

Leasing Demonstration & Follow-Up

NALP 

NATIONAL APARTMENT
LEASING PROFESSIONAL®



NALP **National Apartment Leasing Professional**

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Table of Contents

Message to Apartment Community Leasing Professionals	5
Course Objectives	6
Product Knowledge	7
Three Major Areas of Product Knowledge	8
Key Elements in Preparing for a Successful Demonstration	16
Conducting a Successful Demonstration	20
Important Skills in Demonstrating	21
Feature-Benefit-Emotional Appeal Selling	28
Safety Tips for the Leasing Demonstration	32
Fair Housing Implications in Demonstrating	33
When does Closing Begin?	34
Dynamics of an Effective Leasing Presentation	38
Resolving Objections	39
Procedures for Resolving Objections	44
Leasing Signals	48
Ask for a Commitment	56
Closing Techniques	58
Follow-Up	64

Table of Contents (cont.)

Fair Housing Implications in Closing	67
Summary	69
Examination	70

Sample



Message to Apartment Leasing Professionals

This education program was developed by Leasing, Operations, Marketing and Training Professionals working in the multifamily housing industry across the nation.

It was developed and revised at the request of Leasing Professionals and apartment association members, like you, who told us what they need to successfully perform their job responsibilities. It was also developed at the request of your managers, supervisors, owners and employers. They asked for this program because of your importance to the industry. They recognize you as the key to leasing, renewing and serving future and current residents of your communities and buildings.

This is one of a series of eight courses of the National Apartment Leasing Professional designation program. The other courses, in addition to this one, are as follows:

1. Keys to Success in Leasing
2. Telephone Presentations
3. Leasing and the Internet
4. The Leasing Interview
5. Leasing Demonstration & Follow-Up
6. Rental Policies and Procedures
7. Legal Aspects
8. The Market Survey

For more information about this program or any of NAAEI's education programs, ask your instructor, contact your local apartment association, or contact NAAEI at 703/518-6141.

Course Objectives

Once the Leasing Professional has qualified the prospective resident and collected enough data to provide the best service possible, it is time to begin the leasing tour of the apartment community.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- ▶ Demonstrate thorough knowledge of your apartment homes, your apartment community and the neighborhood.
- ▶ Explain the importance of the three elements in preparing for a successful leasing demonstration.
- ▶ Know the important skills to effectively demonstrate your community.
- ▶ Explain the key elements in conducting a leasing tour.
- ▶ Implement the feature-benefit-emotional appeal approach to selling.
- ▶ Describe some safety precautions that should be practiced during a leasing demonstration.
- ▶ Recognize and understand Fair Housing implications with regard to demonstrating and closing.
- ▶ Describe various “closing” opportunities.
- ▶ Explain the major objectives in a successful leasing presentation.
- ▶ Implement procedures for resolving objections.
- ▶ Identify signals that help close a prospective resident.
- ▶ Invite the prospective resident to lease an apartment.
- ▶ Develop a follow-up program to ensure more return traffic and leases.

Product Knowledge

Surveys of prospective residents clearly show that the knowledge of the product by the Leasing Professional is an important determining factor in choosing an apartment home.

You can never have too much knowledge, particularly in an industry that changes as rapidly as ours. Acquiring product knowledge is ongoing and requires flexible thinking and initiative by the Leasing Professional. Failure to stay abreast of the apartment home industry in your region or market is like trying to sell new cars with last year's literature. It will not work. So ... it is time to effectively show the prospective resident all of the wonderful things you have mentioned about the apartment homes, the apartment community and the neighborhood.

How much does a successful Leasing Professional need to know about the product?

The real answer to this question is "as much as you can!" Never stop learning about the apartments and surrounding area where your community is located. A Leasing Professional must know as much as possible about their product to be fully prepared for the variety of questions that come up in a demonstration. This information is not acquired all at once so the successful Leasing Professional is an ongoing learner. This means you should continue to deepen your knowledge base by spending time with the maintenance team, watching expansion in the area, talking with other co-workers, and actively networking in the neighborhood.

The successful Leasing Professional will describe the benefits of the community as a solution to the prospect's needs. The best way to do this is to know your product and your prospect.

Three Major Areas of Product Knowledge

The Leasing Professional needs to have three areas of product knowledge—knowledge about the:

1. Apartment homes;
2. Apartment community; and
3. Neighborhood.

Each category contributes to the success or failure of a leasing presentation. The Leasing Professional always seeks to improve in all three areas by seeking new information and new ways to present that information when selling the apartment community.

The three sections that follow explain more fully the product information you will need to know in order to become a successful Leasing Professional.

Apartment Homes

The following information should be included in your knowledge of the apartment homes.

- ▶ **Square footage and room measurements** - It is important to know the size and room dimensions of each room since the prospective resident may be interested in bringing floor coverings or furniture. Prospective residents will also appreciate knowing the amount of effective wall space and the total square footage of the apartment home.
- ▶ **Storage space** - Make sure you know the linear feet of closet space and the number of walk-in closets. Prospective residents may want to know the amount of counter space and the number of cabinets and drawers. Be sure to make note of exterior storage facilities.
- ▶ **Appliances** - Make sure you know the function and proper operation of each appliance. Also, be sure to note the manufacturers and brands.
- ▶ **Furniture placement** - Share interior decorating tips. After all, you have seen the interiors of most of your apartments and can share ideas that seem to fit the prospective resident. Describe alternatives for furniture placement.

- ▶ **Construction features** - Be able to explain the energy efficiency rating and the amount of insulation in the walls. Make sure you know the type and main features of carpeting and flooring. Know the efficiency rating on the water heater and the air conditioner, where they are located, and whether they are gas or electric. Speak with your maintenance team or tour a vacant apartment with a member of maintenance to gain this information.

Apartment Features

Make sure you know the features that are included in each floorplan. Examples are:

- ▶ Microwave
- ▶ Telephone jack locations
- ▶ Cable connections
- ▶ High Speed Internet
- ▶ GFIs (Ground Fault Interrupters)
- ▶ Smoke detectors
- ▶ Doors, locking systems
- ▶ Stainless steel or porcelain sink
- ▶ Type and number of cabinets
- ▶ Frost free refrigerator
- ▶ Pantry
- ▶ Disposal
- ▶ Trash compactor
- ▶ Decorator shelves

- ▶ Ice maker
- ▶ Serve-through bar
- ▶ Exhaust Fan
- ▶ Decorator shelves
- ▶ Overhead lighting
- ▶ Self-cleaning oven
- ▶ Windows
- ▶ Floor coverings, carpeting, pads, tile
- ▶ Double sinks
- ▶ Indirect lighting
- ▶ Dishwasher
- ▶ Washer/dryer hook-ups
- ▶ Amount of counter space

One way for the Leasing Professional to retain all the specific information needed to fully demonstrate an apartment home is to compile and refer to a custom summary sheet to be placed in a Leasing Notebook that is used throughout the leasing process.

Apartment Community

Prospective residents will be very interested in the apartment community as a whole. These are the areas about which prospective residents usually ask questions:

- ▶ **Service Team** - Is there 24 hour emergency service for residents? How is it provided? Who do the residents contact when the business office is closed? Who assists residents into their apartments when they are locked out?
- ▶ **Club Room Facilities** - What amenities are available in the clubroom? Can residents reserve the clubroom for private parties? If so, how much does it cost? What are the hours and who is responsible for maintaining it?
- ▶ **Recreational Amenities** - What facilities are available and what are the hours of operation? Are there planned recreational activities for the residents? If so, what type and how frequently are they scheduled? Are there sponsored sports teams? What resident activities and services are provided at the property? Is adult supervision required at recreational amenities?
- ▶ **Functional Amenities** - What are the hours at the laundry room and what is the cost per load? How is the postal center handled? How are packages handled?
- ▶ **Parking Facilities** - How many parking spaces are provided for each apartment home and are any of them covered spaces? Are residents allowed to park their Recreational Vehicles (RVs) in the community? Is parking assigned? Is there a required parking sticker?
- ▶ **Management of the Community** - How many people are involved in managing and operating the apartment community? How are their responsibilities organized? Do persons on the premises handle service requests or do residents call outside service? What ordinances (noise, speed) regulate the community? What is the level of the staff's experience? What is the company's commitment to customer service?

