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HOUSING PLANNER

A self-lead tool for students who are first time renters

Guide for Use

Please Read

This document helps you go through key questions related to finding housing for your needs. Preparing for housing and the cost of living in Nova Scotia supports your personal wellbeing, which helps you to be successful academically.

In Canada there is a Housing Crisis. This means Nova Scotia is experiencing a shortage of rental housing. Finding long term accommodation can be challenging and expensive. Most students report taking up to 4 months to secure a place to live for the long term. It's important to know this, because temporary accommodation (hotels, Airbnbs) can be quite expensive and are not recommended as a long-term solution.

Being financially prepared to sustain the cost of living in Nova Scotia is essential. It is your responsibility as a student to prepare an appropriate budget that will support your success in living and learning. This may mean securing employment to support your ability to meet your financial needs.

It is essential to plan for transportation when securing housing. Public transportation in Nova Scotia is limited, options and access are community dependent and not available in every community. It is your responsibility as a student to get from your housing to campus.

TO PROPERLY COMPLETE THE PLANNING GUIDE

- Learn about housing using the Living in Nova Scotia: A Resource Guide for Students
Take the quiz at the end to receive a statement of completion
- Prepare your budget using the cost of living resource
Use the money matters budgeting tool
- List your needs versus wants, understand where you are willing to compromise.
Included in the Planner
- Have an understanding of your community's transportation, and plans for getting to campus and to your essentials like groceries
If there is no public transportation create a plan to get to campus
If your plan includes active transportation plan for winter weather

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Budgeting

It is generally recommended that individuals only spend 30% of their total income on total shelter costs. Shelter costs include rent and your utilities (heat, water, electricity). Additionally to be successful academically you need to plan for access to internet.

Use the table on the right to help plan for a total monthly spend to guide your search.

Total Monthly Funds for Shelter Costs	
Utilities:	
Internet:	
Parking (if required):	
Maximum Rent:	

Housing Type

How many people will be living with you?

I will live alone (only myself)

I will live with my partner (2 people)

I will live with my child (1 adult, 1 child)

I will live with my family

I will live with friend(s)

Based on your want/need/compromise list and budget, you will have to determine which housing option is best suited for you. This section helps direct you in your search.

More information on housing types can be found in the Living in Nova Scotia Guide.

Housing Type

Home share/Home stay

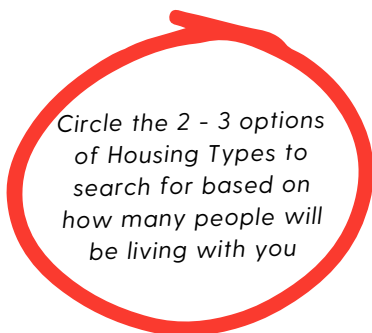
Bachelor/Studio

1-Bedroom Apartment

2+ -Bedroom Apartment

Entire Home

Circle the 2 - 3 options of Housing Types to search for based on how many people will be living with you



QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Questions to Consider*Budgeting & Housing Type*

This section provides space to reflect on the previous budgeting and housing type section of this planner. Use the following questions to help you consider your planning, and use the space below each question to journal your responses.

Is the best suited housing type aligned with your want/need/compromise chart?

If no, you may need to reassess your housing expectations, and update your want/need/compromise chart. Reflect on the best housing can align with your needs versus wants.

Is your ideal housing above within your budget?

If no, you may need to review your needs/wants/compromise list. Reflect on the best housing for your budget and the compromises you may need to make to secure long term housing.

Will you be seeking roommates, when will you post a roommate profile?

If part of the above planning means planning for roommates use the Living in Nova Scotia Guide to help you write a roommate profile. Use the space below to reflect on what you'd hope for in a roommate, and what some aspect of your profile post you will include.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Transportation

Many areas may share resources between multiple communities. Knowing your transportation options is essential to your housing search. This section guides you through the three key steps when considering transportation.



Use the [NSCC Transportation Webpage](#) to learn more about the public transit options in your community. This webpage includes links directly to community public transportation webpages, and clearly states which campus communities do not have public transportation.

1 Transportation Research

Research online what options may be available to you, and how long it may take to get to campus for different methods of transit. Use this bubble to record the key learnings.

