

A Practical Guide For Finding Housing Off Campus

Campus Information Center
Services For Off Campus Students
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Campus Information Center Office Hours:

Monday through Thursday	8 a.m. to 12 a.m.
Friday	8 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Saturday	9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Sunday	10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Summer Hours:

Monday through Thursday	8 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday	8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday	CLOSED

Table Of Contents

I.	Guideline for a successful housing search	
	A Message from the Off Campus Housing Office.....	1
	What to Consider for Off Campus Housing.....	1
	Surrounding Neighborhoods	2
	Off Campus Living Arrangements	3
	Considering Roommates	4
	Keeping Your Safety in Mind	4
	Renters Insurance	5
II.	The Lease	
	Helpful Hints	6
	Clauses to Look for in a Lease	6
	Clauses to Avoid in a Lease	6
	Oral Agreements	7
	Termination of the Lease	8
	Tenancy Contract	9
	Responsibilities of the Landlord/Tenant	9
III.	Moving In	
	The Moving Process Checklist	10
	Utilities	10
	Apartment Furnishings	11
	Move In/Out Checklist	11-12
IV.	When Problems Arise	
	Legal Referral Service	13
V.	Sample Roommate Contract	14-15
VI.	Pets	16
VII.	Food Expenses/Dining Services Meal Plans	16

A MESSAGE FROM THE OFF CAMPUS HOUSING OFFICE

Approximately 86 percent of Old Dominion University's students live off campus in the same areas as senior citizens, families with children and single professionals. Because Old Dominion University students constitute an important segment of the population in the surrounding area, the impact of students' conduct on the community is of major concern. As far as community members are concerned, students represent the University, even when they are off campus. We ask students to be considerate of their neighbors, especially keeping in mind that students' schedules may differ considerably from other residents' schedules.

Students are often short-term residents who move frequently, and those who have chosen to live in an area long term often feel invested in their neighborhood and community at large.

Please be aware of community issues such as:

- ◆ Noise - Take responsibility for your guests.
- ◆ Parking - Keep guest parking to a minimum.
- ◆ Resident zoning laws.
- ◆ Trash and property upkeep - Keep your apartment, home and property clean at all times.
- ◆ Alcohol misuse and large social gatherings.

The Off Campus Housing Office provides aid to students searching for living accommodations in the local area. Please note that *A Practical Guide For Finding Housing Off Campus* contains suggestions, not legal advice. For legal advice, please use our Legal Referral Service located in the Off Campus Housing Office.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN LOOKING FOR OFF CAMPUS HOUSING

There are many important decisions that must be made. Consider the following:

- ◆ How much can you afford to spend on housing? Be sure to consider the utilities, phone, cable, etc.
- ◆ How far from campus are you willing to live?
- ◆ Do you want to live alone or share accommodations?
- ◆ Consider the size and type of place you will want.
- ◆ If you share housing, do you need a bedroom of your own? Do you want a roommate of the same gender?
- ◆ Do you need a furnished dwelling?
- ◆ Is it important to have a pet?
- ◆ How long do you need housing? Refer to the section on leases on page 6.
- ◆ How close must you live to conveniences such as grocery stores, laundromats and restaurants? Do you have a car?
- ◆ Do you have special security needs?

SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS

“ODU Area”: To the immediate east of Old Dominion University is an area containing both commercial enterprises and housing designed primarily for student rentals.

Larchmont: A quiet, residential area located just north of the campus. Many professors choose to live in this area because of its convenient location. Rental property in Larchmont consists primarily of houses.

Ghent: Located approximately three miles south of Old Dominion University, Ghent is an older downtown neighborhood that has been revived and renovated. The area’s apartment complexes, which range from turn-of-the-century to modern, are inhabited by Old Dominion University and Eastern Virginia Medical School students, professionals and senior citizens. Houses for rent and apartment complexes can be found in the Ghent area.



Colonial Place: Located approximately one-half mile to the east of Old Dominion University, Colonial Place is a friendly neighborhood, popular with the Old Dominion University community. An older neighborhood which is carefully being renovated and maintained, Colonial Place offers primarily houses and rooms in private homes for rent.

Hampton Boulevard: Just to the north of Old Dominion University, on Hampton Boulevard, are a number of apartment complexes ranging from the turn-of-the-century to the very modern. Located on a major artery, these complexes back up to well-established neighborhoods.