Neighborhood: The Community Profile

Every Leasing Professional should have a Community Profile in his or her Leasing Notebook. A Community Profile is a summary of the community and its immediate neighborhood. Information to include:

- ▶ Number of buildings
- ▶ Total apartment homes
- ▶ Floors per building
- ▶ Apartment homes per floor
- ▶ Apartment homes by type (example: 14 one-bedroom/one-bath; 25 two-bedroom/two-bath, etc.)
- ▶ Apartment homes by style (example: 7 one-bedroom/ one-bath, 750 square feet; 7 one-bedroom/one-bath, 800 square feet)
- ▶ Special characteristics (example: do all corner apartment homes have extra windows? Do upstairs apartment homes have vaulted ceilings?)
- ▶ Total parking spaces and covered parking spaces (such as carports)
- ▶ Total garage spaces
- ▶ Amenities
- ▶ Satellite dish information
- ▶ Acreage
- ▶ Site Map

- ▶ Location of mailbox kiosks (if applicable)
- ▶ Utility information (gas, electricity, water, telephone, etc.)
- ▶ Neighborhood characteristics (example: multifamily, residential, commercial)
- ▶ Schools and Daycare
- ▶ Parks and Recreation facilities
- ▶ Shopping
- ▶ Entertainment
- ▶ Healthcare and Medical facilities
- ▶ Vehicle registration
- ▶ Banks and credit unions
- ▶ Mass transit/public transportation
- ▶ Voting, government services
- ▶ Major cross streets, highway/freeway access
- ▶ Directions to the property
- ▶ Other residential housing

A Leasing Professional uses this information to increase product knowledge by analyzing the information about the residents and matching the benefits that are satisfied by the apartment homes and community. By understanding the Community Profile, the Leasing Professional will have a better understanding of the typical renters who are attracted to and lease at the community.

Caution: Apartment communities must offer their apartments and accept all qualified applicants as apartment homes become available. Know and understand your Fair Housing laws.

The Leasing Professional must be knowledgeable about the neighborhood and services it provides. Up to **40 percent** of prospective residents visit the apartment community because of its location and the neighborhood in general. The Leasing Professional can expect some of these people to know a little about the neighborhood, yet a majority of the prospective residents do not know much about the neighborhood. The Leasing Professional must point out the best features and benefits of the neighborhood.

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” Use visualization whenever possible. It is helpful if the Leasing Professional has a photo album showing important and attractive features of the neighborhood.

There is a long list of key places in the community that may be of interest to the prospective resident. These include schools, libraries, convenience stores, grocery stores, shopping stores and malls, banks, dry cleaners and areas for dining and entertainment. Recreational facilities play an increasing role in the value of a community.

It is important that the Leasing Professional be observant and not lose full appreciation of the many features and benefits of the community. The Leasing Professional should avoid becoming so comfortable with their site that they no longer really “see” what is there. A fresh look at the value of the community is essential. Use a “new set of eyes” approach to your leasing demonstrations.

Observation Activity Notes:

The Resident Profile

Every Leasing Professional should also know his or her property's Resident Profile.

Define **Resident Profile**:

The Resident Profile is **not** information utilized in making leasing decisions.

A Resident Profile typically includes:

1. Median or average income.
2. Median or average age.
3. Average number of residents per apartment home.
4. Resident type.
(example: Are most of your residents students?)
5. Major employers.
(example: Do a significant percentage of your residents work for the same company?)
6. Employment area.
(example: Do most of your residents work in the same general vicinity, such as a nearby business park?)
7. Point of origin.
(example: Where did your residents live prior to moving into your community?)
8. Reasons for moving (track property move-outs).
9. Job classification.
(example: Are most of your residents blue-collar workers?)

Key Elements in Preparing for a Successful Demonstration

The three major elements in preparing for a successful leasing demonstration:

1. Creating and using a _____ that includes extensive _____ information.
2. Knowing current _____ about your _____ .
3. Planning for the _____ .

Once the prospective resident has been qualified and the apartment has been selected for demonstration, the Leasing Professional is ready to put both product knowledge and leasing skills to work.

The Leasing Notebook

The Leasing Notebook is a resource of information about the community that is readily on hand to use during the leasing process. If you have all of the community information at your fingertips when questions arise, the leasing demonstration will be a polished process. The information found in the Notebook should be updated regularly. Refer to the NALP course on the Leasing Interview to get detailed descriptions of assembling the Leasing Notebook.

Important Items to Include:

- Availability Ready List
- Site Plan
- Community Convenience List
- Moving Information
- Current Market Comparables
- Floor Plans
- Community Information
- Photographs of the community
- Leasing Paperwork
- Miscellaneous newsletters, calendars

Leasing Professionals can clip the Welcome/Guest Card to the front of the Leasing Notebook for handy reference during the leasing presentation and to easily access it to record additional information, apartments shown, etc.

Information contained in a completed Market Comparables Study:

What are two places in which a Leasing Professional can effectively use **The Leasing Notebook**?

Information About Your Competitors

Update the information about your competitors each week. Prices, features and programs can change daily! Do not focus on your competitor's weaknesses but rather their strengths. The better you understand the strengths of your competitors, the stronger and more competitive you will become.

Prepare a **Competitors Notebook** that includes floorplans and general information about your competition. This notebook can become a valuable resource when you need to compare and contrast your property with a competitor while working with a prospective resident.

Planning the Successful Leasing Demonstration

Planning the tour requires thoughtful attention. One of the first things a Leasing Professional learns is that you always need a plan. Why?

There are several key points in planning an effective leasing tour:

- ▶ Inspect the model, market ready and available apartment homes daily.
- ▶ Make sure that all keys work properly.
- ▶ Take the most scenic (and most reasonable) route through the apartment community. If possible, select an apartment location that shows off the grounds and the amenities.
- ▶ Select an apartment(s) that meets the specific needs of the prospective resident while ensuring that you are following Fair Housing rules. If your community has model apartment homes, demonstrate the model home, so the prospective resident leaves with a positive, lasting impression of a beautifully decorated, newer apartment home. If your community does not have a model home, show an apartment that is ready for “move in.” Be sure to present all available apartments as options to lease even if they are not shown.
- ▶ Control the route through the model or vacant apartment by directing the tour, asking specific questions, and focusing the prospective resident on the benefits and features of the apartment home and the community.
- ▶ Plan a few “talking points” that describe the grounds, the apartment home and the apartment community.
- ▶ Sell solutions, not just benefits.
- ▶ Prepare a few opening statements that can be used when entering the apartment home that directs the prospective resident to notice positive highlights of the apartment.

Brainstorm in your groups and create some talking points and opening statements that can be used on the leasing tour:

Plan! Be prepared! It's the best advice you will ever receive.

Sample



Conducting a Successful Demonstration

Up to this point we have discussed several aspects of a successful leasing demonstration:

- Developing your Leasing Notebook;
- Planning the leasing tour;
- Actively involving the prospective resident; and
- Adopting the Feature-Benefit-Emotional Appeal approach to selling.

It is time to put everything together and conduct a successful leasing tour.

The tour of the apartment community begins when the Leasing Professional and prospective resident leave the Information Center. The Leasing Professional has planned the route to and from the apartment home. The prospective resident will be actively involved in the demonstration. Hopefully, the tour ends at the Information Center, and it is time to complete the lease paperwork required to turn the prospective resident into a resident.

There are many different ways to conduct the tour and to weave the feature-benefit-emotional appeal approach throughout the leasing tour.

Some **Demonstrating Do's and Don'ts:**

1. While outside, a Leasing Professional should discuss the benefits of decked areas for sunbathing while walking past the pool, and should mention the activities and events scheduled for residents. It should be pointed out how well the service team keeps the community clean and operational.
2. A leisurely pace should be taken so the prospective resident does not feel rushed. The prospect wants to feel that the Leasing Professional views them as a priority.
3. A Leasing Professional should discuss the features of an apartment only after arriving at the apartment so that the prospective resident can see what is being described. This technique will raise the buying interest of the prospective resident so that it is at a peak when you ask for the lease.
4. When arriving at the model apartment, Leasing Professionals should leave the front door open or turn the dead bolt so that the door cannot be locked. These are good safety practices.

5. Create a sense of arrival. Say “Welcome to your new home,” or “You are going to love this view.”

Important Skills in Demonstrating

What variables are important in becoming skilled in conducting a memorable demonstration?