2 What method of transportation do you plan to use to get to and from campus, grocers, and other essentials?

Circle the sentence that most aligns with your transportation plan

I plan on getting a vehicle and will plan for vehicle costs/maintenance as well as parking.

I will not get a vehicle; my community has public transportation which works for me.

I will not get a vehicle; I will be walking or biking and have reviewed the weather and needs to get to campus safely.

3 What is the ideal proximity to campus you will need to search for housing within?

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Questions to Consider*Transportation*

This section provides space to reflect on the previous transportation section of this planner. Use the following questions to help you consider your planning, and use the space below each question to journal your responses.

Is your transportation plan suitable for all seasons?

If no, you may need to reassess your plan to ensure safe transit during the cold weather periods, where transit can be more limited related to safe transport. Reflect on options for the winter in the following space.

Have you appropriately budgeted for Transit? Will your chosen transit option be financially feasible.

If no, you may need to review your needs versus wants related to transit, and create a new plan that won't impact your financial success. Reflect on the best transit option for your budget and the compromises you may need to make to travel safely.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Utilities & Amenities

Though many more rentals are starting to include utilities and amenities in the rental costs, there are still times where you will need to consider what is included. This section is designed to help you consider what is ideal, but also what you may be willing to compromise on.

What utilities would you like included? (circle all the apply)

-  Heat
-  Water
-  Electricity
-  Internet (WiFi)

Use the [NSCC Cost of Living Webpage](#) to learn more about what other students paid for their utilities. This will help you consider reasonable costs for each, and plan for your housing budget.



Total Utilities Budget Cost	
Heat:	
Water:	
Electricity:	
Internet (Wifi)	

Does the budget to the above align with your monthly shelter costs from page 2, and cost of living site?

What laundry situation would be functional for you? (circle all the apply)

In-Unit (also known as ensuite) In-Building

On-Property (also known as On-site) Off-site (i.e. laundramat)

What furnishings for would be functional? (circle all the apply)

Fully furnished Semi-furnished Unfurnished

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Questions to Consider*Utilities & Amenities*

This section provides space to reflect on the previous utilities and amenities section of this planner. Use the following questions to help you consider your planning, and use the space below each question to journal your responses.

Have you considered the difference in heating types and their costs?

If no, you may want to learn more about the different types of heating in Nova Scotia, and how there are differences. Reflect on how you will find out what type of heating is in the home when searching for housing?

Have you reflected on how to ensure utilities are working if not included in rent?

Research the steps you will need to take for each utility to ensure it is 'hooked up' (working) for your move in. This may include searching how to "set up" utility, and how much notice is required. Use the space below to reflect on what you've learned about setting up utilities.

Can you make compromises related to utilities (laundry / furnishings)?

If no, how will you filter housing options based on the requirements. Reflect on the key questions you may ask related to laundry and furnishings when searching for an apartment,

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Other Key Considerations

There are other various key questions that may be missed when you are creating your housing search. This section provides space to ask, and answer, those key questions, so you can be fully prepared to start your search.

Pets & Housing ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

In Nova Scotia, Property Owners can make all sorts of rules around pets, such as only allowing certain sized pets, certain animals for pets, and only allowing pets in certain parts of the building. Only Service Dogs are a protected class of pets. We encourage students to engage with the Property Owners about allowing pets. Having pets may limit your ability to secure housing.

Do you have a pet? (circle all the apply)

Yes, and I am looking for pet-friendly rentals

Yes, and I have a foster in case I cannot secure pet friendly accommodations

No, I do not have a pet.

Mail & Housing

Not every rental has mail delivery to the location. Use this section to help you plan for mail delivery.

How will you get mail? (circle all the apply)

There is a mailbox 'on site' for my rental

I will register a PO Box at the local post office

Cost of a PO Box	
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QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Questions to Consider*Other Key Considerations*

This section provides space to reflect on the previous other key considerations section of this planner. Use the following questions to help you consider your planning, and use the space below each question to journal your responses.

If you have a pet, have you considered a foster for them while your in studies if you cannot find pet friendly accommodations?

