10 things you should know about Berkeley housing

1. Research preferred neighborhoods and look them up in Google Maps
   If you don’t drive, try to find a place with convenient public transportation. Knowing the distance to school helps you build an idea in gauging the housing budget, commute time, neighborhood safety, local grocery stores and restaurants.

2. Timing is everything
   The best time to search for housing is towards the end of semesters as most students graduate and vacate their housing then. It is also the time when most leases end.

3. Shop for housing through various sites
   Car Rentals is a one-stop rental resource for the UC Berkeley Community. This service is free for students. Additionally, students may also find housing through various Berkeley Facebook Housing Groups, Craigslist, and the Berkeley Student Cooperative. Be cautious of scams that require you to put money up front prior to seeing the place.

4. Looking with friends
   Having a roommate helps reduce rent costs. Plus housing is very competitive and it can be hard to get a place. If you have a roommate, be sure to discuss ahead of time about who's signing the lease, how you will split utilities bills and house cleaning chores to avoid conflict. BIO also has a Roommate Search Tool if you're looking for a roommate.

5. What to expect on your utility bills
   Most students should expect to pay monthly bills for PG&E (Gas & Electricity), Wi-fi, and other utilities (property management fee, garbage, etc). However some landlords/agencies will cover water and garbage fees for you. Be sure to check what is included in your rent prior to signing a lease. The average amount varies depending on the seasons and the property, usually it should be around $30- $50/month and $50-$60/month in winter.

6. Schedule a viewing with landlord/agent/tenant
   Before you commit and make a down payment, be sure to schedule a viewing of the place and conduct a walk-through. If you are unable to do so, ask a friend to do so in your place. Note any damages or lack of cleanliness. Confirm the state of the place before moving in with your landlord/agent in writing, and remember to take pictures.

7. Background and Credit History
   Some apartment managements may require you to submit a background history, reference, and conduct a credit check. If you do not have this, they may request for a bank statement from you to proof that you have enough funding to pay rent. Additionally, they may ask to see your I-20 or request a letter from school to verify that you’re a student.

8. Prepare financially for upfront costs
   Moving into a new place can be very costly. As part of signing the lease, most renters will have to pay 1st month's rent, deposit, and last month's rest - all of which can run into thousands of dollars. This can set you back financially. Furthermore, you will also need put aside some finances to get furniture and basic necessities. This is where having roommates will help considerably.

9. Detailed list of unit condition
   Upon getting keys to your unit, prior to moving all your personal belongings in, make a detailed list of imperfections in your unit. If conditions are bad, take pictures to document. This is to protect you from getting your deposit deducted when moving out.

10. Consider buying renter’s insurance
    This is strongly recommended. Renter’s insurance protects a tenant's personal property in case of incidents like fire, theft, or vandalism.

11. Know the tenants laws
    You have several rights as a renter in Berkeley. For example, a landlord must have at least one of eleven legal options to evict you. Your landlord wanting to sell the property, not liking you, or wanting to get higher rent from another tenant are not sufficient reasons for eviction. Visit [http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/rent/](http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/rent/) or call (510)981-7368 for more information.