Every successful Leasing Professional is adept at performing these leasing demonstration skills:

1. **Actively involve prospective residents in the apartment.** The prospective resident must visualize him- or herself happily living in the apartment home. As the Chinese proverb says:

**Tell me, and I may forget.
Show me, and I might remember.
Involve me, and I'll understand.**

___ % of people remember something they have seen.

___ % of people remember something they have seen, smelled and touched.

When demonstrating an apartment, ask the prospective resident to open doors and cabinets, touch features, use fans, walk onto patios, etc. Consider using mini-model features—some towels, a shower curtain, kitchen towels, small home accessories—to make the vacant apartment feel more like a home. Consider setting out “self-serve” candy or snacks.

2. **Implement “feature-benefit” solution selling.** The Leasing Professional moves from telling about a feature to selling its benefits and providing its solutions. The demonstration then moves from things to feelings and wants. In this manner, the Leasing Professional uses **emotional selling**, which focuses on the emotional impact of the feature. Recall the discussion in the Interviewing section of the course about relationship-building. By focusing on the prospect and his or her unique wants and needs, the feature-benefit-solution selling technique comes naturally!

3. **Demonstrate throughout the entire leasing tour.** The Leasing Professional demonstrates the entire property, so active involvement and feature-benefit-solution selling should extend to community amenities, exterior landscape or building features, accessibility, convenience and other attractions. The “tour” is a continuous trip!
4. **Avoid ending your demonstration in a small room like a bathroom.**
5. The Leasing Professional should **refer to features as “yours”** during the tour so the prospective resident will think in terms of possession.
6. **Use closing statements throughout the presentation** and particularly on the way back to the Information Center as the Leasing Professional finds out what the prospective resident liked and disliked. Efforts to close should continue while the prospective resident is in comfortable surroundings. Try to determine if the prospective resident has any objections before leaving the model or vacant apartment home. It is best to deal with any objections there. It is more difficult to overcome an objection when the prospective resident cannot easily visualize the apartment home.
7. Back at the Information Center, **the prospective resident should be shown floorplans** and other information about the apartment in which they are interested.

How does a Leasing Professional keep the prospective resident actively involved in the demonstration?

Leasing professionals get prospective residents to see themselves in a specific apartment home by engaging in an ongoing conversation with the prospective resident. “Ongoing” means “continuous,” not “constant.”

It is important to start building rapport with prospective residents from the initial contact. There will be lulls in the conversation so the prospective resident can reflect on what the Leasing Professional is saying as well as concentrate on sights and sounds of the apartment community.

Conversation should be about the prospective resident, not the Leasing Professional. Focus on the prospect’s needs that you can solve.

An excellent way to do this is with the skill of “**Transitional Questions.**” Transitional Questions are questions asked by the Leasing Professional to elicit additional information from the prospective resident about their needs and wants in the apartment home. They are called Transitional Questions because they assist the Leasing Professional in transitioning the demonstration from room to room.

For example, when walking into the kitchen, the Leasing Professional’s Transitional Question could be, “Do you like to cook?” The prospective resident’s answer will let the Leasing Professional know immediately how much interest the prospective resident has in the kitchen. Then the Leasing Professional will know how much and what type of information about the kitchen will interest the prospective resident.

If the prospective resident answers with an enthusiastic, “Yes, I love to cook!” you know that the kitchen is an important room in the apartment home and the prospective resident will probably spend additional time viewing that room.

This prospective resident may have some specific questions regarding the kitchen’s features and benefits. You may be able to focus on the kitchen as a solution.

If the prospective resident’s reply is “No, I travel and am rarely home long enough to prepare a meal,” you have learned that the kitchen is not an important part of the apartment home to this prospective resident.

Transitional Question Activity

Working with your partner, write a Transitional Question appropriate for each of the apartment rooms below.

Into the living room:

Into the bedroom:

Into bedroom #2:

Onto the deck/patio:

Into the dining room:

Remember that there is a fine line between engaging in meaningful conversation and carrying on a one-way monologue that a prospective resident will find boring or tedious. The goal is to make the demonstration conversational.



Selling versus Telling Activity

Follow the instructions of your facilitator to complete the activity below.

Telling	vs.	Selling
<p>Example #1 The Leasing Professional enters the apartment home, stands in the doorway and talks as the prospective resident walks through the apartment alone.</p>		<p>The Leasing Professional walks through the apartment along with the prospective resident, directing the prospective resident to open the refrigerator door, walk out onto the balcony, and to step inside the enormous walk-in closet. The Leasing Professional continues to ask transitional questions.</p>
<p>Example #2 The Leasing Professional shows the model apartment home and states, "This is the kitchen and there is the dining room."</p>		
<p>Example #3 The Leasing Professional stands in the living room and tells the prospective resident 30 features of the apartment home.</p>		
<p>Example #4 The Leasing Professional reads the brochure to the prospective resident as they tour the apartment home.</p>		

Here are some basic techniques to help involve the prospective resident in your leasing demonstration.

- ▶ **Ask questions of the prospective resident** that are not invasive but which draw prospective residents into talking more about themselves. This helps to establish rapport, puts the prospective resident at ease and provides you with useful information to use later in your leasing presentation. Good questions might be “What are the best features of the home where you are living now?” or “Did you get to ski much when you were in Denver?” or “Did you visit the monuments while living in DC?”
- ▶ **Build on the information that you have gathered** by asking clarifying questions that attempt to draw out more information. For example, “John, I know you told me that you were in sales, in what type of sales are you involved?” Since you have been asking questions to build a relationship with the prospect, you will learn about the prospect and what particular features may be most appealing.
- ▶ **Give your prospective resident “Minor Orders.”** These are commands that you tell the prospective residents to do to get them to actively participate in the tour. For example, Eric Cumley in the book “7 Secrets to Successful Leasing,” suggests you describe a benefit and then give a suggestion to the prospective resident. Example: As the Leasing Professional and prospective resident enter the apartment, the Leasing Professional says, “The view from the balcony is fabulous.” Then the Leasing Professional would give the prospective resident a suggestion to “go ahead and open the sliding door so we can get a better look.”

- ▶ **Do not talk about your personal life** with the prospective resident. The prospective resident should be the center of attention and all conversation should be directed at the prospective resident's interests. The more time you spend asking questions of the prospective resident, the less time there will be for any personal questions about you.
- ▶ **Keep the conversation flowing, yet leave some quiet time** so the resident can think about what you are saying and take a good look at what you are pointing out. Go room by room during the tour focusing on the benefits of each room in the apartment home.
- ▶ **Put the prospective resident into various settings in your apartment community.** "Joyce, you said you loved to cook; wouldn't this be a fabulous home for entertaining your guests?" or "You'll feel great in front of the fireplace on a cold winter evening, while you unwind from a long day at work." Keep the conversation positive by ending the comment with, "Don't you agree?"
- ▶ **Emphasize unique features of your apartment home** that they might not notice. "I want to point out that there are cable outlets in every bedroom as well as the living room." Or "Did you notice the ice maker?"

Can you think of other techniques or examples that will keep the prospective resident actively engaged in the leasing demonstration?

Feature-Benefit-Emotional Appeal Selling

We have discussed feature-benefit selling, so let us apply these lessons to the demonstration in action. The next step is learning to apply the benefit to give personal meaning for the prospective resident.

This technique enables you to present a demonstration tailored to your prospective resident's needs instead of merely presenting a generic tour.

This approach is known as “**feature-benefit**” selling with the application of **emotional appeal**. Most sales are based on emotion. Yes, the prospective resident wants an apartment, but what they really want to know is what the apartment will do for them!

Define a feature: _____

Features are marketable characteristics found in every part of the apartment home. Examples of features are sliding glass doors, vaulted ceilings, bay windows and frost free refrigerators. Every feature has a benefit.

Define benefit: _____

One benefit of a vaulted ceiling is that it gives the room an open feeling and elegant ambiance. One benefit of bay windows is that they provide space for plants.

Applying the knowledge of features and benefits to create personal meaning for the prospective resident is called **emotional appeal selling**.

The successful Leasing Professional puts special emphasis on benefits likely to appeal to the prospective resident's emotions and logic that forms the basis for a decision to buy.

A feature is concrete. It is visible. You will mention many features in your demonstration of the apartment. However, the successful Leasing Professional mentions the **features** and describes the **benefits**.

You use emotional appeal when you reference what you have learned about the prospective resident's wants and needs. This is the point where all of those carefully asked questions and carefully stored away answers help you make the sale.