If no, you may want to consider what a foster may look like, who may be available to care for your pet while you are studying. Use the space below to create a plan if you cannot find pet friendly accommodations.

If you have a pet, and are leaving them with a caregiver (foster), do you have a plan for your wellness while away from your pet?

If no, you may want to consider what a wellness plan while being away from your pet may look like. For example, some students are unable to visit their pet while in studies, but instead become volunteers in their local shelters. Reflect on your wellness plan if leaving a pet with a care giver.

Have you planned for receiving mail?

If no, you may want to consider what costs there are if you are required a PO box, when you will collect mail, and why having a mail plan is essential. Use the space below to create a plan for mail collection.

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Lease Terms


When planning for housing, and discussing with property owners, terms of lease will be an important consideration. This section allows you to reflect on different access to a lease that you need to plan for.

What is the ideal lease start and end date?

Ideal Start Date	
Ideal End Date	



It takes most students 4 months to secure long-term housing. Based on your ideal lease start, you should start looking for housing 4-months prior.



Be sure to be knowledgeable of the different types of leases, especially as it comes to the required notice-to-quit.

What term-of-lease is best for you? (circle all that apply)

Year-to-year Month-to-month Fixed-term lease

Learn more about terms of leases using Dal Tenants Rights Guide: www.tenantsrightsguide.ca

Temporary Accommodations

Planning for arrival to your new home may mean securing temporary accommodations (i.e. hotel) during your transition. Use this section to plan for your accommodations between arrival and move-in date.

Do you need temporary accommodations between your arrival and move-in date?

Yes No

Cost per night	
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Is this reasonable costs based on your budget?

Yes No

QUESTIONS FOR SELF-NAVIGATING A HOUSING SEARCH

Questions to Consider***Lease Terms & Temporary Accommodation***

This section provides space to reflect on the previous Lease Terms & Temporary Accommodation section of this planner. Use the following questions to help you consider your planning, and use the space below each question to journal your responses.

Is there flexibility for your ideal lease start / end date?

If no, you may want to consider what it would mean if available housing has later (or earlier) start / end dates. Use the space below to create a plan if ideal start / end dates are not available.

Is there flexibility for your ideal lease term?

If no, you may want to consider what it would mean if available housing has different lease terms than what you were hoping for. Use the space below to create a plan if lease terms are different than your ideal.

Do you require temporary accommodations? What options are available?

If yes, you may want to consider what types of accommodations are available in your community for your budget. Use the space below to reflect on different options.

HOUSING SEARCH CHECKLIST & REMINDERS

Housing Search Checklist

This section provides a clear checklist for students to help them navigate next steps after completing this planner.

- Draft an email to send to property listings.
 - Review the rental scam webinar.
 - Check housing listing pages regularly.
 - Review housing options with Places4Students
 - Post on roommate finder on Places4Students.
 - Connect with NSCC Housing for resources to help you navigate resources,
 - Use “Contact Us” on the NSCC Webpage
 - Review housing options using other online marketplaces provided by NSCC Housing & Transition Supports
 - View the listing prior to signing a lease OR sending money
 - Use the pre-move-in-inspection, available in the NSCC Living in Nova Scotia Guide to help guide your viewing prior to signing.
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Important Reminders

- Schedule multiple times per week to reach out to interesting listings.
 - Remember, property owners may be overwhelmed by inquiries, you may consider reaching out 1-week after your initial email, but if they do not get back to you, you may need to move forward with other housing paths.
 - Follow this time with an activity/hobby for your wellness.
 - For example, the Coordinator of Housing & Transition Supports scheduled Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to search for 1.5 hours, then 1.5 hours to send emails and/or reply to emails about the suitable listings. After this 3-hour time block they go for a walk, go to the gym, or create art.
- Treat finding housing like you are interviewing the property.
 - Use the pre-move-in-inspection, available in the NSCC Living in Nova Scotia Guide to help guide your viewing prior to signing.
- Know your rights and responsibilities.
 - Use the NSCC Living in Nova Scotia: A Resource Guide for Students and Tenants Rights Guides to support you in knowing the rights and responsibilities of living in a rental space.
- Connect with supports at NSCC and beyond throughout your housing journey.