First apartment checklist

53 lines across 6 rooms - 33 marked must-have - free, no email required

Tick the boxes as you buy. "M" marks a must-have: the lines an apartment does not work without in the first week. Everything else is a genuine improvement you can postpone without regret. Prices move, so this sheet carries none - each pick names our guide for that item, and that page has a live price and three alternatives.

Kitchen

- [ ] **Cookware set** **M**
  One frying pan, one saucepan, one pot and lids is the real need. Nesting if the cabinets are tight.
  Our pick: CAROTE 20-Piece Detachable-Handle Nonstick Set
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-cookware-sets-small-apartment
- [ ] **Knives** **M**
  A chef knife, a paring knife and a serrated knife cover everything. Five good knives beat fifteen mediocre ones.
  Our pick: Henckels Solution 5-Piece Knife Set
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-knife-sets-beginners
- [ ] **Cutting boards** **M**
  Two minimum, one kept for raw meat. Never glass, which blunts a knife on the first cut.
  Our pick: Totally Bamboo 3-Piece Reversible Board Set
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-cutting-boards-first-apartment
- [ ] **Plates and bowls** **M**
  Service for four is plenty for a first place. A thrift-store set is identical for about a quarter of the price.
  Our pick: Amazon Basics Porcelain Dinnerware Set, 18-Piece
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-dinnerware-sets-first-apartment
- [ ] **Cutlery** **M**
  A 20-piece set covers four people with spares in the drawer. 18/10 stainless keeps its finish in a dishwasher.
  Our pick: KINGSTONE 20-Piece 18/10 Stainless Flatware Set
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-flatware-sets-first-apartment
- [ ] **Dish rack** **M**
  About 12 inches wide, draining into the sink. The most-used object in a kitchen with no dishwasher.
  Our pick: Kitsure Compact Dish Drying Rack
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-dish-racks-small-kitchen
- [ ] **Can opener** **M**
  The classic forgotten line. Cheap, tiny, and the one thing standing between you and dinner on night one.
  Our pick: KitchenAid Classic Multifunction Can Opener
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-can-openers
- [ ] **Food storage containers** **M**
  About a dozen. Latching lids if lunch leaves the house with you.
  Our pick: Rubbermaid Brilliance Tritan Container Set
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-food-storage-containers
- [ ] **Kitchen trash can** **M**
  13 gallon is the size that matches standard bags. Buy the bags in the same trip.
  Our pick: Glad 13 Gallon Trash Can
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/what-size-trash-can-for-kitchen
- [ ] **Microwave**
  Check whether the apartment already has one before you buy. 0.7 cu ft at 700 W fits almost any counter.
  Our pick: Toshiba 0.7 cu ft Countertop Microwave
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-microwaves-apartment

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- [ ] **Air fryer**
  Measure the free counter width and the height to the upper cabinets first. 4 qt suits one or two people.
  Our pick: Cosori Lite 4 qt Smart Air Fryer
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-air-fryers-small-kitchen

- [ ] **Coffee maker**
  Single-serve if it is just you, and it takes up about five inches of counter.
  Our pick: Keurig K-Mini Single-Serve Coffee Maker
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-coffee-makers-small-kitchen

- [ ] **Toaster**
  Wide slots if you buy bagels. Two slices is the right size for a small counter.
  Our pick: Cuisinart Core Collection 2-Slice XL Slot Toaster
  keyandcrate.com/kitchen/best-toasters-small-kitchen

- [ ] **Electric kettle**
  Faster than the stove and it frees a burner. 1 L is right for one or two people.
  Our pick: Amazon Basics 1 L Stainless Electric Kettle
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-electric-kettles-dorm

Bathroom

- [ ] **Bath towels** **M**
  Two per person, so one is always dry. A 6-piece set covers one person comfortably.
  Our pick: Amazon Basics 6-Piece Cotton Towel Set
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-bath-towels-first-apartment

- [ ] **Shower curtain and liner** **M**
  Measure the rail first, and buy the rings separately - they are almost never included.
  Our pick: Barossa Design Oeko-Tex Shower Curtain Liner
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-shower-curtains-small-bathroom