Consider the following conversation between Linda, the Leasing Professional, and Jane Jackson, a prospective resident. “Jane, our building’s architect used a lot of foresight when designing this apartment. You will notice that your kitchen is equipped with a convenient, General Electric, glass-top stove. Just think, you’ll be free from having to clean burners and have more time to have fun on the weekend.”

In this conversation, Linda has:

- ▶ Called the prospective resident by her first name.
- ▶ Referred to the kitchen as “your,” which offers the prospective resident possession and establishes the apartment as her new home.
- ▶ Described the feature (glass-top stove) and the benefit (convenience of easy cleaning).
- ▶ Described the emotional appeal by pointing out saving time and enjoying more freedom from tedious chores.

When applying the technique of **feature-benefit-emotional appeal**, you can test any statement. State the feature. Describe the benefit. Ask yourself, “So what?” If the answer is “Nothing,” you have not applied emotional appeal. Add emotional appeal and then test the statement again.

Feature-Benefit-Emotional Appeal Selling Exercise

The following exercise is also found in the Participant Guide. It may be completed in class or assigned to be done after class. Below are some of the more common “features” that a Leasing Professional will describe to a prospective resident.

Feature	Benefit	Emotional Appeal
Window	Sunlight for plants	Homey feeling
Ice maker	Convenience	Ease when entertaining
Fireplace		
Sliding door to balcony		
Microwave		
Indirect lighting		
Ceiling fans		
Nook		
Bookcases		
Vaulted ceilings		
Breakfast Bar		
Extra Electrical Outlets		



Feature	Benefit	Emotional Appeal
Disposal		
Stainless steel sink		
Pantry		
Trash compactor		
Balconies/Patios		
Other:		

Create a sentence for two features from the list above using the Feature-Benefit-Emotional Appeal selling approach:



Safety Tips for the Leasing Demonstration

As with any job, the Leasing Professional must be aware of personal safety. A few precautionary steps will minimize any unpleasant episodes during the leasing demonstration.

- ▶ Always insist on government-issued photo identification if required by your company. Make certain that the property posts a sign in the Leasing Center that states this requirement.
- ▶ Write the prospective resident's information on the Guest Card before the demonstration. This confirms the prospective resident's identity. Leave the identification and a note of the time when you are leaving in the Information Center while demonstrating the apartment home. No exceptions are allowed. This policy must be followed at all times to avoid any discriminatory practice.
- ▶ Let another staff member or the answering service know which apartment home you are going to demonstrate. If you are alone, you could lean into another office and announce to "an invisible person" where you are going. This leaves the impression that you are not alone and your whereabouts are known.
- ▶ If you feel uncomfortable about the intentions of the prospective resident, you could take another staff member with you for "training purposes."
- ▶ If no other staff member is available, ask a service team member to meet you at the apartment so that the "difficulty you had earlier in the day with a sticky lock" will not prevent the demonstration.
- ▶ If your community has a walkie-talkie, take it with you.
- ▶ Do not enter an apartment home in front of the prospective resident. Open the door and invite them to enter first. Do not allow the prospective resident to be positioned between you and the door. Never close the entry door. Latching doorstops are effective and/or dead bolt plungers can be left in the locked position to prevent the entry door from quickly and easily closing.
- ▶ Install a kickstand on the model door. Suggest the prospect tour the apartment on their own if you feel uneasy.

- ▶ Keep a clear path to the exit. Do not walk into closets, small bathrooms, storage rooms or small, confined areas. Encourage prospective residents to enter these areas so they can inspect them for themselves.
- ▶ Turn on all lights in the apartment home.
- ▶ If no one is available to support you, schedule an appointment with the prospective resident to return and see the apartment home when you will not be alone. Be sure to document the incident and be consistent with all prospects who attempt to view the property while you are alone.
- ▶ Speak with your supervisor about other recommended safety precautions that are specific to your community and company and whether they are available in written form.

Fair Housing Implications in Demonstrating

Throughout the leasing presentation, remember the two “Golden Rules” of Fair Housing:

- ▶ Be consistent
- ▶ Treat everyone the same

By applying these two rules during the leasing demonstration, the Leasing Professional will avoid the risk of a discrimination problem.

Be consistent in planning the leasing demonstration—the Leasing Professional should provide equal access of vacant apartment homes to everyone who is interested in leasing one. For example, every prospective resident that wants a two bedroom, two bath apartment home away from the pool, but near the lake, sees the same apartment homes as long as the apartment homes are available. Using a defined tour path with every prospective resident is ideal.

While conducting the leasing demonstration, the presentation should be objective and devoid of remarks or jokes about protected classes and of comments that discourage a protected class from leasing an apartment home. Every effort should be made to avoid “steering” a prospective resident to an area or a specific location that reflects on a protected class. Drawbacks should not be overemphasized.

Treat everyone the same. Leasing professionals deal with individual behavior styles and personalities. Yet people should not be stereotyped or treated differently because they are in a protected class. Offer the same price, special, discount, deposit, and fees to everyone shown a specific apartment home throughout the business day.

If a disabled prospective resident requests a modification to the apartment or an accommodation to a community policy, the Leasing Professional should tell them that they will need to consult with their supervisor regarding the request and that they will communicate with them as soon as possible with the answer to their request. It is better for a Leasing Professional to ask a supervisor before promising something that they might not be able to deliver.

These tips will help keep the Leasing Professional free of discriminatory actions. For more information, attend the NALP Legal Aspects Course.

When Does Closing Begin?

When the prospective resident signs the lease agreement and all required funds are collected, it is said that the Leasing Professional has “closed” the sale. **Closing is actually inviting the prospective resident to lease an apartment.** It is asking for the lease. If a Leasing Professional has thoroughly identified the prospective resident’s needs, built a great rapport and given a great leasing presentation, “closing” will be simple. The actual lease signing is just the final step in the full and personalized sales process.

Even though a well practiced tour can make closing easy, it is one of the most poorly practiced parts of the demonstration. Second Quarter 2004 shopping reports performed by the Ellis Management Company noted the Leasing Professional asks for the deposit only 63% of the time! If you will learn how to comfortably ask for the deposit, you will stand out from the crowd!

If a Leasing Professional has thoroughly identified the prospective resident’s needs, built a great rapport and given a meaningful leasing presentation, closing will be a natural conclusion.

“Closing” begins at the first contact with the property. This first contact could include driving by, surfing the net, hearing a personal reference or seeing an ad. The entire leasing process is geared toward having the prospective resident develop trust in you and recognizing you as someone who understands their wants and needs. The process culminates in the “close.”

The Leasing Professional begins to “close” when first gathering information and qualifying the prospective resident over the telephone. Closing occurs when the Leasing Professional:

1. Finds out about the prospective resident’s needs and wants and then begins to provide solutions that address these needs and wants.
2. Greets the prospective resident and helps them define their wants and suggests a tour of the apartment community, model apartments, and vacant apartments.
3. Demonstrates the apartment community and home, and uses the feature-benefit-emotional appeal strategy that “links” the prospective resident to the community.
4. Returns with the prospective resident to the Leasing Information Center and summarizes the solutions to the prospective resident’s needs and wants.
5. Assists the prospective resident with the completion of necessary paperwork.

Remember the ABC's of Closing: A _____ B _____ C _____

What are the Major Elements that are the Basis for the Sales Model?

1. The telephone contact;

“Closing” is demonstrated by appointment-setting, creating a sense of urgency, and securing a commitment to visit the property.

2. The greeting;

“Closing” is demonstrated by an enthusiastic welcome, a gracious invite, and a professional introduction.

