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# The Leasing Interview

**NALP** 

NATIONAL APARTMENT  
LEASING PROFESSIONAL®



## **NALP** **National Apartment Leasing Professional**

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### **Acknowledgments**

The National Apartment Association Education Institute acknowledges the contributions of countless volunteers who made this program possible. From the first time pencil was put to paper, through development, revisions and updates, pilot programs and expert reviews, the servants of our industry have made the National Apartment Leasing Professional course and designation a reality. We extend our thanks and pledge to maintain the NALP designation as the premier standard apartment industry training program for all Leasing Professionals.

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## Just for Instructors

The National Apartment Association Education Institute thanks you for your time, talent, and expertise in training and developing the next generation of Leasing Professionals.

Whether you are a subject matter expert or lay person...a seasoned instructor or a new teacher...this guide will help you become an even more engaging and effective trainer.

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.

In this course on interviewing, you will help Leasing Professionals:

- ▶ Inspect and prepare the apartment community, Leasing Center and target apartments for daily business.
- ▶ Properly greet perspective residents.
- ▶ Demonstrate how to build rapport with prospective residents in order to understand their needs and wants.
- ▶ Apply best practices relating to Fair Housing issues involved in greeting and conducting the leasing interview to properly qualify a prospective residents.

Although this course is targeted at people with at least six months of leasing experience, it can also be used to teach those who would like to learn more about the legal aspects of our industry.

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

## Fast Facts: The NALP Leasing Interview Course

This overview will help familiarize you with the educational approach for this course and ways you can enrich the training for participants.

### Course Type

- ▶ Instructor-led classroom training
- ▶ Use short presentations, participant discussions, and learning activities to teach the course material

### Course Materials

- ▶ This Instructor's Guide
- ▶ The Leasing Interview Participant Guide
- ▶ Flipchart or whiteboard with markers
- ▶ Your own Leasing Notebook
- ▶ Four or five photos of individuals (not famous) removed from magazines. These photos should then be placed on a single sheet of paper and photocopied so that there is one set of photos for every three attendees. These will be used in the activity detailed on page 28. Read through the activity to be certain you have the corrected materials assembled prior to the day of the class.


### Course Length


Approximately four hours


### Course Tone


Fast paced, high-energy, experiential, fun

## Legend:

 *Italics*      Instructional Direction

      The NALP Leasing Interview PowerPoint Presentation includes a slide on this topic

#  #      Instructor's Guide page number (*black/outside*), with corresponding Participant Guide page number (*gray/inside*)

      Key pieces of information that will be part of the examination – instructors should focus on these items

## Where this Course Fits in the NALP Curriculum

The Leasing Interview is the fourth course in the NALP training series, the suggested order for delivery is 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

## Course Schedule-at-a-Glance

Here's a quick look at the topics included in the Leasing Interview course, the approximate time it will take to teach them, and a suggested schedule.

Training Topic	Length	Suggested Time
Introduction	15 minutes	8:30am–8:45am
First Impressions Make a Difference	60 minutes	8:45am–9:45am
Understanding the Prospective Resident's Reason for Moving	15 minutes	9:45am-10:00am
Be Prepared and Knowledgeable	20 minutes	10:00am–10:20am
Break	10 minutes	10:20am–10:35am
The Greeting	25 minutes	10:35am-11:00am
Fair Housing Implications	30 minutes	11:00am–11:30am
Conducting the Leasing Interview	45 minutes	11:30am–12:15pm
Summary and Wrap Up	15 minutes	12:15pm–12:30pm

## Preparing to Teach the Course

To give course participants a first-rate learning experience, plan to spend several hours preparing to teach this class.

### When to Prepare

Depending on your experience with this course, begin preparing one to two weeks before the scheduled course date. That is enough time to absorb the material without feeling rushed.

### How to Prepare

- ▶ **Read the Instructor's Guide carefully.** Get familiar with the organization and flow of the course, as well as the content itself.
- ▶ **Look for ways to personalize the instruction.** Add your own stories, examples, and insights. Make the material come alive for the participants.
- ▶ **Mark up this guide.** Write notes throughout. Highlight passages you want to emphasize. Add prompts for your examples and explanations.
- ▶ **Practice.** Do a dry run of the material (or at least some of it) in front of willing colleagues or family members. Get their feedback. Find out: What are you doing well? What is one thing you could improve?
- ▶ **Preview and practice the Covey video activities before class.** Some modules contain activities centered on Franklin Covey teaching videos. Each contains an introduction, the video clip, concept questions, an industry-related activity and a resource sheet. You will need to hit the “next” button to drive the programming through these steps:
  - o *Play the introduction*
  - o *Play the video*
  - o *Click on each of the three concept questions that review the material in the clip*
  - o *Conduct the activity as described in your Instructor's Notes*
  - o *Review the Resource Page provided in the Covey material to close the activity*

### When it is Time to Teach the Course

- ▶ **Use this guide.** Refer to it often to keep the class on track. Using notes will make you look natural, relaxed, and yes, even confident.



- ▶ **Approach the course as a conversation, not as a presentation.** Keep things open and easygoing. Pick yourself up if you make a “mistake.” Answer the questions you can. Most important, avoid the temptation to be the expert—simply share what you have learned.
- ▶ **Keep participants actively involved.** Allow participants to ask questions, share ideas with one another, and get as much hands-on experience as possible. Remember: telling is not training.
- ▶ **Be yourself.** Participants appreciate (and learn more from) instructors who are not only knowledgeable, but also approachable, personable, and dedicated.

## Preparing the Classroom

To complete your final preparations, arrive at the training site at least one hour before class begins.

### Find the Location of these Public Facilities or Services

- ▶ Restrooms
- ▶ Kitchen facilities or vending machines
- ▶ Emergency exits

### Prepare Materials

- ▶ This Instructor's Guide (with all your preparation notes in it)
- ▶ The Leasing Interview Participant Guide (one for each participant)
- ▶ The Leasing Interview PowerPoint Slides (these are optional; use them if you wish)
- ▶ Evaluation Forms
- ▶ Sign-in form (to be turned in to the affiliate office after class)

### Prepare and Test Equipment

- ▶ Flipchart with stand or whiteboard
- ▶ Markers
- ▶ Microphone or sound system (if needed)
- ▶ Laptop computer with LCD projector (if using PowerPoint slides)



## Prepare a Learning-Friendly Classroom

- ▶ Arrange the tables and chairs in the room so that participants will be able to talk with one another, work in small groups, and take notes.
- ▶ Make sure the room is not too hot or cold.
- ▶ Ensure that there is adequate lighting.
- ▶ Write the course agenda on the flipchart or whiteboard.