Lambert’s Point: Located immediately south of the Old Dominion University campus and extending to 38th Street, this area has many new and newly renovated apartments. This area is near banks, fast food chains, and convenience stores. Most of these conveniences are within walking distance.

OFF CAMPUS LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Apartments/Condos

This is the most popular option, which offers a variety of floor plans including:

- ◆ Studio/Efficiency
- ◆ 1-Bedroom
- ◆ 2-Bedroom
- ◆ 3-Bedroom
- ◆ Keep in mind that while having more roommates decreases the cost of living, it may create other obstacles.

Room in House

- ◆ This option involves renting a room in an owner-occupied or student-rented house.
- ◆ Details on this option vary; be sure to have all expectations in writing in the base/rental agreement.

Things to consider include:

- ◆ Will you have a private bathroom and entrance?
- ◆ Will you have kitchen privileges, as well as what other rooms can you use?
- ◆ Is it a noisy household?
- ◆ How many people will be sharing the living space with you, and would you like to be a contributing member of the household?

Entire House

- ◆ This option, living with several other individuals, has special advantages and disadvantages.
- ◆ If all chores and utilities are equally divided and the proper roommates are chosen, sharing a house can be rewarding.

Things to consider include:

- ◆ Roommate problems can become complicated with more than two individuals.
- ◆ How are the bills paid? Who is responsible?
- ◆ Are home repairs or yard work your responsibility?



CONSIDERING ROOMMATES

Sharing an apartment or house with a roommate can be a very financially and personally rewarding experience for a student. A roommate not only shares the expenses but can also provide companionship. Of course, it is not always easy to live with someone else. Great care should be taken in selecting the person or persons with whom you share a dwelling. Take time to get to know your prospective roommate before moving in with him or her. Consider the following issues:

- ◆ What are your standards of cleanliness?
- ◆ Will you always require the apartment to be neat, or can you tolerate books and clothing out of place, as well as dirty dishes?
- ◆ What kind of eating arrangements do you prefer?
- ◆ Will you eat together? Will you share cooking utensils and food?
- ◆ How do you respond to your belongings being borrowed?
- ◆ Should a sublease agreement be signed?
- ◆ Should an agreement between roommates be signed?

*Refer to Sample Roommate Contract on pp. 14-15.

KEEPING YOUR SAFETY IN MIND

Your safety and the safety of your possessions depend largely on you, not the landlord. Take the following precautions and make sure, before you rent, the dwelling is relatively secure.



- ◆ Check outside doors to be sure they are secure and strong.
- ◆ Be sure locks operate properly and are of good quality.
- ◆ "Deadbolt" locks, which are preferable, may be installed (check the lease) by tenant if:
 - the installation does no permanent damage to the dwelling,
 - a duplicate key is given to the landlord, and if requested, upon termination of occupancy, the tenant removes the lock and repairs any damages.
- ◆ Door hinges should be on the inside.
- ◆ Entrances, halls, stairway and parking areas should be well lit.
- ◆ Windows, particularly on the first floor, should have locks.
- ◆ Immediately notify your landlord of broken locks, burned out entrance lights, and lost keys.
- ◆ Always be sure to lock doors when leaving your dwelling, and at night leave a light on, until you return.

If you think you need assistance in assessing the security of your off campus dwelling, you can make arrangements to discuss residential safety by contacting ODU's Public Safety Office at 757-683-4003. Ask to speak with a crime prevention specialist.

RENTERS INSURANCE

Picture this: You're all moved in to your new apartment, and life is good. Suddenly, a loud boom and the sound of rushing water in your living room awaken you. You then rush to determine the source of the noise and find water coming from the living room ceiling. Everything is soaked! About the same time, a maintenance worker knocks on your door to let you know that your upstairs neighbor had a pipe burst. Your new TV and computer are ruined. But everything is okay because your landlord has insurance. Right? Wrong!

In almost all situations, landlords only carry property insurance on the building, not the belongings inside. That forces tenants to find insurance coverage on their belongings elsewhere. Most college students opt to stay on their parents' insurance policy to cover the belongings in their new apartment. Doing this is not always the answer. Most homeowner policies carry deductibles of \$1,000 or more. If your \$850 TV was ruined in an act of flood, fire or vandalism, you would be forced to cover the costs of replacing it. Also, making claims on your parents' policy can cause their premiums to go up or even cause their policy to be canceled. A solution to this problem is getting affordable renters insurance.

