

# Screening techniques

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What are the best ways to Screen your prospective tenants?

In late June there was a series of interesting discussion on the ApartmentAssoc at YahooGroups.com email discussion group on this topic as well as advertising to find tenants , accepting Section 8 (Rent Assistance) and how to learn more about being a successful landlord.

Because of the interest in the subjects I reformatted the discussions into what hopefully you will find as an easy to read reference tool. Each topic is broken out on its own page. The site allows readers to add comments to help explain things that are not clear or to offer their alternatives.

The words of wisdom are those of a number of owners, as well as my own thoughts. Consider the end result to be a stew that began with these individual thoughts. Just as you cannot distinguish which of the flavors came from the carrots many of the authors comments are not individually identified for ease of reading. Just because it is hard to distinguish the individual ingredients, it would not be as good without all the different flavors/authors. Thanks to John and Elaine Kostecki, Brian Flemming, Josh Unger and Anne for their contributions.

Special thanks to Tom in NJ for kicking the discussions off by asking the question.

## Screening procedures

Landlording is a lot like Baskin Robbins - 51 flavors of how to do it . My chocolate frozen no fat yogurt may not be a good match for your Rocky Road taste buds. The same is true with tenant selection and screening. What works well for us may not work well for you.

The most important factor in screening is to have uniform screening criteria for all prospective tenants. Choosing tenants based on race, religion ethnicity, family status source of income and other protected classes is not only illegal, but pretty stupid from a business stand point.

Affordable Rentals method (Click the bold titles to go to the articles)

Affordable Rentals is a mid sized owner/operator of scattered site housing in Milwaukee. This link takes you to an outline of our screening procedure.

Screened application prior to showing (no link)

Another common approach that is probably equally safe is everyone fills out an app prior to being allowed to see a unit. This seems more expensive as you are running apps for people who have not committed to wanting a unit, but again back to Baskin Robbins ...

Telephone pre-screening

I include this as there was a lot of discussion on the list. However we do not use this method as we see the potential for fair housing questions to arise.

Another LandlordGuides.com article on screening

Other methods (no link yet, but once you submit your article there will be)

I encourage readers to add their comments to this article or post their own article on the subject.