## Welcome and Introduction

- I** *In this brief opening section, you will welcome participants, introduce yourself, and set the stage for the "Leasing Interview" course.*



*Show Slide 1*

- I** *Welcome participants to the course. Introduce yourself to the class and have them briefly introduce themselves. You may choose to conduct an ice breaker or warm-up exercise if necessary. Then, proceed with the script below.*

*Dive in...the material is great! And you are going to do just fine, too!*

## Introduction

This fourth course in the NALP training series concentrates on interpersonal skills that will help you be an effective Leasing Professional. As your position in an organization grows, your knowledge of the industry becomes more important. In this class, we are going to focus on the leasing skills required to create a favorable first impression and develop rapport with your prospective residents. By providing these skills, you will become a successful Leasing Professional.

- I** *Turn to page 5 of your Participant Guide, so we can go through the day's agenda, as well as cover a few housekeeping items.*

## Ground Rules

- ▶ **Participate fully.** What you get out of this class is fully dependent on what you put into it.
- ▶ **Help us stay on track.** We are going to cover a lot of ground today—at quite a fast pace—and to make sure you get the best training experience, we will need everyone to stay focused.
- ▶ **Have fun.** The amount of learning that will take place is directly proportional to the amount of fun you have.

## Questions?

- I** *Does anyone have any questions about the agenda, the ground rules, or anything else about today's session?*





*Show Slide 2*

## Course Objectives

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

- ▶ Inspect and prepare the apartment community, leasing center, and target apartments for daily business.
- ▶ Properly greet prospective residents.
- ▶ Build rapport with prospective residents in order to understand their needs and wants.
- ▶ Apply Fair Housing best practices to greeting and qualifying a prospective resident.

## Warm-Up Activity

- 1 *The object of this game is to illustrate the importance of first impressions and stereotyping. Ask the participants to introduce the person sitting to the right of them. In the introduction, have them guess what they believe to be the person's favorite type of music or type of car. Have them explain the reasons for their guesses.*

*On a flip chart, write down the type of music and car.*

*The person about whom the guess is made will then offer the correct information before proceeding on with their introduction of the person to their right. Continue down the line until everyone has been introduced.*



*Show Slide 3*

### Discussion questions:

1. *How accurate were your first impressions?*
2. *On what do we base them?*
3. *Have you ever opted not to meet someone or not do business with someone based on your first impressions?*
4. *What are stereotypes? Why do we have them?*

## The Leasing Interview and Qualifying Residents

- I** *Greeting and conducting the leasing interview of prospective residents are often the second and third steps respectively in the overall leasing process, the first generally being the telephone or Internet contact. (Obviously, if there is no telephone or Internet contact, these are the first two steps in the process.)*

*It is important for the participant to understand and value the emphasis that must be placed on the image of the apartment community and the professional image projected by the Leasing Professional.*

## First Impressions Make a Difference

**!** Remind participants that the saying “The first impression is a lasting impression” applies to both the physical setting and the Leasing Professional.



*Show Slide 4*

How welcome a prospective resident feels is based on two factors:

1. The environment presented
2. How they are greeted by the Leasing Professional

The first impression is made in the first 30 seconds of the meeting. The first impression influences the rest of the presentation.

- I** *Remind participants of their impressions of their classmates that they formed in the warm-up exercise.*

Why is appearance of the community so important?

In the multihousing industry, appearance is so important that we lose customers who never get a chance to see past the obvious. The image you project from the first moment the prospective resident visits your apartment community must be an image of pride and professionalism. This image already has begun to form in the prospective resident's mind, even before they enter the leasing center, as they subconsciously evaluate the aesthetic value of each of the following:



*Show Slide 5*

- ▶ Curb appeal
  - ▶ Signage/Flags/Banners
  - ▶ Landscaping and appearance of the grounds
  - ▶ Lighting
  - ▶ Exteriors of buildings
  - ▶ Common areas
  - ▶ Leasing Center
  - ▶ The tour route, model, and vacants
  - ▶ The Leasing Professional
- I** *Ask the participants which of these items does the leasing team have control over each day.*

*All of these items can be controlled by the Leasing Professional, if attention is placed on these items daily.*



## The Importance of Curb Appeal



*Show Slide 6*

**“What the public sees when driving or walking by your apartment community.”**

The apartment community's curb appeal makes a definite statement in the prospective resident's mind before you have the opportunity to meet them. Curb appeal can be one of your most valuable leasing tools. The appearance of your community indicates the type of resident you want to attract. If your grounds are littered with debris, the signage is in disrepair and the parking areas are not clean or are cluttered, the statement being made is a clear lack of caring for your apartment community or the residents who live there. This also reflects on your resident profile.

On the other hand, well-manicured lawns, clean windows and clean parking areas tell a different story. They say that you have something special to offer, that you have an excellent maintenance program and that you care about your residents. Good curb appeal will tempt the prospective resident to investigate the apartment community by creating interest and excitement.

The Leasing Professional should critique the apartment community's curb appeal daily.

Many companies spend large sums of money to plant seasonal flowers surrounding the exterior of the apartment community near the leasing center and common areas. If a prospective resident is driving past the apartment community on their way to work, they will be attracted by your apartment community's exterior appearance. Your curb appeal should make such a positive statement that it is one of your most effective forms of advertising.

**I** *Remind the participants of the following: If a prospective resident is driving or walking past the apartment community on their way to work they will be attracted by your apartment community's exterior appearance. Your curb appeal should make such a positive statement that it is one of your most effective forms of advertising.*



## Activity: Curb Appeal

- 1 Put the participants into groups of three or four. Their first task is to independently list the three best and three worst curb appeal features of their apartment community. Second, they should share their list with the rest of the group and see if there are any similarities. Then hold a class discussion and create a master list.

*Discuss why certain items seem to always be among the best features of curb appeal while others seem to be among the worst. After this activity, supplement participants understanding by pointing out some of the major points in the commentary above.*



Show Slide 7

## Signage

Signs are an important component of the apartment community's image. They should:

- ▶ Attract the prospective resident's attention.
- ▶ Identify the apartment community.
- ▶ Direct the prospective resident to the leasing center.

*Emphasize the following:*

- 1 Signs should be inspected daily if they are to serve their purpose. A sign that is bent, leaning, broken or faded, indicates neglect. If the sign is lighted, condition and effectiveness should be checked periodically in the evening. Most signs are accompanied by attractive surrounding landscaping, but greenery and flowers should never block the sign itself. Signs should attract attention, identify the apartment community and direct the prospective resident to the Leasing Center.





*Show Slides 8 and 9*

## Landscaping and Walkways

Landscape maintenance is an important item, which should be checked daily. If you are in a high-rise or mid-rise building, you may have more limited landscaping, but the tour path to the office from the lobby is just as important. As you drive or walk to the leasing center, evaluate the effectiveness of the plantings, landscaping and grounds of the apartment community.