- [ ] **Plunger and toilet brush** **M**
  The one item on this list that becomes urgent at 11pm. Buy it before you need it.
  Our pick: MR.SIGA Toilet Plunger and Bowl Brush Combo
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-plungers-toilet-brushes

- [ ] **Bath mat** **M**
  A rubber-backed mat on a tile floor is a safety item as much as a comfort one.
  Our pick: Gorilla Grip Absorbent Chenille Bath Rug
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-bath-mats

- [ ] **Small bathroom bin** **M**
  A few dollars at any supermarket. Grab it with the kitchen can so you only shop once.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.

- [ ] **Toilet paper, hand soap, shampoo** **M**
  A grocery run, and immediately needed. The easiest line on the list to forget.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.

- [ ] **Over-toilet storage**
  The only free square footage in a small bathroom. Choose a no-drill frame in a rental.
  Our pick: GloTika 3-Tier Over-Toilet Storage, No Drilling
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-over-the-toilet-storage

- [ ] **Under-sink organizer**
  Pull-out trays turn the awkward space around the trap into usable shelving.
  Our pick: Vtopmart 4-Pack Pull-Out Under-Sink Organizers
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-under-sink-organizers

- [ ] **Shower head**
  Swaps on by hand in about five minutes. Keep the original in a cupboard for move-out day.
  Our pick: AquaCare 8-Mode Handheld Shower Head
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-shower-heads-low-water-pressure

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Bedroom

- [ ] **Sheets, comforter and a pillow** M
  Measure the mattress before you buy. Our sets are Twin XL, the size a dorm bed takes.
  Our pick: Bare Home Twin XL Bed-in-a-Bag, 5-Piece
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-dorm-bedding-twin-xl
- [ ] **A lamp and light bulbs** M
  Check for a ceiling fixture before move-in day. A clip lamp needs no table and no drilling.
  Our pick: Lepro Clip-On LED Desk Lamp
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-dorm-desk-lamps
- [ ] **Surge-protected power strip** M
  Older buildings put two outlets in a bedroom. A surge protector, not a plain extension lead.
  Our pick: Yintar 6 ft Surge Protector, 6 Outlets + 3 USB
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-power-strips-dorm
- [ ] **Curtains or blinds, and a rod** M
  Measure the window and the wall above it. A tension rod inside the recess needs no screws.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.
- [ ] **Hangers** M
  Count the wardrobe rail, then buy that many. Slim velvet hangers hold roughly a third more.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.
- [ ] **A second set of sheets**
  So the bed is still made on laundry day. Worth it from the first week.
  Our pick: Amazon Basics Twin XL Microfiber Sheet Set
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-twin-xl-sheets-dorm
- [ ] **Mattress topper**
  The cheapest way to make an unloved mattress sleepable. Two inches is enough for most people.
  Our pick: Linenspa 2-Inch Gel Memory Foam Topper
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-mattress-toppers-dorm-twin-xl
- [ ] **Under-bed storage**
  Measure the clearance under the frame before buying. Wheels make it reachable.
  Our pick: Yecaye Under-Bed Storage with Wheels, 2-Pack
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-under-bed-storage-dorm
- [ ] **Fan**
  A clip fan uses no floor space, which matters in a small bedroom.
  Our pick: Vornado Pivot Clip Personal Air Circulator
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-dorm-fans

Cleaning and laundry

- [ ] **All-purpose cleaner, sponges and cloths** M
  Supermarket own-brand works. One spray, one pack of sponges, a few microfiber cloths.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.
- [ ] **Broom and dustpan** M
  A dustpan with a rubber lip actually picks up. The first thing you will want after unpacking.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.
- [ ] **Mop and bucket** M
  A flat mop with washable pads suits a small apartment and dries in the shower.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.
- [ ] **Trash bags and dish soap** M
  Match the bag size to the can you bought - 13 gallon for a standard kitchen can.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.