A *New York Times* article recently reported that there are about 1,800 fires in U.S. college living quarters annually. Renters insurance can cover most, if not all, damage that occurs in your rented dwelling. Most policies run from \$100 to \$200 per year and can often be taken out directly by students. Listed below are several local agencies committed to offering students low-cost, high quality renters insurance:

Allstate (Agent Mike Sanoba) 757-533-9200
1904 Colley Avenue
Norfolk, VA

Nationwide Insurance (Agent Jean Owens) 757-622-5675
125 W. Freemason Street
Norfolk, VA

Farmers Insurance (Agent Bruce Laderberg) 757-480-0300
1500 E. Little Creek Road #309
Norfolk, VA

(The above listed agents are not endorsed by Old Dominion University. They have simply agreed to be listed in this publication.)

THE LEASE

Helpful Hints

- ◆ In order to rent a room or dwelling, you will be required, in most cases, to sign a lease. A lease is a binding legal contract describing the terms, rules and agreement which you accept upon signing the document.
- ◆ The **LEASE** is a **LEGAL CONTRACT** that cannot be easily broken; do not sign it until you understand the legal terminology. The Off Campus Housing Office can assist you with this. You are responsible for remembering and fulfilling the terms of the lease, so keep a copy available for easy reference throughout your tenancy.



Clauses to Look for in a Lease

The following are suggested items to look for when reading through a lease:

- ◆ Specific dates of occupancy. (i.e., June 15, 2003 - July 1, 2004)
- ◆ Amount of monthly rent and date it is due each month.
- ◆ Amount of security deposit.
- ◆ Responsibility for payment of utilities.
- ◆ Responsibility for general maintenance and repairs.
- ◆ Sublease: If you sign a 12-month lease but think you may need the dwelling for a shorter period of time, make certain the lease allows you to sublease (rent your dwelling to another person who will assume the remainder of your lease).
- ◆ Whether pets are allowed.
- ◆ Automatic renewal clause.
- ◆ The word "amend" without an explanation.

Clauses to Avoid in a Lease

The following are clauses that may be disadvantageous to the tenant and should be avoided in a lease:

- ◆ At management's discretion in general or in conjunction with any specific statement, the tenant may be asked to leave within three days. Eviction clauses - be sure you do not give up your due process rights.
- ◆ Security deposit clauses about automatic forfeiture of the deposit.
- ◆ Tenant waives all defects in the building or takes "as is."
- ◆ Landlord shall not be responsible for injury to person, including tenant and guests, as a result of any cause. Rewrite the clause to state the landlord is responsible for damage or injury caused by his/her negligence.
- ◆ Tenant is responsible for all repairs to premises.
- ◆ Landlord may enter dwelling without notice.
- ◆ Landlord has lien (a legal claim on the property of another as security for the payment of a debt) on all personal property of tenant.
- ◆ Rules of behavior; make sure all rules are attached to the lease and do not include a statement that says "the tenant agrees to these and subsequent changes. Delete the "subsequent changes" statement.
- ◆ Attorney's fees. Ensure it states that in the event of any legal problems concerning the lease, the losing party shall pay the prevailing party's reasonable attorney fees and court costs to be determined by the Court wherein such judgment shall be entered.
- ◆ Pets are not allowed (depending on your preferences).

ORAL AGREEMENTS

Oral, as well as written, agreements are considered binding in Virginia; however, be sure not to enter into an oral rental agreement or agreement of a service (i.e. repair, extension, etc.) with a landlord unless you have a reliable witness present, one who is not a prospective tenant or roommate. It is much safer for the tenant to have a written, rather than oral, agreement. Do not be afraid to ask the landlord for one.

Although oral agreements are considered binding, you cannot attach an oral agreement to a written lease. If you have a written lease that you and the landlord agree to alter, the change must be made in writing and should be noted and initialed by both parties on the original lease.