**i** *Quickly review the following list with the participants, emphasizing their need to be aware of the importance that curb appeal has in their community's success:*

- ▶ Grass should be green, edged and cut at the proper level.
- ▶ Flowerbeds or planting containers should be clean and well maintained.
- ▶ Lobby glass should be clean and sparkling.
- ▶ Elevators should be clean and free of trash.
- ▶ Hallways should be clean, vacuumed and well lighted.
- ▶ Curbs should be in good repair and painted.
- ▶ Parking areas and drives should be maintained (no potholes) and striped.
- ▶ All areas should be free of clutter and debris.
- ▶ Carports and garages should be free of dead leaves, oil spots and in good repair.
- ▶ Playgrounds should be clean and equipment maintained.
- ▶ Recreation areas should be clean, organized and maintained.
- ▶ Shrubs and trees should be trimmed.
- ▶ Sidewalks and steps should be clean and in good repair.



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## Lighting

Lighting is not simply a decorator item. Its placement and effectiveness are an important part of your community's safety precautions. Outside and inside lighting fixtures should be checked on a routine basis for proper illumination.

All outside, inside hallway and/or stairwell lights should be in working condition, not only for the overall appearance of the apartment community and curb appeal, but for the safety of the residents as well. If the lights are not working properly, the apartment community may be vulnerable to litigation in case of an accident or criminal incident.



*Show Slides 11 and 12*

## Exterior Building Appearance

Both prospective and current residents see the condition of your buildings as a reflection of the overall effectiveness of the management staff.

**1** *Quickly go through the following questions with the participants. The goal in this section is to have the participants gain the understanding that they need to be continuously monitoring their community's curb appeal.*

1. Are gutters and siding painted and well maintained?
2. Are windows clean and in good repair? (No broken or cracked window sills.)
3. Is brick work/siding in good repair?
4. Is outside caulking checked routinely?
5. Is building lighting working properly?



6. Are railings and decorative trim painted and in good repair?
7. Are steps and sidewalks in good condition?
8. Are building addresses visible, clearly marked and well maintained?
9. Are resident's windows covered in neutral colored blinds or draperies?
10. Are balconies neat and tidy, not full of furnishings, bicycles, etc.?



*Show Slide 13*

## Amenities and Common Areas

Common areas are those shared by all of your residents. They should be included in your tour of the apartment community with the prospective resident.

**I** *Quickly address the following questions with the participants:*

- ▶ Are floors clean and in good repair?
- ▶ Are hallways and stairwells free of clutter?
- ▶ Are railings secure?
- ▶ Are mailboxes/mailbox rooms clearly marked and well maintained?
- ▶ Are walls in good condition?
- ▶ Are individual doors clearly marked by number or letter?
- ▶ Are package rooms neat and orderly?



## *Show Slide 14*

Items that should be inspected include:

- ▶ Flooring (clean and in good repair);
- ▶ Furnishings (clean);
- ▶ Kitchen facilities (clean and organized);
- ▶ Restrooms (in good repair and clean); and
- ▶ All recreational facilities clean and in good repair, including swimming pool, tennis courts, exercise rooms and other amenities.

When your apartment community offers residents and prospective residents an amenity, it is your responsibility to verify that area is clean and in good condition. Any repairs should be handled immediately upon discovery.



## The Leasing Center



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The Leasing Professional must realize that surroundings, furnishings and organizational atmosphere set the mood of the office and establish the level of professionalism. Make sure the office appeals to the five senses.

**I** *For the following, the Participant Guide lists the heading only. Have the participants break into groups of two or three and have them come up with ways that the leasing center can appeal to the five senses. Ask each team to report back to the group as you list the suggestions on a whiteboard or flipchart.*

**Sight** - The leasing center should be neat, clean and ready for business at all hours during the day. The desk should remain clear and free from clutter. A desk cluttered with paperwork indicates a lack of organization or a person too busy to be interrupted. Never eat at your desk.

**Taste** - Have refreshments available for the prospective resident. If your budget does not allow for freshly baked cookies, have candy available or assorted bags of chips, pretzels, and candy bars. A filtered water system is also an economical way to provide refreshments.

**Touch** - Have brochures, convenience lists available for the prospective resident to look over. There should be a display area used to illustrate interior color selections, listing of amenities, and lifestyle photographs of the apartment community. The display area should be cleaned daily so that the statement it makes about the lifestyle offered by your apartment community continues to be a positive one. Consider a texture board with carpet samples.

**Sound** - Soft, easy listening music set at a low level provides a calming atmosphere for the staff and prospective residents and improves the level of concentration.

**Smell** - Use scent rings, spray air freshener to keep the leasing center smelling clean. Avoid the use of lemon, as it has been found to increase anxiety in people. Scents such as baking cookies, apple pie and cinnamon are found to have a soothing effect.

Remember that organization is the key to the success of your apartment community and you. Investigate and inspect each model apartment before demonstrating it to prospective residents. On the next page is a sample of a Leasing Center Standards Checklist.

## The Leasing Center Standards Checklist

Every day, each Leasing Professional should take a moment to view the leasing center as a prospective resident would upon entering the office for the first time. Please complete the following checklist on your office and perform it mentally whenever you walk into your office.



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How does the office appear to the prospective resident?	<b>Yes/No</b>
1. Are all desks free of clutter with minimal personal items and stocked with leasing materials?	_____
2. Is the bathroom clean and neat, stocked with tissue items?	_____
3. Are the trash baskets clean and not overflowing?	_____
4. Are the floors free of clutter?	_____
5. Are all empty drink containers disposed of and not present throughout the office?	_____
6. Is the carpet vacuumed?	_____
7. Is the kitchen area clean and tidy?	_____
8. Is all the dusting completed throughout the office?	_____
9. Are all windows and glass doors throughout the office clean?	_____

	Yes/No
10. Do all team members have a “professional” appearance?	_____
11. Are all entrances to the office clean and orderly?	_____
12. Is the office supply and storage area neat and orderly?	_____
13. Is there quiet, easy-listening music in the background?	_____
14. Are all plants healthy looking and devoid of dead leaves?	_____



*Show Slide 18*

## The Tour Route, Model and Vacants

The tour route should be inspected each day to insure that the route is free of trash and neat. Are your apartments rent ready? Each apartment and model available to show must be inspected each day to ensure that the apartment homes:

- ▶ Are clean.
- ▶ Have working lights.
- ▶ Have working mechanicals.
- ▶ Are stocked with leasing tools.