3. The leasing interview;

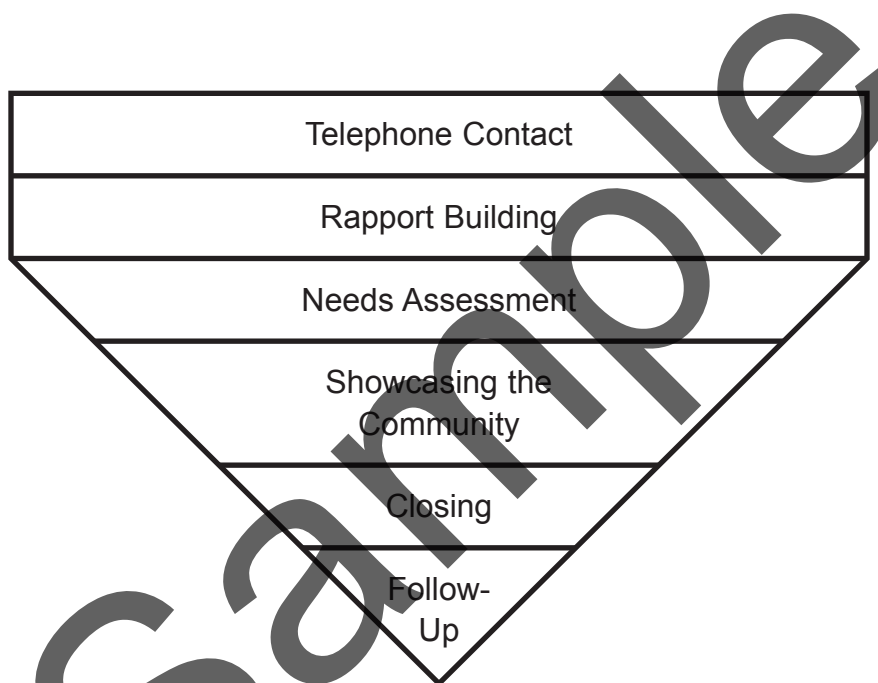
“Closing” is demonstrated by qualifying in a thorough, yet conversational manner, utilizing strong listening skills, understanding body language, discovering needs and wants, and describing features/benefits.

4. The leasing demonstration; and

“Closing” is demonstrated by personalizing key features/benefits to create desire and interest, using trial closes, and resolving objections in order to close.

5. The close.

Pyramid of Relationship Selling



The Pyramid shows that closing is the **fifth step** in a process that starts with a telephone contact. Yet closing is related to—and a part of—all of the other previous steps. Experienced Leasing Professionals will recognize this immediately but for others, closing may be somewhat confusing. They may have questions like:

- ▶ When do I begin to close the lease?
- ▶ How can I recognize when the prospective resident is ready to close?
- ▶ How do I ask for the close?

The following activities are part of the closing process:

- ▶ Identify the prospective resident's needs and wants and then have a plan to address these needs and wants.
- ▶ Greet the prospective resident, help them define their wants/needs and suggest a demonstration of the apartment community.
- ▶ Demonstrate the apartment community and home, and use the benefit-feature-emotional appeal strategy to “link” the prospective resident to the community.
- ▶ Upon returning with the prospective resident to the Information Center, summarize why the community is the right one for them while focusing in on the benefits and the prospective resident's needs and wants.
- ▶ Assist the prospective resident with the completion of necessary paperwork.

As indicated earlier, closing begins with the first contact at the property. The function of actually signing the lease document generally occurs at the end of the “pyramid.” In other words, you would never ask a prospect to sign a lease the minute you welcome them to your property. Nonetheless, at the initial handshake and throughout the prospect's visit, your professional presentation lets the prospect know you want and will ask for their lease!

Dynamics of an Effective Leasing Presentation

What techniques can a Leasing Professional use to address a prospective resident's rental needs and wants?

Remember the acronym PIE. It stands for:

P = _____

I = _____

E = _____

Persuade - Persuading the prospective resident begins with the first contact.

The Leasing Professional appeals to the ego of a prospective resident by convincing him that he is important and that moving into your apartment community will meet his needs and wants. Persuasion is accomplished by open communication, linking the prospective resident's needs and wants to the apartment community and home.

Inform - Superior product knowledge allows the Leasing Professional to provide the prospective resident with the quality, depth, and breadth of information necessary to convince the prospective resident that they should move into the apartment community.

They should be provided with logical reasons for living in the community. Informing should take place through involving, not just telling. Remember, "If you show me, I may remember. If you involve me, I'll understand." Employ the feature-benefit-emotional appeal method.

Enthuse - Informing through enthusiastic conversation and demonstration will have a positive impact on a prospective resident. The Leasing Professional should remember to stay prospect-oriented not just product-oriented throughout the presentation. Do not fall into the trap of the "amenity blast"—just exploding a list of amenities to the prospect hoping one or more will be meaningful.

Resolving Objections

Almost everyone can find something to object to in an apartment community or apartment home. Perhaps the location is just not right, the lighting is wrong, the price is too high, etc. The successful Leasing Professional recognizes these objections as opportunities to close more effectively.

What is an objection?

An objection is a reason or opinion that can be either stated or just thought that focuses on the negatives of a feature and/or benefit. Sometimes an objection can be hidden or unknown. Then the Leasing Professional must use effective questioning techniques to uncover it.

On the surface, an objection is something the prospective resident feels is not right. It might be a problem within the apartment home, within the apartment community, or perhaps within the larger community or area as a whole.

A prospective resident's objection is a stated or implied reason or hesitation that influences the prospective resident's decision to reject the apartment home and/or community. A prospective resident may raise an objection to seek answers or solutions from the Leasing Professional so that they can say, "Yes!" to the sale. An objection is a "buying signal" in which the prospective resident is seeking logical reasons to buy.

Some objections are easy to resolve!

Objections that are easier to resolve are those where the prospective resident misunderstood what was said or has an incorrect impression. Simply restate the correct information without assigning blame to the prospective resident for the misunderstanding.

Other objections are more difficult!

Some objections are more difficult. These are the ones that are essentially true. Acknowledge the objection, admit it and attempt to reverse it by finding another benefit in the objection. This may take planning but if the objection is true, you will hear it often enough that you will be able to plan a response. In the case where you know that the issue is true for all apartment communities in the area, inform the prospective resident of this fact.

There are five general types of objections:

P _____

P _____

P _____

P _____

P _____

How does a Leasing Professional deal with the five major types of objections?

A Leasing Professional deals with the five general types of objections by learning to recognize each type of objection and practicing ways to resolve each one.

Sample



The Private Objection

A private or hidden objection is something the Leasing Professional “senses.” Because it is not communicated, it may be difficult to identify.

If the Leasing Professional senses a private objection, summarizing the benefits and features again to see if something has been overlooked is a good technique. Other strategies include asking the prospective resident:

“May I ask why are you hesitating?”

or

“Have you seen anything you like better?”

or

“Was there something about the apartment you do not like?”

or

“What more can I do to help with your decision?”

or

“Are there any concerns or issues that I’ve failed to address?”

Summarize the features and benefits that the prospective resident already recognizes as reasons to choose this apartment home and community and ask, “What else are you thinking about?”

The Price Objection

It is natural for some of us to want more than we can afford. This may be a private or hidden objection because the prospective resident does not want to admit this.

The Leasing Professional may resolve this objection by emphasizing the value of living in this apartment community. You can enhance value by reviewing the features and benefits that make the apartment home worth the price. Sometimes the price really is out of the prospective resident’s reach. Yet often the apartment home price is within their reach if the Leasing Professional can convince the prospective resident that money will be saved in other ways, such as a shorter drive to work or no more need to join a private club for pool or fitness use.

When a prospective resident states that the rent is too high, the Leasing Professional should ask, “How much is too much?” to establish the dollar and value amount that must be discussed. Or discuss what the prospective resident has budgeted for housing so you can fully understand their desired rent, utilities and expenses.

The Place Objection

Factors such as work, shopping, school, and recreation make some locations preferable to others. The location of the apartment community cannot be changed but the Leasing Professional can prepare for this objection in advance.

Make sure your presentation lists the benefits of the existing location. Personalize them to each prospective resident. Few locations will satisfy all the needs of all prospective residents. It is a trade off. The better you know the needs and wants of your prospective residents, the easier it will be to overcome this objection.

For example, the prospective resident may mention that the apartment community is too close to the shopping center next door. The Leasing Professional can turn this into a positive by stating that a lot of the residents enjoy the conveniences associated with being close to the shopping center and the short drive to pick up last minute grocery items.

When a prospective resident states that a location is not desirable, the Leasing Professional should ask questions to uncover specific location issues. This way, an appropriate objection recovery statement could be made to address the concern.

Sample



The Prejudice Objection

A prejudice objection reflects an individual's preferences for specific features that are not available in the apartment home and/or community. Many of these objections can be anticipated. By composing a list of possible or previously stated objections, the Leasing Professional can prepare for and anticipate objections that may arise.