Termination of the Lease

Once a lease is signed by the tenant and the landlord, it is legally binding and cannot be broken except under special circumstances. If a situation develops which seriously affects the tenant's health and safety or if the landlord will fully reduce the delivery of services such as gas or water, the tenant may break the lease. The Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act outlines a specific procedure for terminating the lease under these circumstances; the tenant cannot just move out. Information concerning this procedure can be obtained from the Off Campus Housing Office should you encounter difficulties.

There are two clauses dealing with termination of the lease that are frequently misunderstood by students.

- ◆ The first is the **"MILITARY CLAUSE,"** allowing termination of lease to military (and in some cases civilian personnel) who are forced to move out because of their employment. This clause in no way applies to non-military students.
- ◆ The second is **"THE AUTOMATIC RENEWAL CLAUSE,"** allowing the rental contract to continue from year to year unless written notice of termination is received by the landlord by a date specified in the lease. Should you intend to move out of your dwelling but forget to send a written notice to that effect, you will be legally and financially bound for another year.

If a tenant abandons a dwelling unit before the expiration of the rental agreement and the landlord finds a new tenant to rent the unit, then the rental agreement is terminated as of the date the new tenancy begins. The landlord may collect damages (accrued rent, advising cost, etc.) for the time the dwelling is vacant. Alternatively, the landlord may consider a rental agreement to be terminated immediately upon learning of the abandonment, as a surrender of the dwelling.

Tenancy Contract

A tenancy contract or roommate contract signed between potential roommates is a safety precaution should any dispute occur. In it the roommates agree to pay their portion of the rent and bill incurred, such as electricity, heat, phone, water, etc.

- ◆ A tenancy contract may be picked up at the Campus Information Center in the front lobby of Webb Center.
- ◆ A sample roommate contract is provided for you on pages 14-15.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LANDLORD/TENANT

The Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act* requires landlords to:

1. Comply with the requirements of applicable housing and fire codes.
2. Maintain in good and safe working order all electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilating, and other facilities and appliances, or to do whatever is necessary to keep the premises in a fit and habitable working condition.
3. Keep all common areas shared by two or more dwelling units of the premises in a clean and safe condition.
4. Provide and maintain appropriate receptacles in common areas for the collection, storage and removal of garbage used by two or more dwelling units and arrange for removal of the same.
5. Supply running water and reasonable amounts of hot water at all times and reasonable heat in season except where the dwelling unit is constructed so that heat or hot water is controlled by the tenant or supplied by a direct utility connection.

The landlord and tenant may agree *in writing*, however, that the tenant performs the landlord's duties specified in (3) and (4), including specified repairs and maintenance tasks. Such an agreement is legal only if it is entered into in good faith and not for the purpose of evading the obligations of the landlord.

*For a complete copy of The Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act, visit our Off Campus Housing Web site at www.odu.edu/offcampushousing.

THE MOVING PROCESS CHECKLIST

- ◆ Complete change of address form for post office.
- ◆ Reserve a rental truck if needed.
- ◆ Make travel arrangements, if necessary, with airlines, buses, car rental agencies and hotels.
- ◆ If you are moving here from out of town, set up a local bank account.
- ◆ Pack breakable items in bubble wrap, towels and sheets.
- ◆ Purchase or rent furniture (see Apartment Furnishings section pg. 11).
- ◆ Set up utilities services (see Utilities section pg. 10).
- ◆ Complete a housing checklist (refer to pg. 11-12).
- ◆ Bring friends and family to help!



UTILITIES

Once you have selected an apartment/house and signed the lease, your next step is the connection of utilities. For specific information regarding the service and the associated fees, please contact the respective company.

- ◆ City of Norfolk, Department of Water and Sewage 757-664-6700 (trash)
- ◆ Dominion Power 1-888-667-3000 (electricity)
- ◆ Virginia Natural Gas 757-466-5550 (gas)
- ◆ Verizon 757-954-6222; Cavalier Telephone (Norfolk) 757-248-4000 (phone)
- ◆ Cavalier Telephone 757-467-3900 (Virginia Beach)
- ◆ Long Distance Phone Companies: AT&T 800-222-0300; U.S. Sprint 800-877-4646; MCI 800-444-3333
- ◆ Cox Communications Inc. 757-222-1111 (cable)

APARTMENT FURNISHINGS

Many students entering college do not have their own furniture. Although some apartment complexes offer furnished apartments, students may prefer to rent an unfurnished apartment and furnish it in their own personal taste. Listed below are places where used furniture may be purchased or where furniture may be rented on a monthly basis.

