

HOMEOWNING TIPS

Thinking of buying a house in the future, but have no idea of how to even start the process? Come out to OCL's March Lunch Series and learn tips on how to purchase a house. A panel of experts including a real estate agent, insurance agent, mortgage lender, and home inspector will be present to answer your questions and guide you along your homeowning journey. Come to Peabody Hall Room 411 on Thursday, 3/17 from 11:45am-12:35pm to learn the basics of purchasing a house. Free lunch provided. This event is sponsored by the Office of Off Campus Life and the Florida Opportunity Scholars Program.



PET-A-PALOOZA

Do those Sarah McLachlan ASPCA commercials make you want to run out in the street and adopt the first feral cat you see? While giving shelter to a feral cat may not be the best idea, adopting a pet through a legitimate business is definitely a great way to get companionship and give a local homeless animal a loving place to call home.



The Community Advocates Student Organization is hosting a pet program on Tuesday, 3/22 from 7-9PM in Peabody Hall Room 411. Come to this program to find out ways to adopt a pet or volunteer with local pet agencies. Some adoptees may even be present at this event. Free food will be provided. For more information, join the Community Advocates facebook group named "Community Advocates".

SPRING BREAK SAFETY & TRAVEL TIPS

Finally, a time to let loose and relax! From 3/7-3/11, the world is your oyster as you ditch the responsibilities of school and live the life you always envisioned. Alright...while your Spring Break may not be as epic and wild as MTV always depicts it to be, the point is to unwind and have some fun!

If you're leaving Gainesville, be sure to leave your house in proper order. As the old adage goes, when the cat's away the mice will play. Professional criminals know when students will be out of town and take advantage of this time to do their work. Don't make your house an easy target. See below for tips on how to safeguard your house before you leave for the best Spring Break ever.

- * **Lock your doors and windows.** Sounds simple enough, but you would be surprised at how many people neglect to do this. You may as well have a neon sign outside your house saying "Thiefs and criminals, come on in!"
- * **Close window blinds and keep valuables out of sight.** Again, another common sense tip that isn't so commonly practiced. Don't leave your lap top and plasma flat-screen TV in plain sight through open windows. If someone wants that stuff badly enough, a window is not going to stop them from breaking in. If you can, bring your expensive portable items with you (jewelry, watches, cash, lap tops, etc.).
- * **Lights, camera, (no) action.** If no one's going to be at your place over break, put a timer on one of the lamps. You could also use a WiFi webcam to serve as a home surveillance camera. With these precautions set, hopefully there will be no unwanted action happening in your crib while you're out.
- * **Check your car's condition.** Haven't gotten your oil changed in a hot minute? Get it done before you leave town! While you're at the mechanics, have them do an inspection of your car to make sure it's road-ready. Also, check your tire pressure and adjust the air levels as needed.
- * **Tell a trusted friend you will be out of town.** Don't spread the word on facebook or tweet about how your house is vacant. If you know someone who is going to be staying local, have them look out for your house while you're gone.



SG HOUSING FAIR

Student Government hosts the Housing Fair to give students the opportunity to learn about the different options available to them for living on or off campus. Different apartment complexes can rent tables and come to inform students about the advantages of living in their complexes through brochures and representatives from their apartment community. Also, apartment complexes usually give tons of free gifts and promotional items along with info about leasing at their property.

Date: Wednesday, 3/23
 Time: 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
 Location: Reitz Union Colonnade, Reitz Union North Lawn, Reitz Union North Terrace

***Check out the Student Living Guide in the Alligator on this date for tips and info about living off-campus.

**LOOKING FOR OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING?
 COME SEE US FIRST!**

Off Campus Life staff is here to help you with your housing search. Before you sign a lease, feel free to contact us with any questions you may have. Come meet with us to hear important tips and considerations to keep in mind before signing a lease.



You have plenty of time to find an apartment so take your time in your apartment search. Go to our website at www.offcampus.ufl.edu for staff contact info and more information or drop

by OCL offices on the 3rd floor of Peabody Hall (next to Plaza of the Americas and Library West).

WORDS OF WISDOM

Wanna be part of a UF publication? OCL's annual magazine-style publication, the Gator Guide to Off Campus Life, is looking for tips from students on how to find housing, their roommate experience, any advice they can give about living off-campus, etc.

Be part of the new and updated Gator Guide! About 10,000 copies are distributed annually and the Gator Guide is available online. Go to <http://www.offcampus.ufl.edu/gatorguide.php> to see the Gator Guide or pick up a copy at various UF offices including the Dean of Students Office, International Center, Welcome Center, and OCL's office on the 3rd floor of Peabody Hall.

**RENTAL HOUSE
 101**



If you're thinking of purchasing or renting a house, there are some considerations to be aware of before committing to a house.

Make sure your landlord has a permit from the City of Gainesville. Landlords are required to be registered with the City of Gainesville and have a landlord's permit. OCL recommends only renting from a landlord who has a permit with the city.

In addition to having a landlord permit, be aware that most houses have a joint lease. A joint lease means that a certain amount must be paid per month. So, if a roommate moves out or is unable to pay their share of the rent, the remaining roommates are required to pay the total amount regardless of the circumstances.

Also, the City of Gainesville has an Occupancy Limit for single-family dwellings that states that no more than 3 unrelated people can live together in a house. Even if there are four bedrooms, if the house is zoned as "single-family housing", 4 friends cannot live together. If there are two relatives and two friends for a total of four people, that is permissible, but four individuals is in violation of this city code. Violations may result in fines and possible eviction.

Lastly, some rental houses require that you take care of lawn maintenance and other miscellaneous household repairs. Be prepared to do these tasks if the lease notes that you are responsible for them.

Feel free to come by OCL offices to consult with OCL staff before deciding to rent or purchase a house. There are definite benefits of living in a house such as more space and privacy, but there are also different responsibilities and rules that go along with living in a house. The ultimate choice is yours, but OCL is here to help you make the most educated decision possible.