

HOA 101: Tips For Living In An HOA Community

Millions of people around the world belong to a homeowners' association (HOA). These types of communities can differ by location, but in general, being a member of an HOA provides a unique set of opportunities. If you're looking to enhance your community living experience, then we've identified five simple ways to get the most out of your HOA.

1. Know the rules and respect them.

Hopefully, you got to know the rules before buying your HOA home, but if not, it's never too late to start. Take a close look at your governing documents and familiarize yourself with your community's rules and regulations. If anything is unclear, don't hesitate to ask for help. Your HOA board or Community Association Manager (CAM, for short) will be happy to answer any questions you have and fill in any missing details.

Once you have a proper understanding of your HOA rules, do your best to follow them. Almost all potential problems of living in an HOA will be avoided by living within the rules. If your community has a guideline that you can't follow, don't worry. HOAs are more flexible than you may think, and there are ways to change your association's rules. However, it's in your best interest to follow the rules as long as you live in that community. Always wait until a rule or policy has been officially changed using the proper channels before deviating.

2. Be a good neighbor.

Following the rules will also help keep a good relationship between you and your neighbors. If you suspect your neighbors of ignoring neighborhood guidelines, like parking or noise violations, don't jump to any conclusions. It may be wise to talk to your neighbor face-to-face before reporting them to your association. Keeping open lines of communication between you and your neighbors is always a good idea. Also, don't hesitate to reach out to them and invite them to HOA meetings and activities.

3. Get out and enjoy everything your community has to offer.

Living in an HOA community isn't free, but often it does have some perks. If you're paying monthly dues to help maintain neighborhood parks, pools, or walking trails, then get out and enjoy them with your family. One of the main reasons people want to live in an HOA is to take advantage of the added events and amenities. Getting out and enjoying the extra things your community offers will likely improve your sense of community and make your experience of living there far more enjoyable.

4. Actively participate and volunteer with your HOA.

If you're looking for additional ways to get involved in your community, then HOAs provide many volunteer opportunities. Start by attending your association's meetings and getting to know your current board members. Often, your board will have additional committees for activities or welcoming new members that you can help run. Likewise, you may want to consider volunteering to serve on the HOA board.

5. Stay connected and communicate often.

HOA communities are always changing and adapting to meet the needs of their residents. While your board may try its best to keep you informed, it's a good idea to do all that you can to stay connected. Make sure you are signed up to receive any community communications, whether it be through the mail, emails, text messages, or phone calls.

Additionally, many communities will also use online apps and websites to send out notifications. Whichever way your HOA communicates, make sure you are plugged in and not missing any relevant news or announcements.