Used Furniture

Hope House Thrift Shop

1800 Monticello Ave.
Norfolk, VA 23517
757-625-7493

Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters

Thrift Shop
1356 E. Little Creek Road
Norfolk, VA 23518
757-583-1300

Thrift Store City

1760 E. Little Creek Road
Norfolk, VA 23518
757-583-6936

Furniture Rentals

Aaron's Sales and Lease

610 E. Little Creek Road
Norfolk, VA 23505
757-587-0287

Best-Way Rent to Own

Southern Shopping Center
7525 Tidewater Dr. #32
Norfolk, VA 23505
757-583-1300

Rent A Center

7525 Tidewater Drive
Norfolk, VA 23505
757-587-5900

Other sources of finding used furniture are the *Trading Post* (a weekly classified newspaper), the classified section of the local newspaper, garage sales, bulletin boards around campus, and the classified section of www.maceandcrown.com.

MOVE IN/OUT CHECKLIST

Prior to moving in to the apartment/house, it is a good idea to walk through the premises, preferably with the landlord, noting any defects or damages; be very specific. The list should be signed by the roommates and the landlord and delivered to the landlord no later than five days after occupancy of the premises. When you move out of the apartment/house, send the landlord a copy of the apartment inspection sheet to insure that you receive as much of your security deposit back as is justified and that you're not charged for damages incurred before your occupancy of the premises.

Sample checklist

ITEM	Move In Comments	Move Out Comments
LIVING ROOM, DINING & HALLS		
Walls/Ceilings		
Floor/Carpet		
Closets/Doors/Locks		
Lights/Mirrors		
Drapes/Rods/Blinds		
Windows/Tracks/Screens		
Fireplace		
KITCHEN Walls/Ceiling/Floor		
Countertops/Tile		
Cabinets/Closets		
Oven/Stove		
Hood/Fan/Lights		
Refrigerator		
Dishwasher		
Sink/Faucet/Disposal		
BEDROOMS Walls/Ceiling		
Floor/Carpet		
Lights/Mirrors		
Drapes/Rods/Blinds		
Windows/Tracks/Screens		
Closets/Doors/Shelves		
BATHROOMS Walls/Ceiling		
Floor		
Cabinets/Mirrors		
Sink		
Tub/Shower		
Tile/Grout		
Lights/Vent Fan		
Toilets		
Windows/Doors		
Towel Bars/Accessories		
WASHER/DRYER		
HEAT/AIR CONDITIONING		
BALCONY/DECK/PATIO		
STORAGE/PARKING AREA		
GARDEN/PLANTS/GRASS		
SMOKE DETECTOR		
NUMBER OF KEYS		

WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE

Unfortunately, off campus living is not always worry-free. Information in this section will help you contact those who can help when problems beyond your control arise.

Legal Referral Service

Student Legal Referral Service is offered through the Campus Information Center located in the front lobby of Webb University Center. Students in need of legal services may:

1. Review the list of lawyers/law firms. Each referral listing includes the name, title, qualifications and experience of the lawyer/law firm; area of legal specialization; charge (if any) for initial consultation; fees for standard legal services; credit plans offered; and other relevant information.
2. Select a lawyer/law firm.
3. Complete the referral form.
4. Make an appointment for an initial consultation.
5. Take the referral form to your consultation meeting with the lawyer you select. A current Old Dominion University ID card must be presented. Most of the lawyers and firms participating in this program have established reduced fees schedules for students referred to them from Old Dominion University.

Questions and/or concerns pertaining to the Legal Referral Service may be answered at the Campus Information Center or by calling 757-683-5914.



SAMPLE ROOMMATE CONTRACT

Sometimes problems arise when rooming with another person. It is advised that you consider entering a valid contract with your roommate.

This agreement made on _____(date) is a contract between:

_____, and _____, co-tenants at

_____Address_____

Apt. #_____ City _____, Virginia.

I understand that I am entering into a legally binding agreement with my roommate(s).

I understand that we, as a group and as individuals, are responsible to our landlord, the utility companies, and each other.