Example: The successful Leasing Professional anticipates prejudice objections and deals with them directly. For example, the Leasing Professional acknowledges the small square footage of a kitchen by stating, "This is our stepsaver kitchen." It might be noted that space saved in the kitchen was used to make a larger living area where space was more important. The Leasing Professional may also add that a compact kitchen means less cleaning time.

Con	Pro
No washer/dryer	More space in the apartment and reduced utility costs.
No fireplace	More wall space for flexible furniture placement.
Small pool	Your rent dollars are not being wasted to maintain a large amenity that is used infrequently.
Limited parking spaces/no street parking/no garage	Reduced vehicle noise. Reduced gas fumes, emissions. Non-residents are not using our lots.



The Procrastination Objection

This objection is less a result of the apartment home and community and more a result of the prospective resident's state of mind. The objection is that "I'm not ready to make a decision at this time." The Leasing Professional should handle this type of objection carefully.

If the inventory of apartment homes is low, one way to handle the procrastination objection is to **create a sense of urgency**.

Remind the prospective resident of limited availability of this type of apartment home and how the prospective residents may lose out on a home that meets their needs and wants. The Leasing Professional should try to discover when the prospective resident would be ready to make a decision and should schedule a follow-up appointment.

By making a statement such as in the following example, a positive sense of urgency can be created:

"It would be nice to have an apartment home of your choosing. While the perfect apartment community probably does not exist, based on everything you have shared, our community comes pretty close."

Procedures for Resolving Objections

What are some good procedures for resolving objections in general?

The keys to resolving objections are to anticipate them and have alternatives available. There are three techniques that may be used with objections in general:

- ▶ Admit it;
- ▶ Explain it; and
- ▶ Resolve it.

Admit It!

Unless the prospective resident has misinterpreted something, or the Leasing Professional has misspoken, the prospective resident's objection is valid, at least to them. The Leasing Professional should admit it and agree with the prospective resident. The Leasing Professional should build on this agreement by pointing out the advantages of living in this apartment home and community.

The Leasing Professional should anticipate an obvious objection and deal with it in the feature-benefit-emotional appeal sequence. The Leasing Professional should seek agreement, and avoid conflict and arguing with the prospective resident.

An example may be: "This kitchen is too small." "The kitchen is small. When we designed the step-saver kitchen, we used the extra square footage in the bathroom. Anyway, aren't counter space and cabinets the most important feature in the kitchen?"

Explain It!

Prospective residents will disagree on features. One will like the location of the main bedroom and bath being connected; another will not. The successful Leasing Professional puts each objective in a positive perspective.

For example, if the feature is a main bedroom and bath being connected, then the benefit is convenience at night. Or, reverse the process for the prospective resident that sees it as just the opposite. When the feature is the bathroom across the hall from the main bedroom, the benefit is that guests do not have to pass through the bedroom to reach the bathroom facilities.

Finding the positives or the advantages requires advanced thought and planning by the Leasing Professional. Again, it is best to prepare for possible objections by listing the advantages of each proposed negative. A skillful Leasing Professional accentuates the positive and minimizes the negative.

These situations provide an opportunity to use the **Feel/Felt/Found** technique.

When a prospective resident objects to something, you as the Leasing Professional should first acknowledge their concern by expressing that we understand how they **feel**. Then, we state that others who have leased at our community originally **felt** the same way. Finally, much like relating a testimonial from a satisfied customer, we describe how these satisfied residents eventually **found** that their concerns were resolved and they moved in.

For example: “I can appreciate how you **feel** about wanting a place to exercise because I understand how important daily exercise and fitness are to you. Interestingly enough, a number of other people living here once **felt** the same way you do.

However, after looking around the area, they **found** that our rental rates were considerably lower than communities that have to pass the costs of equipping and maintaining the clubhouse facilities onto their residents. In fact, the money that these residents have saved has allowed them to join the local fitness club down the street.”

Resolve It!

There are two approaches to resolving an objection. One is the boomerang, in which the Leasing Professional resolves the objection by turning a negative into a positive. For example, if the trash center is located close to the apartment home and detracts from the overall appearance, the Leasing Professional points out that it is convenient in bad weather since fewer steps are required for disposal.

Example: Small bedroom = larger general living area.

A second technique to resolving an objection is to use sincere empathy to identify with the prospective resident’s situation or feelings. Empathizing with the prospective resident on how they feel shows that the Leasing Professional cares and is listening to the prospective resident’s needs and wants.

Empathetic statements usually begin with “I can see why you are [feeling].” Then, the Leasing Professional could explain to them that they are not the only ones who object to a specific concern. Continue to resolve the objection by using the Feel/Felt/Found technique.

For example: “I can see why you are concerned about the storage space and **feel** that it would be difficult to store your belongings. Others have **felt** the same way. That is why we make our service team members available to install additional shelves when needed. Residents have **found** that these ‘extra’ shelves solved their storage issues.”

Once again, in handling the objection with a straightforward approach you are conveying trust and again providing solutions for the prospect.

Objections Activity

This activity will help participants to: (1) observe resolving objections in action and (2) practice resolving objections with other participants. Follow your instructor's directions.

Please give responses on overcoming these negative statements.

1. I really want a third floor apartment.

2. I would like to be closer to my work.

3. I need more storage space.

4. I do not think my furniture will fit.

5. This apartment is too far from the Information Center and too close to the tennis courts.

6. It is really more than I can afford.

7. I need to think more about this.

8. I do not think my husband would like this arrangement.

9. I think XYZ Apartments is offering a \$200 move-in promotion and I'd like to check this out before making a commitment here.

10. You do not have _____ here. (i.e. garages, microwaves, Internet access, extra storage area, etc.)

Leasing Signals

The following is adapted from the “7 Secrets of Apartment Leasing” by Eric Cumley:

Recognizing an opportunity to close the sale is a skill developed by all successful leasing people. There are no set rules for the timing of a close, only some general guidelines. Remember, the prospective resident expects you to provide opportunities to close the sale and invite him to live in your community.

Direct closing opportunities generally occur after the Leasing Professional has presented the product, explained the benefits and, based on the prospect’s needs, addressed objections and gained the prospect’s trust.

You will improve your closing skills by:

- ▶ Listening to what the prospective resident says;
- ▶ Observing their body language and other nonverbal behaviors;
- ▶ Showing sincere concern regarding their new home; and
- ▶ Understanding what they think as well as what they feel.

You are “reading” the prospective resident so that you can gauge the timing of your closing statements. The most opportune times for closing statements are during the demonstration of a model apartment home, at the conclusion of the demonstration, and while returning to the Information Center.

Assuming that an apartment home that fulfills the prospective resident's needs and wants, is available and the prospective resident is qualified, the Leasing Professional can increase their closing ratio by following these steps:

1. Recognize buying signals.
2. Reinforce buying signals.
3. Evaluate interest and sense of urgency.
4. Offer reassurance.
5. Close by inviting the prospective residents to lease. Personalize each statement: "Your new address," "Your rental rate," or "Your carpet color."

Recognize Buying Signals

Buying signals are verbal and non-verbal.

- ▶ Verbal signals are reflected in the positive answers to specific questions. For example, as the living room is being shown, ask the prospective residents, "What do you think about the wonderful view?" If the prospective resident responds favorably saying, "Yes I like it", or "I really like this apartment, how much again is this one," they are sending buying signals.
- ▶ Non-verbal signals are messages translated through facial expressions and body language. As we have seen earlier in the NALP program, body language can say more than verbal communication.

Below are a few of the more prevalent buying signals. Put a checkmark in the box in front of the buying signals that are non-verbal:

- Relaxing the body and maintaining good eye contact.
- Nodding positively to the Leasing Professional's questions—saying yes five or more times.
- Beginning to calculate with a pencil or calculator.
- Writing notes.
- Studying the brochure carefully.
- Smiling and showing enthusiasm.
- Talking about the placement of furniture.
- Discussing rental payments, pro-rated rent, move-in dates, availability.
- Asking a spouse or friend for an opinion.

Sample



Reinforce Buying Signals

When the prospective resident is sending buying signals, reinforce those signals. For example if the prospective resident says, “I sure do like this bedroom and my queen size bed would look good in here,” use the “Tell Me” question to draw more information and reinforce the signals with the prospective residents. For example: “Tell me what type of furniture do you have?” This encourages the prospective residents to talk about their furnishings and then visualize living in the apartment home.

