

# Lesson 2 – Apartments & Neighborhoods

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Welcome to Lesson 2 of the Everyday English Speaking Course! Today you're going to learn vocabulary and phrases for renting an apartment and talking about where you live.

First, listen to this conversation between Jackie and a **real estate agent** (that's a person who helps arrange rentals and purchases of apartments and houses).



## Conversation #1 – Renting an apartment

**Jackie:** Hi there. I'd like to rent a place in Brooklyn.

**Agent:** Okay, let's have a look at the listings. How many bedrooms?

**Jackie:** Either a studio or one-bedroom apartment would be fine.

**Agent:** And what kind of price range are we looking at?

**Jackie:** Up to about \$1200 a month.

**Agent:** Let's see... I have a furnished studio apartment for \$800, right near the L train. It's a steal - but it won't be available until February 1.

*("it's a steal" = it's a very good price)*

**Jackie:** Ah, that's too bad, I gotta move in as soon as possible.

**Agent:** There's a newly-renovated one-bedroom near Prospect Park, with hardwood floors and a balcony. The rent is \$1250 and it's available immediately.

**Jackie:** Hmm, sounds nice, but I can't afford it. Oooh, this place looks nice – how much is the rent?

**Agent:** It's \$1000.

**Jackie:** Does that include utilities?

**Agent:** It includes water and electricity, but TV or internet would be extra. Oh, and there are laundry facilities in the building.

**Jackie:** Is there a security deposit?

**Agent:** Yes – \$750. And also a \$50 fee for the credit check.

**Jackie:** That could work... is it close to a subway station?

**Agent:** Yup, it's just a 5-minute walk from the F train.

**Jackie:** Does it have air conditioning?

**Agent:** No, but the description says it has great ventilation, so it doesn't get too hot.

**Jackie:** OK. When can I see it?

**Agent:** How about tomorrow at 2?

**Jackie:** Great. Oh, I forgot to ask - is it OK to have a pet?

**Agent:** I'll have to check with the landlord, but I think small pets are allowed.

## Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

The first question the agent asks Jackie is how many bedrooms she would like to have in her apartment. She says she wants a **studio apartment** (an apartment with one big space that includes the bed, kitchen, living area, etc.) or a **one-bedroom apartment** (an apartment with a bedroom that is separate from the living room, kitchen, etc.)

Bigger apartments are described as two-bedroom, three-bedroom, four-bedroom, or five-bedroom apartments. Sometimes, in the listings or classified ads, this is abbreviated as 1BR, 2BR, etc.

The agent then asks about her **price range** - the minimum and maximum she would like to pay for rent. She says she would like to pay up to \$1200 - so when he shows her an apartment that is \$1250, she says:

- **"I can't afford it"**  
(*I don't have enough money*)
- Another way to say this is: **"That's outside my price range."**

- You can also say **"I'm looking for something a little more affordable"** to communicate the idea that you want a lower price.

Jackie sees pictures of an apartment she likes, and asks a number of questions:

- **"How much is the rent?"**
- **"Does that include utilities?"**  
*(utilities are services like water, electricity, internet, and cable TV)*
- **"Is there a security deposit?"**  
*(a security deposit or damage deposit is an amount of money that you pay when you move in, to pay for any possible damage you might do to the apartment. If there is no damage, you will receive this money back when you move out of the apartment)*
- **"Is it OK to have a pet?" or "Are pets allowed?"**  
*(a pet is a small domestic animal like a cat, dog, rabbit, etc.)*

Here are some other questions to ask about an apartment you're thinking of renting:

- **"Does it have..."**
  - ...air-conditioning?
  - ...a balcony?



- ...hardwood floors? / carpeting?



- ...laundry facilities?
- ...an elevator?
- ...appliances?  
*(refrigerator, stove, dishwasher)*
- ...a parking garage / a parking spot?
- **“Is it furnished?”**  
*(meaning it has complete furniture – couches, tables, chairs, a bed, etc.)*
- **“Is it close to...”**
  - ...a subway station?
  - ...a bus stop?
  - ...a supermarket?
  - ...a laundromat?  
*(a laundromat is a place where you can pay to use a washing machine and dryer to clean your clothes)*
- **“When is it available?” or “When can I move in?”**
- **“When can I see it?”**
- **“Do I have to sign a lease?”**  
*(a lease or rental agreement is a contract that guarantees you will rent the apartment for a specific period of time – for example, 6 months, 12 months, or 2 years)*

When answering Jackie’s final question about pets, the agent says he’ll have to check with the **landlord** – this means the person who owns the apartment and who has decided to rent it out. If it’s a woman, then she is called a **landlady**. The official word for a person renting an apartment (in this case, Jackie) is **tenant**.