**i** *Suggest that inspections are rotated amongst the team members each day to insure a fresh set of eyes is inspecting the fine details each day.*

Keep in mind that the model should appeal also to the five senses: **visual, sound, touch, smell and taste.**



## The Lease Professional: “Personal” Curb Appeal

### Activity 1:

- I** *Before you begin discussing personal image, break into teams and have each of the teams list the top five qualities of an outstanding Leasing Professional. After each team has their list, ask each team to share some of the qualities on the list and record the qualities on a flipchart. After recording the qualities and discussing them briefly ask the participants which of the qualities they possess and which ones they need to improve upon. Discuss the importance of setting goals to help the participants to achieve the qualities they desire. This is a good lead-in to discussing the most important part of the sale... the Leasing Professional.*

*Discuss the information in the Participant Guide under “Personal Curb Appeal” and “Appropriate Professional Appearance” .*



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**“You must first sell yourself before you sell anything.”**

- I** *Ask the participants, “How can this be achieved?” Discuss the personal inventory list found in the Participant Guide.*





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## **Activity 2** (Optional):

- 1 *A good activity to demonstrate the importance of a good appearance is to provide participants with photographs of people and have participants share their first impressions.*

*It is not important that the photos be of successful people because the purpose of the activity is for participants to hear what qualities others see in the photo. In this way, the participant who dresses inappropriately or who favors extreme grooming may learn that those attributes weaken their professional impression.*

*Use the pictures you selected before class. Using three participants in groups, have participants write down their impressions of each person in each photo such as “successful,” “lazy,” “smart,” etc. Next have the groups list the attributes that add to or detract from the person’s appearance. Review with the class both the list of impressions and the list of attributes. Note the similarities.*

## **You are the product—are you rent ready?**

- 1 *At the end of this section return the participants’ attention to the prospect.*

## Understanding the Prospective Resident's Reason for Moving

1 *Discuss this information and correlate to experience with a prospective resident.*

Your knowledge and understanding of why people move (in other words, their needs and wants) will help you in selling your apartment community.

The prospective resident may have several reasons for moving, however, your job is to clearly understand the purpose of the move in order to gain valuable insight that can be used to find the perfect home for the prospective resident and to prepare for a successful close.

Based on a 24-month survey conducted in 2002 by SatisFacts, the four major reasons why people move are:



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1. To buy a house
2. Rent Increase
3. Relocation
4. Moving home

To understand the above mentioned reasons, you must understand that each of the reasons can be categorized into four major categories:

1. Family
2. Finances
3. Prestige
4. Physical well being



## Family

Some factors may have changed in the prospective resident's family—recent marriage or a new baby, and the need for more space; a divorce or death and the need for less space; and the residents' grown children moved away, resulting in a need for less space.

## Finances

The prospective resident may have received a raise and can now afford a more luxurious apartment. Perhaps an extra source of income has been cut off and the prospective resident needs to economize or some financial change has occurred, making a move either necessary or desirable.

## Prestige

Some apartment communities and styles are symbols of success so a recently promoted prospective resident moves from an efficiency to a one-bedroom apartment with a study.

## Physical Well Being

An apartment community allows more time for leisure activities than does a single family house. The prospective resident may be searching for a more stress free lifestyle with recreational facilities and the time to use them.

The prospective resident may have one of the above reasons or a combination of several reasons that have prompted a move. By establishing the purpose of the move, the Leasing Professional gains valuable insights that can be used for a successful close.

Research completed by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) shows that the four major reasons why current residents selected their current apartments are:



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1. Monthly rent amount
2. Location/Neighborhood
3. Immediate availability
4. Lifestyle/ Image/ Safety

In addition to seeking apartments with more square footage and more bedrooms, residents favor these amenities:

- ▶ Full size washers and dryer
- ▶ Sufficient hot water
- ▶ Soundproofing and entryways with some degree of privacy
- ▶ Extra safety measures such as intrusion alarms, controlled access and closed circuit television monitors
- ▶ Larger windows
- ▶ Extra parking spaces
- ▶ Larger mailboxes
- ▶ Gardens, balconies or patios



## Be Prepared and Knowledgeable

The prospective resident is relying on you to help them make a good decision about their new apartment home. They view you as an expert in the multifamily industry.

This gives you the lead with the prospect; they already view you as a leader before you have even said a word. Seize that moment and build your presentation around this trust that has been placed in you. This credibility will continue to build if the following occurs:



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As a Leasing Professional, you should:

- ▶ Have complete knowledge of your product/market.
- ▶ Assemble a Leasing Notebook and properly use it.
- ▶ Understand how to develop a “Show List” and use it to your advantage.
- ▶ Determine the benefits of all the features in the community to be better prepared to “sell” your product.
- ▶ Develop a thorough knowledge of other communities in your area so that you understand how your community competes with them. Insert information and brochures into your Leasing Notebook about other properties.

As a Leasing Professional, you must have the confidence required to perform your job and have thorough knowledge of your product. To be effective in your role, you will need to know:



### *Show Slide 24*

- ▶ What your competitors are doing and/or offering.
- ▶ Community/neighborhood conveniences, businesses, etc.
- ▶ Room sizes, square footages.
- ▶ Quality/construction features.
- ▶ Brand names/types of appliances.
- ▶ Familiarity of all amenities (i.e., pool, tennis courts, etc.).
- ▶ Lease terms.
- ▶ Rental rates/ Deposits/ Policies.
- ▶ Energy efficiency features.
- ▶ Apartment features (i.e., vaulted ceilings, fireplaces, etc.).

**i** *Discuss Why to Use a Leasing Notebook.*

The Leasing Notebook has several uses and selling benefits. Listed below are two of these benefits:

- ▶ It shows the guest you are prepared and ready to show the community.
- ▶ It becomes a good resource when the guest asks a question.



## The Leasing Notebook

The Leasing Notebook is a resource tool that helps the Leasing Professional avoid memorizing vast quantities of information. By having information about the community organized and readily available it assists in answering the prospective residents questions on the spot which assists in closing the lease.



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Getting started you will need:

1. A three-ring binder containing inside pockets to include all blank leasing forms, Welcome Cards, Rental Application, Bond paperwork, floor plans, etc.
2. Set of tabs.
3. A three-hole punched zipper pocket containing pens, business cards, a tape measure, calculator, stapler, highlighter, etc.

**NOTE:** Clip the Guest Card to the front of the Leasing Notebook for handy reference during the leasing presentation to have the card easily available for recording additional information such as apartments shown, etc.



- ▶ **Availability Ready List:** Each day you should prepare a list of apartments that are ready for show. This means that the apartment was walked TODAY by a member of the staff to determine that it is in ready condition.



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- ▶ **Floor Plans:** If your individual floor plans are smaller than 8½' X 11', you should attach them to a regular sheet and insert under this section. On a separate sheet of paper, list rental rates, room sizes, square footages and security deposit amount for each floor plan.
- ▶ **Floor/Building Layout:** If you are in a highrise or a midrise building, you will need to know what floorplans are available on what floors, as well as pertinent information such as their view and primary exposure.
- ▶ **Site Plan:** Include a site plan with all amenities, pools, clubrooms, mailbox areas, or any outstanding features highlighted. This will allow you to determine the direction a particular apartment home faces, as well as its view.
- ▶ **Community/Building Information:** Keep a list of benefits that match the features of your building or community. It is also a good idea to keep a copy of the community's building addresses handy as well as a current Market Comparable Study.
- ▶ **Community/Building Convenience List:** This includes a standard list of businesses in the area such as schools, hospitals, libraries, post office, shopping centers, grocery stores, cleaners, etc. You might also include a city map of your area with points of interest indicated on the map.





