many students focus their lives in Bowling Green, winter and summer breaks are inevitable, as is a return home.

“Sometimes, coming back from breaks is almost unreal,” Jacobs said. “It almost feels like I put my life on pause when I see the city limits and again when I open my front door. I love seeing my family and I miss them very much, don’t get me wrong, but in a weird way, I kind of feel like going home makes me kind of go back to how life once was.”

Weber also finds it difficult to head home and forget life on the Hill during breaks.

“It is a bittersweet situation,” she said. “Every time a long break is coming up, it is hard to pack up my car and leave Bowling Green. Throughout the entire break I think of my friends, the fun times and how much I miss WKU and Bowling Green. When it is time to come back to Bowling Green, it is a great feeling.”

Some parents have a hard time adjusting when their children move to Bowling Green, though.

“It has been a big adjustment, but since Carly is the first to leave, this is helping us start adjusting to an empty nest,” said Terri Weber, Carly’s mother. “There is always loss and a grieving process but at the same time, we realize that it is time for her to start her own life and make it better than the one we gave her.”

Austin Lanter’s mother, Alice Lanter, has had to make this adjustment twice. Austin’s sister, Jennifer, is a junior at WKU.

Alice Lanter said though she worried at first, she has a peace about her now and believes her children have adapted well to life in Bowling Green.

“I enjoy when they do get to come home,” she said. “It’s definitely different when they do come back because the house has been so quiet, but we do pick up right where we left off. We adapt back just as if they haven’t been gone.”

—CARLY WEBER
Lexington junior
Property managers advise students to do their research

By CAITLIN CARTER
news@chherald.com

Many WKU students will soon begin the search for off-campus housing.
Whether apartment or house-hunting, WKU students who have spent their mandatory two years in dorms may want to look for a new option, said John Copeland, property manager for Chandler Property Management.
Copeland said that most students have matured during their two years on campus and are capable of maintaining their own property.
“By the time they hit that point, I think they’re ready to get to a place that they can call their own,” Copeland said.
Copeland said many students are ready to move off campus to have a private bedroom.
“Even in a roommate situation in off-campus housing, it does afford students a lot more privacy than dorms,” Copeland said.
Copeland said renter’s insurance, which protects a tenant’s belongings in case of disaster, is highly recommended.
He said Chandler Property Management doesn’t require a tenant to purchase renter’s insurance, but leases contain a statement advising renters to do so because management companies can’t be held responsible for any damages.”Insurance is about $150 or $200 per year, so it’s worth it,” Copeland said.
At Campus Pointe, there is a $30-per-person cap on electricity, she said.
Daniels said there are many students that are resourceful and never go over the cap.
“But I also have some that go over every month,” she said. “These are the ones like my son that throws a shirt in the dryer every morning just to get a few wrinkles out.”
When students opt to move off campus, class responsibilities also grow, Richardsville junior Shayna Peters said.
“At times, she gets tired of the commute to campus, compared to those who can just roll out of bed and walk to class.
She said she also feels like she has more pressure to get things done quickly, not being within walking distance to professors or computer labs.
“There are negatives and positives for both living on and off campus,” Peters said. “It’s just what amount of responsibility you prefer.”

HOW DO YOU SAVE MONEY ON UTILITIES?

By JOANNA WILLIAMS | news@chherald.com

Moving off campus into an apartment or house can put a big hole in a college student’s pocket, as they may now have to pay for their own utilities.
Here are some tips about how to save money living off campus — from saving on heating costs during the winter to using less water all year long.

“Usually we try to keep the air off. We also wash clothes together to save on the water bill and take shorter showers.”
—CRISTENA LANG
Nashville senior

“Simple things, like don’t run the water when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes. And make bigger loads instead of washing, like, two pairs of jeans.”
—HEATHER THOMAS
Lebanon graduate student

“Close vents and shut doors that are rarely used, and unplug electronics and appliances when you’re not using them.”
—passivefamilyincome.com

Try to use the minimum lights possible by turning the lights on only when necessary.”
—KRISTIN SMITH
Carmel, Ind. senior

Usually we try to keep the air off. We also wash clothes together to save on the water bill and take shorter showers.

Simple things, like don’t run the water when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes. And make bigger loads instead of washing, like, two pairs of jeans.

Make hot tea on the stove, rather than in the microwave. Put on sweatpants and buy more blankets.

Try to use the minimum lights possible by turning the lights on only when necessary.

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Two roommates transformed their Barnes-Campbell Hall dorm room into their own unique home with a stack of smokeless tobacco cans, a makeshift recording studio, dueling TVs and other personal touches.

Louisville freshmen Hunter Berry and William Fangman said their bare dorm room depressed them when they first opened the door of Room 520 of Barnes-Campbell Hall. “I felt out of place — instead of feeling at home, I felt like I was in a dorm,” Berry said.

Fangman and Berry share a passion for music, so they revamped their room into a personal music studio where Berry’s band, One Intoxicated Evening, plays and records. “It’s heavy rock and really random,” Berry said. “It’s whatever we’re feeling really.”

Instruments placed around the room, including acoustic and electric guitars, a keyboard and a handheld recorder, make up this makeshift studio.

They also placed the beds in an “L” shape, which allows them enough room to record music, Fangman said. Both roommates agree that their dorm feels like a home, allowing them relaxation and entertainment while accomplishing school work.
However, sharing a dorm room can mean making compromises with roommates concerning personal tastes in decoration.

While Fangman pinned up his Bob Marley and Kid Cudi posters, Berry decorated with posters of Leonardo DiCaprio movies that complement his collection of DiCaprio movies, they said.