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- [ ] **Laundry basket** M
  A vented basket carries wet laundry back from a shared machine without souring it.
  Our pick: Rubbermaid XL Hip-Hugger Laundry Basket
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-laundry-baskets-wet-towels
- [ ] **Drying rack** M
  Pays for itself quickly against a shared dryer, and folds flat behind a door.
  Our pick: Honey-Can-Do 6-Tier Collapsible Drying Rack
  keyandcrate.com/bath/best-drying-racks-small-apartment
- [ ] **Laundry hamper**
  A collapsible bag hamper stores flat between washes, which a rigid one cannot.
  Our pick: Lifewit 80 L Laundry Hamper Bags, 2-Pack
  keyandcrate.com/dorm/best-laundry-hampers-dorm
- [ ] **Vacuum**
  A broom covers the first few weeks on hard floors. Wait until you know the apartment.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.

Tools

- [ ] **Household tool kit** M
  One box with a hammer, pliers, bits and an adjustable wrench beats buying tools one at a time.
  Our pick: Amazon Basics 142-Piece Household Tool Kit
  keyandcrate.com/tools/best-tool-kits-new-homeowners
- [ ] **Tape measure** M
  25 ft with a magnetic hook, so you can measure a room on your own. Use it before you buy furniture.
  Our pick: Milwaukee 25 ft Magnetic Tape Measure
  keyandcrate.com/tools/best-tape-measures-home-use
- [ ] **Damage-free hanging strips** M
  How you decorate a rental without patching walls on move-out. Follow the weight rating.
  Our pick: Command Large Picture Hanging Strips, 15 lb
  keyandcrate.com/tools/how-to-hang-things-without-damaging-walls
- [ ] **Screwdriver set**
  A ratcheting handle with bits assembles flat-pack furniture far faster than the supplied key.
  Our pick: Amazon Basics Ratcheting Wrench and Precision Screwdriver Set
  keyandcrate.com/tools/best-screwdriver-sets-home-use
- [ ] **Cordless drill**
  Check your lease before drilling. Worth owning the first time you hang a shelf or a curtain rod.
  Our pick: BLACK+DECKER 20V MAX Drill Driver Kit
  keyandcrate.com/tools/best-drills-new-homeowners
- [ ] **Stud finder**
  Anything heavy belongs on a stud. A multi-sensor model shows both edges at once.
  Our pick: Franklin Sensors ProSensor M150 Stud Finder
  keyandcrate.com/tools/best-stud-finders-home-use
- [ ] **Step stool**
  Reaches the top cabinet and the smoke alarm, and folds into the gap beside the fridge.
  Our pick: Cosco 2-Step Folding Steel Step Stool
  keyandcrate.com/tools/best-step-stools-home-use

Safety

- [ ] **Test the smoke and CO alarms** M
  Usually the landlord's to install, yours to test. Press the button on day one and note the date.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.

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- [ ] **Fire extinguisher** M
  An ABC-rated extinguisher covers paper, liquid and electrical fires. Keep it near the exit, not over the stove.
  Our pick: Kidde Basic 110 Fire Extinguisher, 1-A:10-B:C
  keyandcrate.com/tools/home-safety-essentials-first-home
- [ ] **First aid kit** M
  Keep it in the kitchen, where most small injuries happen, rather than the bathroom cabinet.
  Our pick: M2 BASICS 300-Piece First Aid Kit
  keyandcrate.com/tools/home-safety-essentials-first-home
- [ ] **Batteries and a flashlight** M
  AA, AAA and a 9V for the alarm. A flashlight you can find in the dark, not a phone.
  Any supermarket own-brand does this job.
- [ ] **Fire blanket**
  Smothers a pan fire without spraying the kitchen. Keep it within arm's reach of the stove.
  Our pick: Prepared Hero Emergency Fire Blanket, 2-Pack
  keyandcrate.com/tools/home-safety-essentials-first-home
- [ ] **Kitchen fire extinguisher**
  A second, smaller unit rated for grease and electrical fires, stored under the sink.
  Our pick: Kidde Kitchen Fire Extinguisher, 711A
  keyandcrate.com/tools/home-safety-essentials-first-home

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