



Write Better Real Estate Listings

*How to write listings that
practically rent themselves*



As a real estate professional, you see a lot of property listings: the good, the bad, and the truly embarrassing.

In fact, there are entire blogs dedicated to the bad ones (see below for some of our favorites).

You may already see the benefits of typo-free, carefully-worded listings (better applicants and more of them). But there's always room for improvement: did you know that an exact address featured in the listing leads to more clicks and inquiries than a listing with a vague location?

In this guide, co-written with the help of the experts at Zillow®, you'll learn how to take your property listings from, "That place looks okay." to "Wow, I want to live *there*."

3 OF OUR FAVORITE FAUX-PAS LISTS:

[Terrible Real Estate Agent Photographs](#)

[9 Epic Listing Fails](#)

[Regrettably Bad Real Estate Listings](#)

HOOK THEM WITH THE HEADLINE

Research shows that apartment hunters know what a good listing looks like before they click on it.

Make your headline stand out from the crowd with compelling (succinct) property details. At the very least, you should include:

- Monthly rent
- Number of bedrooms
- Location
- Property type (apartment, condo, house, etc...)
- One amazing feature (washer/dryer, free parking, pet-friendly)

A POLISHED HEADLINE WILL LOOK SOMETHING LIKE THIS:

\$1,800 - 1 bed/1 bath, Loft, Downtown, Washer/Dryer In Unit!



Not sure which amenities are worth highlighting?

Zillow® reports that there are two things that overwhelmingly result in more contacts than anything else:

1. Pet-friendliness

Survey data says that 35% of renters nationwide are willing to pay more for pet-friendly apartments. Listing yours as pet-friendly is likely to boost contacts significantly, depending on the city.

Consider using this in the headline if your building is in any of these famously pet-friendly cities:

- Austin, TX
- Portland, OR
- Boulder, CO
- San Diego, CA
- Charleston, SC
- Seattle, WA
- Chicago, IL

2. Parking

24% of renters say they’d pay more for designated parking spots, and data from Zillow® supports that parking boosts the contact-rate for listings. Again, only in some cities.

Consider using this in a headline if your building is in any of these cities, known for their nightmarish parking.

- Seattle
- Philadelphia
- Los Angeles
- Brooklyn, NY
- Boston
- Manhattan, NY
- Houston
- Washington, D.C.

Attention-grabbing features for your headlines

In 2016, we surveyed 900 renters across the U.S. about what they have and want from their apartments. The following are some of the top-rated features.

Top 3 Unit Features:

1. In-unit washer/dryer
2. High speed internet
3. Central Air

Top 3 Community Features:

1. Pet-friendly
2. Safe neighborhood
3. Walking distance to amenities

Top 3 Convenience Features:

1. Tenant portal
2. Online rent payments
3. Email and text messaging



THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS...

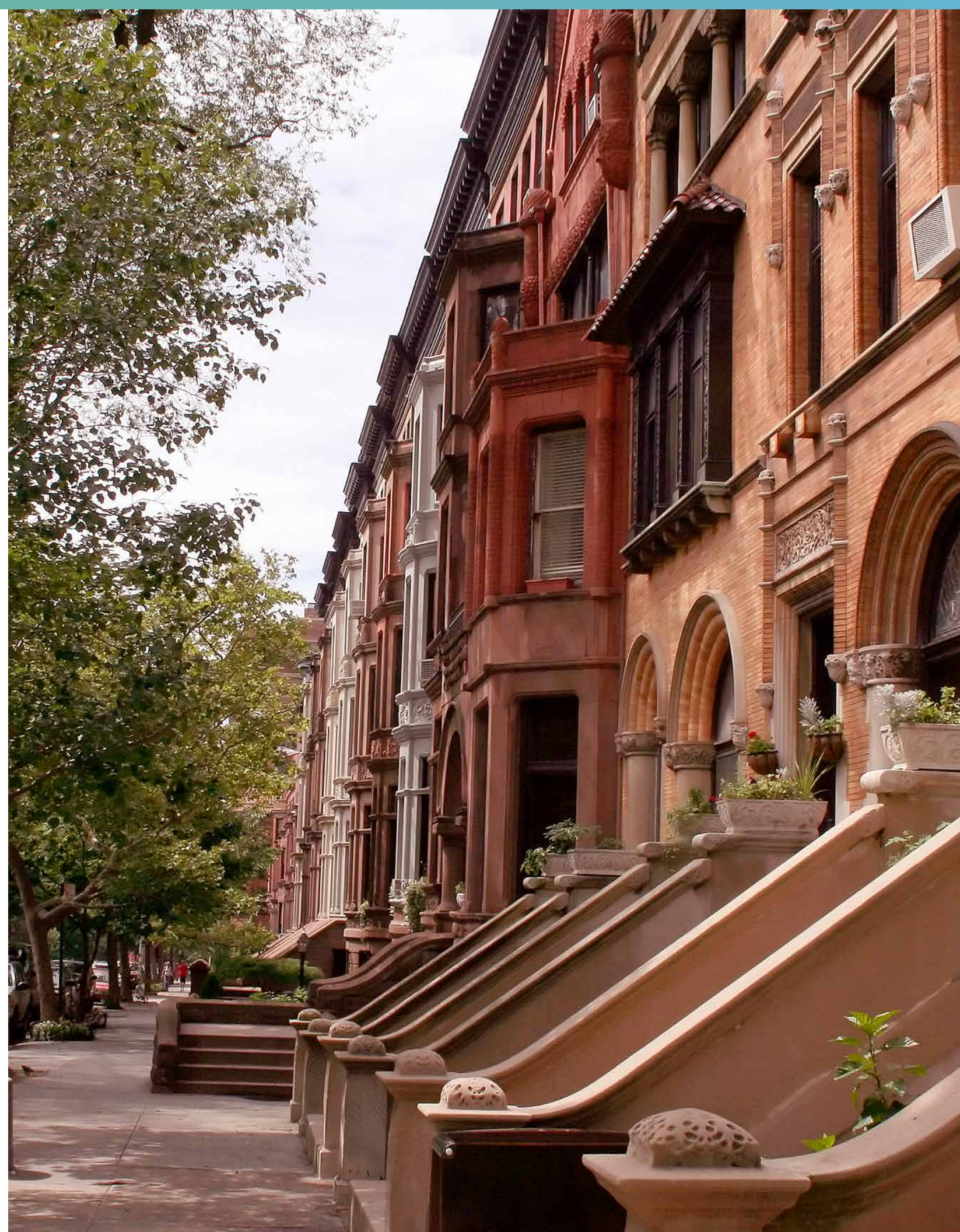
Once they click on your listing, you've won the first battle. The next hurdle is getting them to stay there longer than 20 seconds, because that's how long it takes them to make a decision.

