



## Apartment questions answered

Bug situation? Rental history? Landlord responsibility? Your burning apartment quandaries, solved.

By Celia Shatzman April 21, 2010

### Where can I find information about previous tenants?

If you want to get the scoop about a building from a prior occupant (and learn what it'll *really* be like to live there), you might have to do some harmless snooping. Those lucky enough to find a rent-controlled apartment can dig through the records that the New York State Division of Housing Community and Renewal (*25 Beaver St between Broad and New Sts; 866-275-3427, [dhcr.state.ny.us](http://dhcr.state.ny.us)*) maintains for such units. For the rest of us, there's the Internet: PropertyShark allows you to type in an address and perform a property-report search, which includes an ownership summary and any phone records they have from previous tenants. Of course, you can always go the more direct route: **"Ask the neighbors on either side of the apartment," says Barak Realty agent James Miller. Once you have the name, you're a few clicks away from being Facebook friends.**

### How do I find out the bug history of a building?

Start at the top. **"Go directly to the management company and request a copy of the extermination report for the building," says Miller, who also suggests contacting the building's extermination company (the name and phone number are usually posted in the lobby).** If you come up empty-handed, hit the Web again: First, plug in the address on the community-review site Bedbug Registry. You can also search the address on the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development's website ([nyc.gov/html/hpd/home.html](http://nyc.gov/html/hpd/home.html)) for a history of any roach, mice and other vermin complaints, along with all open violations. "Buildings with significant infestation issues typically have violations, which are noted in HPD's database," says Maria Beltrani, a partner at real-estate law firm Wolf Haldenstein Adler Freeman & Herz. Your fellow New Yorkers love this topic, so a search of Google, Curbed, BrickUnderground or Apartment Ratings might get you answers too.

### How can I find a broker who won't screw me?

All of the experts were unanimous on this one: The best way to find a trustworthy broker is by word of mouth. "Get a referral from a friend, family member or business associate that has used one in the past and had a positive experience," says Miller. (Or, [click here](#) for more on the best brokers we met while researching this issue.) Don't know anyone who's recently dealt with a broker? Instead of relying on biased client testimonials provided by the broker him or herself, check references on your own by reading reviews posted on [Rateyourbroker.com](http://Rateyourbroker.com), Incredible Agents, RealEstateRatingz and even Yelp. But the best way to keep an agent from pulling a fast one is to really trust your gut. "Never check your brain at the door," says Safi Bello, an assistant property manager with New Bedford Management. "If something doesn't sound or feel right, walk away."



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