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- ▶ **Photos:** It is recommended that photographs be taken of amenities, the model or scenic areas of your community and used to show prospective residents. These will be particularly beneficial during winter months or rainy days. For high rise buildings, photos of night time views are an excellent leasing tool. Also include pictures of the onsite team, particularly the service team.
- ▶ **Moving Information:** This section contains moving convenience lists and handy Web sites that assist with moving.
- ▶ **Leasing Overviews:** A leasing overview is a simplified explanation of your lease agreement. Include a copy of the leasing overview so that you will always feel at ease when explaining the lease. You can easily refer to this section when explaining the lease to your guest. Be careful to follow state and local laws regarding what contractual items can be reviewed by you and which should be handled by the manager.
- ▶ **Miscellaneous:** Other items you might want to include are: corporate apartments, furniture information, newsletters, calendar of events and resident activities. Site maps of the region, the city, and the local community each with the apartment community noted (May be obtained from city or county planning office), a note pad to jot down questions that need follow up or to note service request needs of an apartment demonstrated.

All of this information should be carefully organized in your Leasing Notebook so that you maintain a professional appearance.

## Avoid Industry Slang—Activity

- 1 *Review and Discuss*—give an example of an experience that you had regarding a leasing person using trade jargon or slang that made you feel excluded from the conversation if possible.

While it is important to assure the prospect that you are an informed Leasing Professional, use of slang and industry-specific terms can be confusing and even irritating to a customer. Substitute words, which have a positive connotation for those with negative connotations. Creating a positive image, for both future and existing residents, is the foundation of sound resident relations.

As a group, brainstorm alternatives for the industry team.

- 1 *The Participant Guide has blank lines in the second column.*



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Industry Term	Use These Words Instead
Unit	Apartment Home
Tenant	Resident
Complex/Project	Community/Neighborhood
Leasing/Leasing Agent	Leasing Professional
Landlord	Management
Rules and Regulations	Policies/Procedures
Office	Leasing center, Information Center, Welcome Center



# The Leasing Interview

Instructor's Guide

National Apartment Leasing Professional

Hold	May I place you on hold? (Wait for an answer before putting a caller on hold)
Work Order	Service Request



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Maintenance Man	Maintenance Supervisor/ Service Technician
Traffic/Pieces of Traffic	Prospective Residents, Guests, Future Resident
Security	Comfort
Security Gates	Entry Gates, Limited Access Gates
Security Intercom	Intrusion alarm
Problem	Challenge/Opportunity
Gym	Fitness Center
Laundry Room	Laundry Center/Clothes Care Center
"I don't know."	"That's a good question. Let me find out."



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“We can’t do that.”	“Let’s see what we can do.”
“I disagree.”	“I understand and I have another point of view.”
“No, that’s not included.”	“That’s an optional feature.”
“You’ll have to...”	“May I suggest...”
“But...”	“And...”
“Hang on a second.”	“This may take a few minutes. Are you able to hold or would you like me to call you back as soon as I can?”

## The Greeting

### How Should a Prospective Resident be Greeted?

Before serving a prospective resident, you must be prepared with the right attitude. Remember that you are here to take care of the prospect's needs. Offering a warm and friendly greeting conveys this message. A proper greeting is the first step in establishing personal rapport with the prospective resident. Prospects are not an interruption of your day, but rather why you are there...to help them find a home. Your goal is to make prospects feel comfortable so that they will communicate their needs and wants which will allow you to find the perfect apartment home for them.

Remember that research shows that they have already been through this process an average of nine times already! It is your job to greet, reassure, inform and close!



- i** *Participants need to know that there are a number of ways to express sincerity, to show the prospective resident that they are important:*



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- ▶ Use positive facial expressions;
- ▶ Have a friendly tone of voice;
- ▶ Stand, smile, and immediately acknowledge the prospective resident;
- ▶ Give the prospective resident your undivided attention; and
- ▶ Acknowledge the prospective resident even when you are occupied with another person or on a telephone call.

- i** *You may want to discuss the “art” of introductions and give some examples.*

*Encourage participants to develop their own style. In situations where both a man and a woman are prospective residents, make sure that the Leasing Professional talks with each person, establishes eye contact with each person, and does not leave anyone out of the greeting and preliminary conversation.*

*Ask participants to share experiences when they were left out of a conversation because the leasing person directed all of their comments to a partner.*

*Review the information in the Participant Guide also.*

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1. Make eye contact immediately.
2. Stand and eliminate physical barriers between you and the other person. Come from around your desk and head toward the prospect to welcome them.
3. Smile. A smile always conveys a warm welcome.
4. As you walk toward the person, greet them with warmth and enthusiasm. Extend a handshake as deemed appropriate.

A word about handshakes, especially for women: A University of Alabama study has proven a firm handshake correlates with positive personality traits. Researchers found a firm handshake was related positively to extroversion and emotional expressiveness. For women, it was also related positively to openness to experience. A firm handshake pays off!

Recall from the Telephone Presentations course to be respectful of the variety of cultures represented by our population today. Offer the handshake, but be prepared to accommodate a cultural preference NOT to shake hands.

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5. Tell them your name and obtain their name. "My name is Jenna Lee and your name is...?"
6. Repeat their name back to them, to help yourself remember it and to ensure that you are using the correct pronunciation. Then make sure you use their name occasionally throughout your presentation, but be careful not to overuse it.

Your first words of greeting and your expressions are vital to the positive impression you are attempting to give.



**i** Have the participants write down the greeting that they will utilize.

*If time permits, let participants select a partner, stand, and practice a good greeting. Select one pair to demonstrate in front of the class.*

## Greeting FAQs



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### **What if I am on the telephone speaking with another prospect and I am the only one in the office?**

If you are speaking on the telephone when prospects enter, acknowledge the prospects by looking up, smiling and offering a gesture indicating that you will be with them in a moment.

Prospects do not mind waiting after they have been acknowledged and when they understand that you are with another customer. People generally do not expect you to immediately terminate a business conversation, but they do expect you to be aware of their presence.

On the other hand, if prospects see that you are merely passing the time of day with a friend or an acquaintance, or if you are conducting a personal telephone call, they will become irritated by your unprofessional attitude.

### **What if a prospect enters and I have a report due to my supervisor immediately?**

Always put the customer first no matter what type of report or paperwork you are completing. Although you may find yourself hard pressed to meet report deadlines, you must delay them temporarily to greet prospects, even if they are not those with whom you have a special interest.





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### What if a prospect enters and I am already with another customer?

If you and the prospects are conversing during a particularly busy time and another person enters the Leasing Center, politely excuse yourself, greet the visitor, and explain that you or another person will assist them momentarily. Invite them to be seated or view the display area.

### Fair Housing Implications

**Reminder to Participants:** A lengthy review of Fair Housing laws is available in the Legal Aspects course. We will review only briefly the practices most involved in greeting a prospect and conducting a leasing interview.

It is important to greet and interview every applicant in the same way. You must greet each person equally, extend the same courtesies of every person, and ask for the same information from everyone.



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### Be consistent! Treat everyone the same!