“We mixed ourselves together,” Fangman said. “We’re like in a blender.”

Both roommates enjoy their Pabst Blue Ribbon neon beer sign and their “dip pyramid,” which sits on the center of the windowsill and consists of multiple empty cans of smokeless tobacco contributed by visitors of their dorm, they said.

“It represents who we are,” Fangman said. “We like dip, we like beer — the Pabst.”

Setting the mood for their “music studio” dorm room depended on the decorating scheme, including stringing colorful Christmas lights along the beds, they said.

“The lights take out the stress from school because they’re so pretty,” Fangman said. “It makes you think of Christmas — the happiest time of the year.”

Christmas lights offer extra ambiance for their dorm, which they’ve also coined the “love cave,” they said.

“The lights are good for lovemaking,” Berry said.

Louisville freshman Austin Moore, a friend and frequent visitor of Berry and Fangman’s dorm room, said the roommates originally thought of naming their bed area the “cuddle cave” before settling on its current name.

“I think it’s pretty funny because they were trying to think of names,” he said.

Their “dip pyramid” gets bigger every week, Moore said.

“Each week it gets higher and higher,” he said. “I think they are up to 100 cans now.”

Moore, who lives in Barnes too, visits their room throughout the week along with about 10 other people, he said.

“The doors are always unlocked so you can just walk in,” Moore said. “The way they have it set up, it’s open and you feel welcomed.”

The roommates have dueling TVs, one constantly playing sports while the other plays video games or movies, Berry said. Their music recording also brings in visitors.

If he could do anything else to the room, Fangman said he would paint the walls and add a giant beer keg.

“Everyone comes in here,” he said. “Basically, our room is kick ass — that’s pretty much it.”
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On or off campus?

Most first-year students and sophomores are required to live on campus at WKU. But upperclassmen will have to decide whether to continue living on campus or find a place off the Hill. Here are some pros and cons for each option.

**ON CAMPUS**

**PROS**

■ **Accessibility to the school**
You can easily walk to classes, libraries, computer labs, cafeterias, etc. You don’t have to waste time and money on driving to school and finding a parking space.

■ **Increased social life**
You can meet more people and establish more friendships. You will also usually be more aware of campus activities and how to be involved in them.

■ **Simplicity**
You don’t have to worry about monthly rent payments, utilities or grocery shopping. Most students who live in a dorm get a meal plan in order to make eating easy and convenient.

**CONS**

■ **Little privacy**
It can be very hard to find privacy. You have to share bedrooms, bathrooms, etc. Close living quarters mean that you may never have quiet time in your dorm.

■ **Limited space**
You have to limit what you bring to school, or your space will be too crowded. That means you can’t bring a different pair of shoes for every outfit.

■ **Possible low GPA**
If you constantly choose hanging out with your dorm buddies over studying at the library, your GPA will suffer.

**OFF CAMPUS**

**PROS**

■ **Independence**
Dorms have several rules that students must abide by when living on campus. Living off campus will give you freedom from those rules and allow you to set your own.

■ **Privacy**
Living off campus means you will more than likely have your own bedroom, so you can have a place to sneak off and have time alone away from your roommates.

■ **Sense of responsibility**
If you live off campus, you will be in charge of paying bills, cleaning house, grocery shopping and cooking. Being responsible is a good quality to possess.

**CONS**

■ **More expensive**
In addition to paying rent, you may also need to buy furniture, kitchen essentials, bath necessities, cleaning supplies, etc., which will be a hefty start-up cost.

■ **Transportation**
It may not be convenient to walk to campus. Whether you drive or use public transportation, it is going to cost money. Also, traffic can be an issue if you live in a crowded area.

■ **Isolation**
You may not be as involved in campus activities. This could cause you to feel a sense of detachment with WKU and cause you to not make as many friends.
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Louisville senior Blake Blackburn can only stand upright in one spot in his bedroom.

Blackburn is 6-foot-5 and lives in a room with slanted ceilings on the second floor of a house he shares with three of his friends.

When he and his friends did a walkthrough of the house to decide if they wanted it, he told his friends he wanted the upstairs bedroom, he said.

“I called it as soon as we picked rooms,” Blackburn said. “I was on the outside looking in. I didn’t realize how short it was.”

Blackburn said that he isn’t in his room a lot when he isn’t sleeping, but the cramped space is easily cluttered.

“It gets hard to move around when a bunch of people are in there,” he said.

This could cause problems when Blackburn and his housemates throw parties, which they do often.

Blackburn is a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity and likes living in his house because it’s close to campus and the fraternity house.

He said he has no plans of moving out of the house any time soon.

“It’s been a really good home,” Blackburn said.

Nashville junior Chase Griggs has also lived in an unusual space during college.

Instead of living in a “normal” room in the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity house last year, Griggs lived in what used to be the kitchen.

“It was remodeled the semester before I moved in,” he said. The brothers of Lambda Chi took all of the appliances out of the room and converted it into a bedroom.

The space normally used for the refrigerator was turned into a makeshift closet, with a pole stretching from the wall to the cabinet, Griggs said.

“I used the pantry for a second closet,” he said.

Griggs said the worst part about living in a former kitchen was that it was beside the front door.

“Whenever anyone would leave, they would walk right by my room and make a lot of noise,” he said.

Wilmore junior Allison Evans has an odd feature in her room. Her bookshelf opens up into a small room.

“Everyone’s first reaction is always, ‘Wow! That’s so cool!’” she said.
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