Many landlords, before agreeing to let someone rent their apartment, will perform a **credit check** on the potential tenant – this means they check the person's financial records to see if they have paid on time in the past. It's also possible for the landlord to request **references** – contact information for people who know the tenant and can describe the person.

Okay – let's imagine that Jackie decided to rent the last apartment mentioned in the conversation. Now she calls her friend Pamela to talk about it.

## Conversation #2 - Talking about where you live

**Jackie:** Hey Pamela, it's Jackie.

**Pamela:** Jackie, hi! How's the apartment hunt going?

**Jackie:** Actually, I just signed the lease on an apartment in Flatbush.

**Pamela:** Flatbush? Isn't that a sketchy neighborhood?

**Jackie:** Well, it's a working-class area. Some of the buildings are a little run-down, but it's actually quite safe.

**Pamela:** Oh, that's good to hear. So, tell me about your new place!

**Jackie:** I love it! The building is clean and quiet, the appliances in the kitchen are all brand-new, and there are huge windows that let in a lot of natural light. The bathroom is a little cramped, but it doesn't bother me too much.

**Pamela:** Is it in one of those high-rise apartment complexes?

*(high-rise = very tall building)*

**Jackie:** No no, it's in a three-story walk-up. I'll definitely get my exercise going up and down three flights of stairs every day!

*(three-story = the building has three floors/levels.  
walk-up = the building has no elevator)*



**Pamela:** Hey, it saves you money on a gym membership. What's your commute like?  
(*commute = the trip from your home to work*)

**Jackie:** It's great, it's just twenty minutes.

**Pamela:** Lucky you! Do you have a roommate?  
(*roommate = a person who lives with you and helps pay the rent*)

**Jackie:** Nope – I like having the place to myself. So tell me, how's life in the suburbs treating you?

**Pamela:** It's pretty nice. We're renting a very spacious house for a fraction of what we used to pay in New York. It has a huge backyard, which is great for the kids to play in. You're welcome to visit anytime you need a break from the city.

**Jackie:** Thanks - I'll definitely take you up on that sometime!  
(*I'll take you up on that = I'll accept your invitation/offer*)

## Conversation Vocabulary & Phrases

Pamela asks Jackie if Flatbush is a **sketchy** neighborhood. "Sketchy" is a slang word meaning "not well-maintained and not safe." Jackie responds that it's a **working-class area** - meaning that the people who live in the area work for typically low salaries.

Here are some other ways to describe the area where you live:

- "I live in a residential area."
- "I live in a business district."
- "I live in an upscale area."  
(*upscale = rich, chic, fancy*)
- "I live downtown / in the city center."
- "I live on the outskirts of the city."  
(*outskirts = outer edge*)
- "I live in a suburban area." / "I live in the suburbs."  
(*suburban = residential area outside a major city*)
- "I live in a rural area." / "I live in the countryside."  
(*where there is a low population density*)

Jackie names several positive aspects of her new apartment:

- **"The building is clean and quiet."**
- **"The appliances in the kitchen are all brand-new."**  
(*brand-new = very new, never been used*)
- **"There are huge windows that let in a lot of natural light."**  
(*natural light = sunlight or daylight*)

Here are some more positive aspects of houses or apartments:

- **"It's very spacious."**
- **"It's in a great location."**
- **"It was recently renovated."**

The one downside of Jackie's apartment is that the bathroom is a little **cramped** - that means small and uncomfortable. Here are more phrases for problems with your living area:

- **"The apartment is dark and dingy."**  
(*dingy = dirty and discolored*)
- **"There's very little ventilation."**
- **"My neighbors are noisy and inconsiderate."**  
(*noisy = opposite of quiet*)  
(*inconsiderate = don't think about the effects of their actions on other people*)
- **"The landlord takes forever to make repairs."**  
(*takes forever = delays an extremely long time*)  
(*make repairs = fix things that are broken*)
- **"It's infested with cockroaches / rats."**



- **"The building is run-down."**  
(*run-down = not well maintained or cared for*)

How would you describe the place and area where you live? [Click here](#) to leave me a message describing your home and neighborhood – I'll send you tips and corrections.