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Rents Negotiable In Tough Housing Market

Landlords Looking To Prevent Tenants From Moving

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Rents are dropping across the country. "[Rent.com] found that about 68% of landlords are willing to negotiate lower rent or give a month or two free," says Grant.

To find out if you could be paying less for your apartment, start by researching the market. Once you figure out what apartments like yours are going for in your neighborhood, you'll know if you're paying too much. "You want to ask other renters what they're getting charged every month, you want to check for local listings on [Craig'sList](#), and you want to check out area comparisons on this site called [RentOMeter.com](#)," says Grant. Rents vary around the country, so by becoming better educated about your local market, you'll be in a better position to negotiate.

Examine a little deeper, too, and track vacancies within your building or complex. "Any sort of an empty apartment is going to be costing landlords money... to upgrade the apartment, market it and of course, that lost rent," says Grant. If you notice your building has an increasing number of vacancies, talk to your landlord about decreasing your rent. "The landlord would rather keep you in place and charge you a little bit less than have to waste that money looking for someone else," she adds.

Being a good tenant can also help. "Point out if you've always paid on time, you've kept the property in great shape, and of course, if you haven't had any complaints from the neighbors," says Grant. New tenants should get references from previous landlords or acquaintances.

Some landlords, though, will still refuse to discount your rent. In that case, look towards other perks, like a discount on storage space or extra included utilities. "If you're a new renter, you might

even be able to negotiate a lower security deposit," says Grant.

There's also the old standby; when money gets tight, get a roommate. Some landlords are looking to fill "underhoused" units, and will offer discounts to tenants who move in with current residents. Just be sure to protect yourself. Screen all roommates carefully and if you're hesitant, it's financially smart to come up with a code of conduct. "Spell out who's paying for what and what's going to happen if someone decides to leave early," says Grant.

For more information on slashing your rent, visit www.SmartMoney.com.