Answer: A “trial close” is a statement made by the Leasing Professional which asks the prospective resident to decide on a minor point or to think about their feelings or reactions to a specific feature or benefit of the apartment home, community, or area.

When the Leasing Professionals see one of these buying signals, they should initiate a trial close. Here are a few examples of a trial close:

“How do you think your roommate would like this view?”

“Will you need access to our fitness center in the evenings?”

“How does this fit with your housing needs so far?”

By stating a trial close, you are asking the prospective residents to “try” the apartment or its benefits, features, amenities, etc. Keep in mind that when you initiate a trial close, you must give the prospective residents time to think and reply before speaking again. There is a fine line between closing and pressuring.

Evaluate Interest

“Is this what you had in mind?”

“Would this apartment home work for you?”

“What do you think?”

These three questions reveal the level of interest and sense of urgency of the prospective residents. Asking these questions helps the Leasing Professional decide on the next plan of action. For example, if the prospective resident answers the questions by saying, “No, I think I need something larger,” this gives you the opportunity to complete a quick needs check to ensure that the next apartment home shown fits the prospective resident’s needs.

Because prospective residents frequently buy based on emotion, the Leasing Professional can ask:

“How do you feel so far about everything that I have shown you today? Is this what you had in mind for yourself?”

This open-ended question will draw more information from the prospective resident and is considered a trial close.

Offer Reassurance

1. Give the prospective resident your undivided attention throughout the tour.
2. Display and discuss the application early in your conversation. (Perhaps have the application handy in the model or during the tour to discuss with the prospective resident prior to returning to the office. This softens the closing process.)
3. Remind the prospective resident that you are here to help them find an apartment home they will enjoy.
4. Summarize some key benefits that interest the prospective resident.

For example: “Well, Olivia, I know you will love relaxing after work in the sauna and strolling along the community walk in the evenings.”

5. Give the prospective resident a reason to take action and lease.
6. Empathize with the prospective resident. Renting an apartment is a serious decision, one in which you are professionally trained to offer assistance.
7. Remind the prospective resident of the many satisfied residents who already live at your community.
8. Discuss the professionalism of your management and service teams.
9. Use a Feel/ Felt/ Found statement. “I know how you feel. I’ve felt the same way. I’ve found it helps to”

Securing the Lease

By this point, you have built a trustworthy rapport with the prospective resident. You want them to move forward with leasing an apartment home. So give the prospective residents valid and honest reasons to take action. Our prospective residents do not want to be sold or manipulated into leasing an apartment home. Let the prospective resident know that you want them to take action. Use these reasons to reassure and encourage them into action:

“I’d like to have everything ready for your move-in date (REASON). Shall I get started?”

or

“I want to ensure no one else will get this apartment (REASON). And since it looks like this apartment home could be a good fit for you, let’s get your deposit recorded and your application completed...”

or

“Since your time is valuable and searching for an apartment home can be exhausting (REASON), why not end your search here and take this apartment off the market by reserving it with your application and deposit?”

Close by Inviting the Prospective Resident to Lease

Closing, or getting a commitment, actually begins the moment a prospective resident arrives at the Leasing Center. Everything we do from greeting the prospective resident, through demonstrating the apartment, to resolving objections, is designed with one aim in mind: to get a lease! It is the crucial point on which the success of the leasing effort depends.

Remember, there is no exact statement that will work in every situation and with every prospective resident.

Careful review and practice will make closing a comfortable process for you! Many leases have been lost simply because no one asked for the lease! Remember only 63% of Leasing Professionals do! To better understand closing, let's understand what closing is not.

List some examples of what closing is **not**:

Ask for a Commitment

If you don't _____, you won't _____.

_____ and you shall _____.

Ask for a commitment and invite the prospective residents to lease. Ask for their business! Some “asking” statements that lead to the close:

- ▶ “Is this what you had in mind?” – If the prospective resident says yes, then this is an “open door” to ask, “Would you like for me to take this apartment home off the market for you?”
- ▶ “From everything you discussed, I have narrowed the list down to three excellent choices. We do have others. I’ve chosen in accordance with your specific needs.” **Be careful not to violate Fair Housing laws.** Hopefully the prospective resident will tell you which one works for them and then you can proceed with asking for the deposit. “Great, I will go ahead and take apartment #625 off the market for you. I will just need your \$100 deposit.”
- ▶ “You mentioned to me how important it is that you have a short commute to your office and we calculated a 15-minute drive to your office from here. You also mentioned that you needed to save money and our mini-blinds are already included in the apartment saving you those upfront costs. And you stated that your monthly housing budget is \$800 and this apartment is only \$775. Since we are able to meet your important housing needs, it makes good sense to make this apartment your new home. Shall we begin by taking your \$100 deposit now?”

What If the Prospective Resident Says No When You Have Asked a Closing Question?

Do not assume that the first “no” really means “no.” Why? The prospect may still have a concern or question that has not yet been resolved or answered. It may just mean “I’m not yet ready.”

In fact, statistics say that people most often will say “no” and still make the commitment. As a Leasing Professional, your job is to encourage your prospect to tell you why they are not ready to lease. As you ask and they explain the “no,” you actually become better enabled to invite them to lease.

Continue to find out what it will take for the prospective resident to select your community. Take advantage of the moment and the efforts you have made during your entire presentation. It is easier to keep enthusiasm high now than to start all over at a later date. Be positive and maintain a relaxed atmosphere.

Sometimes asking “What will it take for you to lease an apartment home today?” will unveil the true reason or objection for not leasing. Now you can overcome the specific objection by using a planned strategy discussed earlier in this program. If the prospective resident needs to return with a spouse or friend, try to schedule a follow-up appointment for their return visit.

A “no” gives you the opportunity to prove your professionalism, to show you are ready to respond to whatever the concern is and that you care about whether this prospect becomes your resident. Encourage the “no's!”

Closing Techniques

The "Summary" Close - This allows you to guide your prospective resident to make a decision by summarizing all the positive points about the apartment and the community that the prospective resident liked. The effectiveness of this close depends on how well you listened to your prospective resident. Be sure to follow fair housing rules. For example:

The "Personal Invitation" Close - This should be used in every presentation along with other closes. It basically is a sincere invitation to the prospective resident such as:

The "Assumption" Close - This is showing the prospective resident your confidence in your community and that it is not a question of whether they will lease, but which apartment they will move into. Example:

Which Close - This is an extension of the Assumption Close. The Alternate or Which Close uses opinion gathering questions such as:



The "Only One" Close - This close stresses that while this apartment may be the "only" one of its kind that suits all the prospective resident's needs, you would hate for them to miss out on it. For example:

The "Price Increase" Close - This is actually another type of the Urgency Close. The price may be increasing or a special is only for this week. If they wait, the rate may be higher. Statement:

The "Acceptance" Close - Simply use the psychology that people have a need to be accepted in society. Remind the prospective resident that you have other people that work at the prospective resident's company and that they will feel right at home in your community. Avoid mentioning a protected class so you do not violate fair housing laws. Example:

The "Yes" Close - By asking questions that will obtain a "Yes" response, this close should allow the prospective resident to say "Yes" when they are asked for a deposit. Example:

The "Commitment" Close - This is a good closing technique for prospective residents who have just begun looking for an apartment and feel unsure about making a decision before looking at other apartments. Offer to hold the apartment until 5:00 p.m. that afternoon. This may require a partial deposit depending on company policy. Example:

The "24-Hour Hold" Close - This close simply means holding the apartment for 24 hours or less. Example:

The "If I Could...Would You" Close - If there is a particular objection your prospective resident has, get their commitment that they would lease if you could "fix" it. If the prospective resident says that there is not enough closet space, your reply could be

Sample



The "Priority Waiting List" Close - This is used when a prospective resident is looking out into the future—past the time when you have apartments available. Encourage the prospective resident to still complete an application and leave a partial deposit. When an apartment becomes available, the prospective resident can either take it or change their mind and their deposit is fully refundable (check your policies and procedures). Sample statement:

The "What Did I Miss?" Close - In this close, you ask the prospective resident why they have not made their decision to lease. For example:

(If the prospective resident has a hidden objection, they will now identify it, giving you the opportunity to resolve and continue closing.)

Name That Close Activity

Several closes have been placed in a bowl. Select two closes from the bowl. Role-play a closing strategy on the instructor when you have a close that you feel would apply to the scenario presented. Be ready to answer: Which closes would you use and why?