Saying that, the Leasing Professional must use common sense—for example it would be inappropriate and even rude to attempt to shake the “hand” of a double amputee solely because you were compelled to treat everyone exactly the same.

- ▶ Make no statement or perform any act that implies that any protected class is more/less desirable than another as far as neighborhood composition, personal safety, or quality of schools.
- ▶ Do not tell jokes regarding protected classes to a prospective resident, another employee, or anyone who may be in a position to report the remark to others.



## How can the Leasing Professional avoid the risk of being accused of discriminatory housing practices?



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- ▶ Complete a Guest Card for all prospects.
- ▶ Document the leasing interaction.
- ▶ Ensure application requirements are the same for all.
- ▶ Apply policies uniformly.
- ▶ Give everyone the same information and use the same interview questions.
- ▶ Ask everyone the same questions based on the same circumstances.
- ▶ Know how to respond to requests for reasonable accommodations or modifications.
- ▶ Present facts to prospective residents without comments that may discourage them from living in your apartment community or that steer them toward a particular section or building.
- ▶ Take all prospects on the same tour route.

Fair Housing guidelines also affect how you advertise your apartments. Make sure your advertising shows that housing in your apartment community is available to all while avoiding any implication that protected groups will not fit in at your apartment community.



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#### Reminder! The Golden Rule of Fair Housing always applies:

- ▶ Be consistent!
- ▶ Treat everyone the same!
- I Optional activity: Review and lead into the discussion about an experience or story about discrimination that you have or someone else has experienced.*

## Conducting the Leasing Interview



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**“Relationship selling is the state-of-the-art today. It means custom-tailoring information to individual people.”** Brian Tracy, Motivational Speaker

Our customers are more sophisticated and educated than ever before. In fact, they understand when they are being “closed.” The customer of today wants to do business with a Leasing Professional who is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and genuinely cares. In order to display these attributes to your prospective resident, you must realize the importance of getting to know your customer and establishing a rapport that allows the prospective resident to feel comfortable sharing information with you.

The Leasing Interview is not an interrogation or a robotic routine but instead, a productive question and answer time to share conversation, build rapport and discover needs and wants that will ensure you the opportunity to find the appropriate apartment home for the prospective resident. If you spend more time discovering the needs and wants of your customer, it will be easier to find the appropriate apartment home and lease to them. The key is to relate to the customer. Building rapport is a vital feature of the leasing interview. Strong listening skills and properly reading body language contribute to successful rapport building.



- 1 *Begin this section with a discussion about the importance of “getting in step” with the prospect. The interview is not an interrogation. There are questions that the Leasing Professional must have answered, but the manner in which the Leasing Professional relates to the customer is generally the difference between a lease and just a walk-in visitor.*

*The following sections help the Leasing Professional build the skills to successful relationship selling.*



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## Building Rapport

Successful business people understand the longevity of their business depends on the relationship and bond that is built with clients, vendors and prospective customers. Rapport is the key to relationship-building and the following represent the five most effective ways to create instant and lasting rapport, as reported by Paul Montelongo, CGR, a nationally recognized speaker and consultant.

1. **Express a genuine interest in the other person and in what is important to him or her.** Ask questions in order to find things in common. Use their personal name. Make mental or actual notes about important events or activities in the prospect's life. When you show interest, not only will people be more likely to open up, but they are also more likely to listen and trust you.
2. **Create physical rapport.** This is sometimes called matching, mirroring or parroting. Try to match body language, vocabulary and tone of voice of the prospect. As different as we are, we tend to have the same body language for what we are feeling. This shows respect and adds validity to what the other person is saying.
3. **Be an active listener.** Discussed earlier in the Telephone Techniques course, listening four times longer than speaking is the mark of a strong communicator. Listening attentively allows you to repeat and paraphrase to check for understanding. People love to talk more than listen so the listener controls the conversation.

4. **Seek agreement.** It is easier to move from agreement to agreement than from disagreement to disagreement. Search for a way to reach similarities. Look for beliefs and opinions you can share. If there are none, the agreement to disagree can sometimes build enough respect for opening a relationship. Agreement may require an adjustment on your part, but even the slightest detail of agreement brings a base for establishing a relationship.
5. **Be genuinely friendly.** There is no substitute and no way to fake it. A smile and pleasant disposition can diffuse any level of tension. It doesn't mean that you have to be bubbly. A sincere smile, a warm handshake, good manners and strong eye contact go a long way.



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## Listening Skills

Dr. Larry Barker and Dr. Kittie Watson, co-authors of the book “Listen Up: How to Improve Relationships, Reduce Stress and Be More Productive by Using the Power of Listening,” conclude that there are enormous benefits in strong listening abilities. Such skills enable you to:

- ▶ **Control the dialogue.** Listeners can draw out others to get information.
- ▶ **Uncover people's desires.** You cannot please someone if you do not know what they want.
- ▶ **Reduce stress.** When people feel that they are being heard, their stress levels fall and they are more cooperative. Think of what it does for you!
- ▶ **Put yourself in demand.** Attentiveness makes others feel special so you will be a desirable contact.
- ▶ **Improve business performance.** Listening rewards you with ideas to enhance products and services.



Research shows that the average person on the job spends 40% of his time listening, 35% talking, 16% reading and 9% writing. How you maximize the 40% is essential to your success as a Leasing Professional. Follow these laws of listening to make the most of your interviewing skills with prospects, as well as your communication with residents, vendors and coworkers.



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1. **Listen to understand, not to reply.** So often we think about what we want to say—or in the case of prospect interviewing—what comes next in our questioning. Give prospects all the time they need to speak. Listen for what is being said and how it is being said.
2. **Make eye contact.** This is a key skill, even with prospects whose cultural background suggests a downward glance. Looking anywhere but at your customer tells them that something else is more important. Even if you are taking notes or completing the Guest Card, do so with occasional glances back at the prospect. Use your eyes to communicate non-verbally with the customer—widening, showing surprise, etc. Let your expressions show that you are building a trustworthy relationship with the speaker.
3. **Ask questions.** Good listening requires you to interpret what the speaker is saying and reading between the lines. You must make sure there are no misunderstandings. Do not interrupt, but at a time of pause ask pertinent questions or re-phrase their point just made to show you are seeking understanding. Your prospects will appreciate that you are trying to clearly identify their needs. Plus if they go off on a tangent, your questions can redirect the conversation.
4. **Repeat important points.** Reviewing what you have determined to be the most important issues serves several purposes: First, it shows customers how well you listened; second, it ensures that what YOU thought was important is what the prospect thought was important; third, repeating the speaker's own words goes a long way to ensuring understanding is occurring—how can the speaker refute his own words? Do not try to take verbatim quotes, but jot down key terms.

