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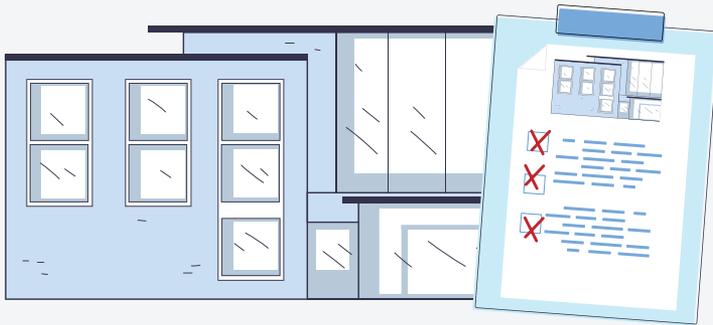
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RED FLAGS WHEN LOOKING FOR YOUR NEXT RENTAL

How to spot and avoid rental fraud.

Have you heard about this rental scam? Legitimate-looking descriptions and photos depict a non-existent property or one the scammers don't have any legal right to rent. Some scenarios require you to act immediately if you want to rent the property. And the supposed landlord or property manager pushes plausible reasons for payment to happen quickly, perhaps in an unusual way.

This is the blueprint for the newest scam, the oldest scam, and every scam in between. No matter how advanced fraudsters get or what AI tools they use, the pattern is the same. Learning to spot the following red flags can help you avoid being tricked.



A PRICE THAT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

If the rent advertised is overly low for the market, your suspicions should be high.

PAY FIRST, TOUR LATER

No matter what story the person claiming to be the landlord or property manager tells you, don't pay a deposit or any rent before you have toured the property with the owner or a verified representative.

NO QUESTIONS ASKED

If all someone seems interested in is getting your initial payment, that may be because they plan to disappear afterward. Real landlords and property managers have a vetting process and will want to know more about you.

TOO MANY DETAILS

Don't be snowed by a lot of specifics—like why the landlord or property manager can't meet with you or why the current tenants shouldn't know you're considering the rental—especially if they all add up to someone asking you to do something unusual.

TOO FEW DETAILS

Be sure not to sign a blank or incomplete lease. Even if both parties are honest, working with a half-finished or missing lease is messy, but if it turns out rental fraud is involved, a signed contract someone else can fill out will make things harder for you to set straight.

THIS DEAL CAN'T WAIT

One of a scammer's most useful tools is urgency. If you're rushed, you're less likely to ask the questions that could expose the scam. So, slow down and check everything carefully.



You can look up property owners in the county records, and you can verify that a real estate agent has a valid license by checking the Texas Real Estate Commission's website. Also know that agents and brokers who join the association of REALTORS® are bound by our Code of Ethics to work for the best interests of our clients. Help us help you by keeping your Texas REALTOR® in the loop!