1. Mr. Okura is unable to move for one month. The apartment home is available now. Only your manager can make this decision.

Possible closes:

2. Russ is overwhelmed by all of the things he has to keep in mind about apartment hunting. He likes most of the features about your apartment home but is still not sure what is the best thing for him to do.

Possible closes:

3. John is a student at the nearby college and brought his parents to take a look. He likes the location because it is convenient to the nightlife. His parents like the controlled keycard system as well as the lighted parking.

Possible closes:

4. Robin and Alex seem to be unable to agree on anything. Each likes certain features but not all of them.

Possible closes:

5. The Tanner family agrees with everything you say but provides you with very little information about themselves and their wants and needs.

Possible closes:

6. Eric and Maria will be married next month. She seems more interested in the apartment home than he does. Your guess is that money may be a problem for them.

Possible closes:

7. Tom is in town for two days, preparing for a move next month to your part of the city. He did not have time for an apartment tour but raved about your location and the recreational amenities.

Possible closes:

8. Dana and Jordan are single roommates who are very busy with their careers and schooling. They frequently eat out but are often seen poolside most Saturdays at their current apartment community. They are both watching their budgets because of expenses related to their doctorate degrees.

Possible closes:

Continue Supporting the Prospective Resident Even After the Close

Be ready to offer assurance as soon as the prospective resident completes the application and pays the deposit. It is normal for the prospective resident to wonder at this point if they have made the right decision and to seek assurance. Say something like:

“Please feel free to contact me with any questions that may arise.”

or

“I am so glad you have decided to experience the great lifestyle that our community offers.”

Using reaffirming statements will boost your prospective resident's confidence in their decision to lease and increase their sense of ease. Invite them to attend a resident function. Use feel-felt-found statements to reassure the prospect you understand the importance of his decision.

Follow-Up

“Of the five communities I visited, only one sent a follow-up thank you note. That friendly and professional note influenced my decision to return to your community and lease.”

Follow-up, along with closing, is one of the poorest scored areas of a shopping report.

If a prospective resident leaves your office without actually closing the sale, do not file the information and forget it. A Leasing Professional performs follow-up to build on the rapport created and to invite the prospective resident back to the community for another visit.

Some Follow-Up actions that can enhance your chance of closing with your prospective resident:

1. **Ask permission to follow up before the prospective resident leaves.** Here is a great way to ask: “I'd like to stay in touch to answer any questions you have that may come up. Is it all right if I drop you a note or give you a call or is e-mail preferred?” If they do not want you to follow up, they will tell you. Perhaps they have not informed others that they are moving. You will avoid an awkward situation.

2. **Follow up with everyone who indicates they would welcome follow-up.** Remember to be consistent in your follow-up procedures and use the method approved by the prospect.
3. **Follow up immediately by leaving a message on their voice mail, answering machine or e-mail.** Be sure to use whatever method they have approved. A simple message that states, “Hi, this is Jenna at Wonderful Apartments. You were just here looking at our apartments and I wanted to thank you for visiting. I know you have a lot of things to do to prepare for your move at the end of the month, so please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at 555-555-5555.” Your voice will be the first one they hear upon returning from a day of apartment hunting.
4. **Write and mail a thank you note within 24 hours of their first visit.** Personalize the note by reflecting on the information gathered from the tour. Invite them back for a second tour.
5. **Stay in touch.** Set up a schedule to follow up. Make one call per week based on what you know to be the prospect’s needs.
6. **Send them a thank you note when they do lease from you.** This sends the message of reassurance to the prospective resident and continues to develop the lines of trust.
7. **Make time for follow-up.** Take five minutes immediately after the prospective resident leaves to make the first phone call and then immediately write the thank you note. Then set aside 15 minutes each day for follow-up. Continue the follow-up process on a weekly basis or until you discover the prospective resident has selected a new home elsewhere. If the prospective resident tells you he has decided to lease with the competition, ask why. Evaluate the answer to determine if you could have satisfied the prospective resident’s objectives at your community.
8. **Log your follow-up actions by noting the time and dates of calls, and the follow-up correspondence that was sent.** Most Welcome/Guest Cards have a space to record the follow-up actions. Make sure each contact with the prospective resident is documented.
9. **Log the follow-up efforts into some type of data base management software or other method to evaluate the results of follow-up.**

Fair Housing Implications in Closing

Successful Leasing Professionals are “always closing.” They seek ways to resolve objections, look for closing signals, and employ time tested strategies. But sometimes you may wonder if certain strategies you use violate Fair Housing laws. Consider the following examples:

May I provide discounts and incentives to certain groups such as the elderly and the military?

Yes. Discounts and incentives are not prohibited as long as they are offered consistently within that group. A discount to the elderly is allowable because you will find elderly persons of all races, colors and nationalities, as well as elderly with families and elderly persons with disabilities.

- ▶ An “Incentive or Special Close” may only be used when applied to specific units and not individuals.

May I place a prospective resident on a “Priority Waiting List” or Future Resident Club?

Yes. Priority waiting lists are legal if all prospective residents are informed that such a waiting list exists, the number of persons on the list and that selection will occur in the order that names were placed on the list. Leasing Professionals must avoid any request from prospective residents that would require a violation of Fair Housing. When closing, you must offer every prospective resident the same special or discount.

Example: “Although we do not have a studio apartment available for your desired move-in date, for a deposit of \$100, I can place your name on our “Priority Waiting List” so you can be eligible for the next studio available. You would be the only person on the “Priority Waiting List” for a studio at this time.”

- ▶ The “Priority Waiting List” Close may be used only if all prospective residents are informed that such a waiting list exists, the number of persons on the list, and that selection will occur in the order that names were placed on the list.

May I honor a request from a prospective resident who does not want to live near families?

No. Leasing Professionals must avoid requests from prospective residents that would force the Leasing Professional to violate Fair Housing laws. One such request is for the prospective resident to ask for an apartment home that is not near families. The Leasing Professional cannot honor such a request. Rather the Leasing Professional should show the available apartment homes and let the prospective resident choose the apartment home they prefer. To do otherwise would be steering.

May I direct prospective residents with families to other areas of the apartment community?

No. This is considered steering. While reasonable precautions should be taken to protect all residents, the ultimate decision and responsibility for the selection of an apartment home rests with the prospective resident.

Remember: **Always Be Closing (ABC)**, while remaining mindful of the Fair Housing laws and guidelines.

Sample

Summary

You have learned the dynamics of an effective leasing presentation—from how to effectively prepare for and perform a property demonstration to how to lease apartments in a safe and professional manner. You have also learned how to analyze and respond to human behavior by recognizing closing signals and resolving hidden and stated objections. By implementing all of the essential elements of the leasing model, the result is a new resident in your apartment community.

In summary:

1. Define, compile and use product knowledge while demonstrating an apartment home and community.
2. Prepare for property tours.
3. Implement the Feature-Benefit-Emotional Appeal approach to Selling vs. Telling.
4. Remember to use safety precautions during leasing presentations.
5. Remember the **ABCs: Always Be Closing.**
6. Recognize and use specific closing opportunities, resolve hidden and stated objections and identify buying signals that help close a prospective resident.
7. Put your prospective resident at ease and implement one of the many “close” strategies available for this stage of the leasing process.
8. If the prospective resident does not lease on the first visit, follow up with the prospective resident right away. Immediate attention to the undecided prospective resident will make you stand out among your competitors and persuade your prospective resident in your direction thus allowing you to secure more leases.
9. Understand that ongoing practice will increase your confidence and improve your professional skills. You will prepare for common objections, try various trial closing statements, and practice effective closing techniques to enhance your success as a leasing person.

Exam

The NALP exam is comprehensive and delivered online. The NALP Exam is 100 questions and timed for 1 hour and 30 minutes. All participants must enroll in the designation program to be eligible to sit for the exam. To enroll in the NALP course, go to the NAA Web site at:

www.naahq.org/education

You will need an Eligibility Code in order to sit for the exam. Eligibility Codes are unique to each participant and are the key to unlocking the exam. Your Eligibility Code will be given to you by your instructor or Sponsoring Organization.

The passing point for the comprehensive exam is 70 or above.

You must work individually on the exam. No books are allowed to be used as a reference.

For more detailed information on the exam and to download the Candidate Handbook, please visit the NAA Web site:

www.naahq.org/education/designationprograms/Pages/OnlineExams