5. **Look out for obstacles to good listening.** Interruptions, your prospect's speaking style and your own experiences can get in the way of understanding. Simply be aware that they can intrude and concentrate on keeping them to a minimum. If the speaker is monotone or the office is continuously interrupting, take steps to move, or use self-discipline to keep your mind from wandering.
6. **Keep your composure.** When prospects object to some part of your units, amenities, pricing or specials, you will need to stay cool to close the sale. Avoid taking negative comments personally. Be sympathetic and understand that the prospect is showing you he needs your help. By staying calm, you also have a better chance to think and through questioning, steer the conversation toward resolution. Restrain yourself from answering each assertion with a "but" or raising your voice.
7. **Listen actively.** To absorb everything, you must keep your brain engaged as you listen. You can think a lot faster than your prospects will talk, so you will have a chance to analyze the words they speak. Think about how their needs match your property and how you have helped other prospects with similar needs.

Your prospect's words hold the key to your sale so LISTEN carefully!



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## Body Language

If you know what to look for, you can learn a lot from a prospect's body language. When the body language is consistent with what they are saying, you can have reasonable confidence that they are going to be honest and open with you. But when their words say one thing and their body language another, there is a good chance there is a problem. Here are a couple of tips for you as a Leasing Professional and for reading your prospect as you listen to his or her needs:

- ▶ **Make a good first impression** with eye contact, a smile, a greeting and open body language. Unbuttoning the jacket of a suit, an extended hand in greeting, arms outstretched and open are all positive signals to the prospect.



- ▶ As you listen to the prospect, continue to show your interest by tilting your head and body toward the prospect. Turning your head slightly to one side notes your eagerness to listen, to hear. If standing, encourage the prospect to sit—much more casual and meaningful conversation occurs when people are seated. If you remain standing, refrain from standing in a “power” stance—weight evenly distributed, slightly bent backwards, chest out, arms crossed. This posture is one of closed power and will interrupt communication.
- ▶ **Synchronize yourself with the other person.** Is he crossing his legs or talking softly? Does she tilt her head? Mirror the language subtly. If you study this process, you will find that you may do this already in conversations with your close acquaintances. It is a natural reaction that you need to study since you have not yet built the rapport with the prospect.

Be careful not to overdo your mirroring. Anybody that is blabbering flattery while thrusting her heart at you and imitating your movements would easily be detected as a phony!

## The Ultimate Question – Activity

Listening and use of body language are both effective ways to connect with your prospect. With a successful leasing interview, you can turn that prospect into a loyal customer. Let's look at the “Ultimate Question” when it comes to profits and “promoters”.

- 1 *Play the Covey video “The Ultimate Question” beginning with the Objectives introduction. After listening to the video, answer the three concept questions as a class – encourage the students to offer their personal “takes” on the lesson points.*

*Break the room into small groups (3-5 members) and ask each set to complete the following:*

1. List several “bad profits” in your area of responsibility that can turn a loyal resident into a detractor.
2. Make a list of the 5 things your “promoters” would say about you or your staff. Who are your promoters?

*Allow 10 minutes for groups to make their lists. Ask several groups to share their answers.*

*Refer to the Resource Page to reinforce the critical concepts.*



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## Objective of the Leasing Interview



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Gather information that will assist you in identifying what the prospect wants most in their new apartment home and take that information and match the appropriate apartment home with the prospective resident.

It is easier to prepare for the prospective resident who has made a telephone inquiry and allowed you to determine qualification in advance. In these cases, you will greet the prospects when they arrive for their appointment and, after exchanging greetings, confirm the information that was gathered previously with the prospect and ask any further questions to identify their needs and wants.

This is especially effective if you have used the Guest Card during your telephone conversation and already have pertinent information on it.



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## The Welcome/Guest Card and Beginning the Interview

Most apartment communities have a specific form known as a Guest Card. There is a sample Guest Card at the end of this section. The Guest Card helps qualify a prospect and then serves as a way to begin collecting information about a prospect's wants and needs. The information collected on the Guest Card aids in evaluating the results of advertising and promotional efforts. In this section, we will discuss the use of the Guest Card for the personal interview understanding that the card may already have been started during the telephone interview.

**The Welcome/Guest Card also helps the Leasing Professional to:**

**I** *The participant has blank lines to be completed with the following.*





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- ▶ **Develop** a leasing strategy and helps you to create an individualized tour for the prospective resident.
- ▶ **Obtain** information to help anticipate and resolve objections as they arise.
- ▶ **Establish** a prospective resident's needs and wants.
- ▶ **Identify** important points that can be used when closing.
- ▶ **Document** the apartments shown and lease rates offered for Fair Housing purposes.

The Welcome/Guest Card should be completed by the Leasing Professional. Talk with the prospective resident for a few minutes before you begin completing the Welcome/Guest Card. This builds rapport and you will more likely get more information from the prospective resident. Your opening line could be “How long have you been looking for a new home?” Or “Tell me about the special things you are looking for in your new home.”

There are disadvantages in having the prospective resident complete the Guest Card.

- ▶ A prospect may be offended when asked to complete the card unless you explain the purpose. Even then, the prospect may feel the questions are unnecessary and irrelevant.
- ▶ Many times, the prospect's handwriting is illegible, making the information on the card impossible to use for follow-up purposes.
- ▶ Prospect's often do not complete the card in its entirety, choosing instead to fill out only their name or a few blanks of their own choosing.

A sample Guest Card has been provided on the following two pages.

- ▶ *Discuss the card with the participants as you lead a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of who should complete the Guest Card.*

## Welcome Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Names of others who will be living with you: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

Referral  Apt. Publication  Apartments.com  Locator  Drive-by

Realtor  Relocation Co.  Newspaper ad  Realtor  Internet

Employer  Community website

Other \_\_\_\_\_ If Internet, which site? \_\_\_\_\_

What size apartment best suits your needs? \_\_\_\_\_

Studio  1-bedroom  2-bedroom  3-bedroom

What floor do you prefer? \_\_\_\_\_ Price Range desired \_\_\_\_\_

What features are most important? \_\_\_\_\_

Move-in date desired? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you moving? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any special needs or desires for your new home (i.e. room size, storage, work space etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

What specifically attracted you to our community? \_\_\_\_\_

We are a pet-friendly community. Do you have a pet?  No  Yes, I have a \_\_\_\_\_  
(Pet's age: \_\_\_\_\_, Weight: \_\_\_\_\_, Breed: \_\_\_\_\_)

Leasing Professional \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_



*(This side to be completed by the Leasing Professional)*

1<sup>st</sup> contact: Date   /  /   How?  Phone  In-person  e-mail  other \_\_\_\_\_  
Results \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> contact: Date   /  /   How?  Phone  In-person  e-mail  other \_\_\_\_\_  
Results \_\_\_\_\_

3<sup>rd</sup> contact: Date   /  /   How?  Phone  In-person  e-mail  other \_\_\_\_\_  
Results \_\_\_\_\_

Model(s) shown \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Vacant(s) shown \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

Why did not show \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail thank you \_\_\_\_\_ date   /  /  

Guest's needs and wants \_\_\_\_\_

Hot buttons \_\_\_\_\_

If guest did not lease, why? \_\_\_\_\_



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## What is your opening line to begin the Leasing Interview?

