

## **Classified Advertising Tips for Rental Property by Robert Cain**

Beginning at the beginning, after you get the property cleaned and ready to rent, it's time to get a new tenant.

Most landlords run an ad in local daily newspapers. They do that because it works if done properly, but it doesn't if done improperly. It's also where many people who are looking to rent a place traditionally have looked to find a new home.

In this article, we will look at ways to make your ad more effective; ways to attract the kind of tenant who will work best for the property without violating fair housing laws; how to keep people who will be bad tenants from even calling you; and how to use the ad as your first step in ensuring that the tenant you do select will be a good tenant regardless of their quality in past relationships with other landlords.

### **Advertising Begins Your Relationship With Your Tenant**

Remember, you are attracting a customer. If you owned a sporting goods store, for example, and wanted to sell soccer balls, you would run an ad that told all the benefits of the soccer balls that you sell, high quality, hold air longer, professional style or whatever would attract customers for soccer balls. You would not put in your ad the fact that you have a \$20 charge for any returned check. But, too often, landlords send a message in their advertising that tenants are a necessary inconvenience to managing rental property. If you think of your prospective tenants as customers, it is easy to write an ad. You are attracting a customer, one who will pay your mortgage, property taxes and insurance and make you a profit.

Start out your relationship with your next tenant with an ad that treats him or her like a customer, and the rest of the relationship becomes more businesslike.

### **Writing Classified Ads**

Take aim. Your ad should not attract everyone who is looking for a place to rent. Doing that is a waste of your time and theirs. The ad should do two things; first, let people know the property is available and second, give them information that will eliminate some tenants.

Studies have shown that people reading and answering a classified ad, either for buying a home or renting one, first circle the ad. Then, when they call it is to eliminate that property. You can help the applicant and yourself by providing as much information as possible. You can also help yourself by making sure people see the ad. For example, compare these two:

#### **Ad #1**

2 bedroom, 1 bath duplex in good neighborhood. 1<sup>st</sup> and last plus dep. No pets. \$600. 123-4567.

## Ad #2

½ Block to the Bus.

Cute and sharp 2 bedroom duplex on super quiet street. Large rooms, built-in dishwasher, gas heat, fenced backyard for kids. School close. \$600.  
1234 NE Main, 123-4567.

The First Ad has Four Disadvantages

- First, it gets lost in all the other two bedroom ads.
- Second, everybody who wants a two bedroom duplex in the area covered by the ad section will call you.
- Third, it gives information that does nothing to make an applicant want to rent that property rather than your competition's. In fact, it wastes words (most landlords ask for first and deposit and tenants will ask you about pets).
- And fourth, it doesn't do anything to make the applicant want to call you first.

The Second Ad does Seven Things That Will Help

- First, it is different from most of the other ads in the paper – that means it jumps off the page.
- Second, it is an ad rather than a notice. An ad tries to sell something by telling the benefits. A notice just relates facts – in this case, that the property is for rent.
- Third, it uses a “fear of loss” benefit, i.e. their children will be safer because of a fenced back yard.
- Fourth, it tells features that will make them want to think about your property – large rooms, built-in dishwasher, etc.
- Fifth, it gives the address. That means they can drive by to look at the outside and the neighborhood before they call you. Then, if they make an appointment, they are more likely to show up because they have seen the neighborhood and will consider living in it.
- Sixth, it makes them want to see your property first, because it has advantages that they want. Other units may have those, but they don't know that because the ad didn't say so.
- And seventh, it tells them that kids are welcome. In spite of fair housing laws, many landlords still discourage children. The fact that you mentioned children specifically and the proximity of schools implies that you will accept children.
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