Being able to scan quickly for the details they are looking for may make the difference between a bounce and an application, so be sure to include:

- **Photos.** Research from Zillow® shows that listings with 11-15 photos get 70% more clicks than those without any photos.
- **Amenities.** Every completed field in the listing leads to 5% more views than listings with few benefits listed.
- **The address.** Listings that include the property's address receive about 20% more contacts than those without it.

HOW SHOPPERS VIEW LISTINGS:

- **60%** - the amount of time spent looking at photos
- **20%** - the amount of time spent looking at the property description
- **40%** - the number of people that don't read the agent's remarks
- **"Z"** - the letter the represents how people read listings: left-to-right, top-to-bottom.



CRAFT A COMPELLING BLURB

If they're on your listing for longer than 20 seconds, you've got them hooked. Now, you just need to show them it's worth sending you an email.

The key here is that they have to imagine themselves living here. So, start by thinking of the reasons you'd enjoy living there, and build on it.

So instead of saying "2-bd/2-bth, walkable to public transit, hardwood floors, safe neighborhood."

Try: "A sunny 2-bd/2-bth on the first floor of a 3-family house. Hardwood floors, fireplace, and large windows in every room. Shared backyard and porch great for barbecues! Close to public transit and major highways. Off-street parking available."

Remember that many listing sites have a character or word limit, so be sure to avoid

- **Being too wordy:** Say it's a sunny apartment, not a sunny, breezy, happy, delightful apartment.
- **Real estate language:** Renters don't need to know about "COD," "liabilities," or "commission percentage."
- **Real estate shorthand:** You know what "2bd, 1bth, w/dk, CAC, EiK" means. Renters may not.
- **The thesaurus:** This relates to the first point. Be straightforward and clear. It's "bright and airy," not "luminous and atmospheric."

And, remember, there's no need TO TYPE EVERYTHING IN CAPS. It looks like yelling, don't you think?

Are your properties in a quiet neighborhood? Don't leave that out!

When we asked renters what they loved most about their current homes, and what would get them to move: a quiet neighborhood won out in both categories.

Specifically, they look for homes that are described as:

- Quiet and peaceful
- Serene
- Safe
- Walkable
- Private
- Having quiet neighbors
- Close to shopping
- Having a lot of trees

GET PARTICULAR ABOUT YOUR POSTING STRATEGY

It used to be that you could post a vacancy in the newspaper and tape a sign to the window, and that'd be that.

But now, if you're not everywhere, you may as well not be anywhere. So how you can be everywhere at once?

The trick is finding a property management solution with one-click syndication that also makes it easy to upload and store all unit details, including:

- Address
- Amenities
- Square footage
- Photos
- Price
- The blurb

And, you'll want to find a provider that allows unlimited storage for unit details. Even if you don't need to list a unit for a few years, it should be easy to edit the listing, post to your website, and syndicate to listing partners in just a few clicks.

In our 2016 Renters Survey, we asked renters how they would find their next apartment.

Nearly half of respondents reported they'd rely on word-of-mouth, friends, and family, in addition to:

- Craigslist (44%)
- Zillow® (33%)
- Google (31%)
- Apartment List (26%)
- Community websites (25%)
- Trulia (18%)

DON'T FORGET TO PROOFREAD

You're almost there! But, before you click "Post," it's a good idea to check for spelling errors.

Recent research from the writing experts at Grammarly found that mistakes in grammar and spelling are some of the top reasons that [people don't get promoted](#), aren't trusted by their colleagues, and don't close sales. So you can imagine how people view typos when they're looking for a new home.