Term or Period of Agreement

This agreement is to begin on _____(date) for the term lasting from _____(date/yr.) to _____(date/yr.). I fully understand and accept the rules and responsibilities of this agreement.

Security Deposit

The security deposit for the dwelling is \$_____. My share amounts to \$_____. I understand that this amount will be returned to me less the amount deducted by the landlord for unpaid rent, and/or damages. I accept responsibility for damages which I, my pet, or a friend of mine causes, and I will reimburse my roommate(s) for the part of the security deposit withheld for those damages.

Rent

The total rent according to the terms of our lease agreement with our landlord for the dwelling is \$____ per month. I promise to pay 1/___ of the monthly rent. This amounts to \$____. The total amount my roommate(s) and I are liable for over the period of the lease is \$____, of which my share is \$____. I understand that we, as a group and as individuals, are responsible to our landlord for the total rent for the term of the agreement.

Utilities

I promise to pay 1/___ of the deposits and/or hook-up charges for all utilities.

I promise to pay 1/___ of the monthly utility bills except telephone.

I promise to pay 1/___ of the monthly phone service charge, plus all long-distance calls which I make and the taxes on those calls.

I promise to pay as follows for any additional

utilities:_____

Moving Out

If, for whatever reason, I move out of the dwelling, I realize it is primarily my responsibility to find a replacement. I promise to look for a replacement roommate who is acceptable to my present roommate. I understand the need to be reasonable in accepting a replacement roommate.

If I move out of the dwelling and a replacement roommate has not been found, I realize that I am still legally responsible for paying my share of the rent and utilities.

I understand that I can be held responsible by my landlord and/or utility companies for up to the entire rent and/or utility bills, if my roommate(s) fail to fulfill their part in this agreement.

The following are my preferences as they relate to these topics.

Food/shopping arrangements: _____

Cleanliness/cleaning responsibilities: _____

Privacy: _____

Sharing of personal properties: _____

Noise/study times: _____

Smoking, drinking, drugs: _____

Parties/entertaining: _____

Overnight guests: _____

Additional remarks, i.e., security of the apartment, pet agreement, etc.: _____

As part of this agreement I realize that I, as well as each of my roommates, have an equal right to use of the space and facilities in the dwelling with the exception of the areas we have designated as each one's private space. This agreement is intended to promote harmony between roommates by clarifying the expectations and responsibilities of roommates to each other.

All obligations under this contract are to be performed in _____, Virginia.

To be effective, it is not necessary to witness or notarize this agreement. Each roommate should sign below and receive an original copy.

The parties have executed this agreement on _____ 200_

This sample agreement is provided by the Off Campus Housing Office, Old Dominion University, for the mutual benefit of roommates. The University assumes no responsibility.

PETS

- ◆ Consult with your landlord or rental agency to make sure pets are allowed. If so, consult your roommate before bringing a pet into the house or apartment. Some people have pet allergies.
- ◆ Know local codes on pets and their keeping. Keep in mind that you should have tags on dogs and cats in case they leave your yard.
- ◆ Remember to clean up after your pet if it uses a neighbor's yard as its bathroom. The same may apply for parks in the area.
- ◆ Have neighbors get to know your pets.

FOOD EXPENSES/DINING SERVICES MEAL PLANS

Students living off campus generally purchase and prepare their own meals. However, students wishing to use the dining services provided by Old Dominion University can choose from a variety of meal plans offered through the University Card Center. Meal plans for commuter students include the basic meal plan and Monarch Plus account.

The basic meal plan allows you to eat in any of the on-campus dining locations, and it can be used in the Whitehurst and Gresham convenience stores. The Monarch Plus account, a debit account which allows you to use your Old Dominion University ID card for purchases, is accepted in all dining locations, the bookstore, vending machines and some off campus locations. A registered dietitian is part of the central office staff and is available to provide all students with up-to-date nutritional information. If you have any dietary questions or needs, contact Dining Services at 757-683-4601.

For information about meal plans, please contact the University Card Center at 757-683-3508 or via e-mail at cardcenter@odu.edu. The card center is located in Webb Center and is open 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. on Friday.



Student Activities and Leadership
2122 Webb University Center
757-683-3446

Old Dominion UNIVERSITY
**A PRACTICAL GUIDE
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HOUSING OFF CAMPUS**