Make sure questions are asked in a conversational manner rather than an interrogation. A great way to begin is by asking: “In order to help me find the perfect apartment home for you, I need to ask you a few questions, all right?”

If a prospective resident opposes giving you the information, politely explain the importance of the information in determining their specific wants and needs. The Leasing Professional can convey the impression that these questions are important, in which case the prospect will probably want to answer them as completely and accurately as possible. After all, this is part of the Leasing Professional’s objective—to establish a good relationship with the prospect.

These are the basic leasing interview questions that need to be covered in order to assist the prospective resident in finding the perfect apartment home.

## Interviewing Basics

Avoid questions that may be answered with a “Yes” or “No” by asking open-ended questions.



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Open-ended questions begin with:

▶ Who; What; When; Where; Why; and How



**Bonus Open-ended Questions** produce an abundance of information about the prospect:

- ▶ What specifically are you looking for in your new apartment home?
- ▶ Where are you living now?
- ▶ Help me understand what prompted your decision to move?



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Welcome/Guest Card questions can include:

- ▶ What size apartment home best suits your needs?
- ▶ When would you like to move into the apartment?
- ▶ Who will be occupying the apartment home?
- ▶ Furnished or unfurnished?
- ▶ What price range did you have in mind?
- ▶ What preferences (floor preferences [1st, 2nd, 3rd], fireplace, washer/dryer, color scheme)?
- ▶ Any pets?
- ▶ Where are you employed?
- ▶ How did you hear about the community? Or what particularly interested you in our community?
- ▶ Why are you moving? (This is one of your best tools in knowing how to close. Find out what the problem is and solve it!)

The effective Leasing Professional establishes a prospect's wants and needs by asking well phrased questions and by answering questions from the prospect. You will have already accumulated a good deal of information from the prospect's Guest Card. Utilize the information gathered on the Guest Card to build your leasing presentation.

Complete the rest of the open-ended questions.

Please describe for me:

---

---

---

Tell me about:

---

---

---

## Domino Questioning Techniques

This is named after the chain reaction created when a line of dominoes is stood on end and the first one is tipped over. As one domino falls upon the next, one question influences the next. The questions are linked to each other and follow a natural progression of information gathering.

While you will need to focus on asking questions to complete the Guest Card, each subsequent question should not repeat questions on the card but should be phrased to give the prospect an opportunity to talk more extensively about him or herself.

**i** Give the participants the following example of domino questions so they may then practice writing two domino questions:





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Q. Do you have a pet?

A. Yes.

Q What kind of pet do you have?

Q. Where do you work?

A. At the elementary school. I am a teacher.

Q. What grade do you teach?

**I** Ask the participants to write two domino questions on the blank lines in their guides.



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### Primary Versus Secondary Questions

Primary questions are the questions included on the Guest Card that you must know before the leasing interview begins. Secondary questions utilize the information obtained from the primary questions to draw out more information and clarify the information. A good way to phrase a secondary question is to begin them with **why**. For example, “I see that you would prefer an apartment home on the first floor. Why do you prefer the first floor?” Utilizing a primary question, write a secondary question that will reveal more information.

**I** Ask the participants to write a secondary question on the blanks in their guides.

### Exploratory Questions

These questions help you explore the prospect's reasons for moving and his or her particular needs. They help you to develop a road map to close your prospect. By uncovering “hot buttons”—those things that are important to your prospect—you can more easily and accurately match the prospect's needs with your community.

**I** Ask the participants to list several hot buttons they might discover from their prospect. Write the hot buttons on the blanks in their guides.



Exploratory questions should be different than those that are on the Guest Card—they should expand from the Guest Card questions. The more hot buttons you can get from one question the better! As you think about these exploratory questions consider the questions below to help you determine what is important to your prospect and what may be driving their ultimate leasing decision.

- ▶ How large is your present apartment?
- ▶ What will you base your decision on?
- ▶ Do you work in the area?
- ▶ How will you know when you have found the right apartment?
- ▶ What color scheme are you working with?
- ▶ Where are you in your process of choosing an apartment?
- ▶ When does your lease expire?
- ▶ How did you choose your present apartment?
- ▶ What attracted you to our community?
- ▶ What pleases you most about your present apartment?
- ▶ What is most important to you in your apartment home?
- ▶ What are you looking for that you don't have now?
- ▶ What have you liked at other communities?
- ▶ What features are most important to you?
- ▶ What type of location do you prefer in a community?

Ask the participants to conclude this section by writing down two exploratory questions that might help them uncover the hot buttons they listed above.





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## Final Q&A Points

- ▶ **Be prepared to answer all of the prospective resident's questions concerning your apartment community.** Sometimes you may get additional information about the prospect's needs and wants from the questions asked. If you do not know the answer to a specific question, tell them you don't know but you would be happy to research that information.
- ▶ **Questions about the rental rates should be considered opportunities to review or expand on the community's most attractive features.** For example, if a prospect will work near the community, you can remind them of how much money they will save on gasoline and maintenance of their car. Or, they will not have to join a racquet club to get on the tennis courts. Of course, one of the biggest benefits is that they will have you to respond to their service requests.
- ▶ **What if the prospect clearly does not qualify for the apartment home?** They may have a large pet and the community does not allow pets or they may have a lower price range in mind. Always offer to tour a prospect even if you know it is not in their rent range. If you discover a prospect does not meet the rental qualifications, always be helpful in referring the prospect to another community, to a locator, or by offering them an apartment publication to assist them in their search.
- ▶ **Act like a doctor coming up with a diagnosis or think of a friend you have lost track of from high school.** It is this level of care and concern that should be shared with the prospect.
- ▶ **Answer questions thoroughly, clearly and honestly.** If you are unsure of an answer, find the answer later and follow up with them.
- ⓘ *Exercise: If time permits, divide group into pairs or trios to role play a Leasing Professional using the Welcome/Guest Card to gather information from the prospective resident. Ask for volunteers to demonstrate in front of the class. (Will add 15-30 minutes.)*



*Show Slide 55 & 56*

## Summary

In summary, you should now realize the importance of creating a positive impression the first time you meet a prospect, through your curb appeal, professionalism, and greeting. Asking questions to determine your prospect's unique needs and wants will develop a relationship and level of trust which will lead to your success as a Leasing Professional.

## 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, direct participants to the NAA Web site at:

[www.naahq.org/education](http://www.naahq.org/education)

Participants will need an eligibility code to sit for the exam. The Eligibility Code will be emailed to each Affiliate after a participant enrolls in the course. Eligibility Codes are unique to each participant and are the key to unlocking the exam.

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

Each participant will work individually on the exam. There should be no discussion among participants and no books are allowed to be used as reference.

For more detailed information on the exam and to download the Participant and Instructor Guides, please visit the NAA Web site:

[www.naahq.org/education/designationprograms/Pages/OnlineExams](http://www.naahq.org/education/designationprograms/Pages/OnlineExams)