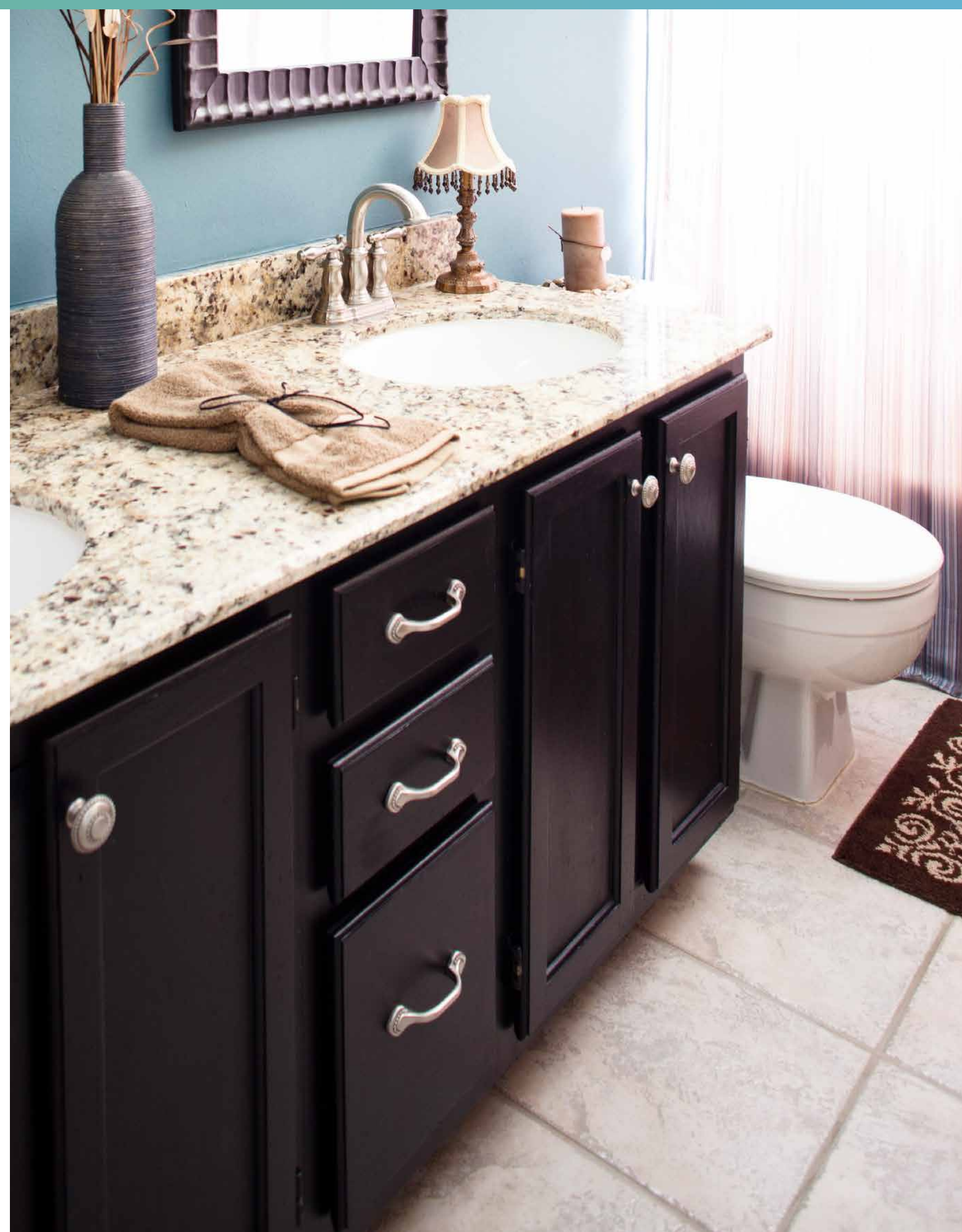
Build trust with apartment hunters right out of the gate with a polished, professional listing.

Here are some of the proofreading tips we use every single day at Buildium:

- Read it out loud
- Read it backwards (yes, really!)
- Have a friend or colleague read it

5 MISTAKES SPELLCHECK WON'T CATCH:

1. **Confusing homonyms:**
There/Their, It's/Its, or Complements/Compliments
2. **Mistyped descriptions:**
Walking closet/walk-in closet
3. **Misspelled addresses:**
Hemenway Street/
Hemingway Street
4. **Tense mistakes:** If you meant "heated unit" but typed "heats unit"
5. **Repetition:** "New carpets and and windows"



IT'S TIME TO ADVERTISE!

There you have it: the formula to a vacancy listing that sells—or in this case, rents—itsself.

Remember, the best thing you can do is provide as many details as possible.

In short: Include about 10 photos, the exact address, and be sure to post it on the sites your potential residents frequent. Don't forget to proofread!



Want to take better photos for your listings, too?

Check out our [Take Better Photos](#) guide to take your listings to the next level.

ABOUT BUILDIUM

Buildium is the only property management solution that helps real estate professionals with new business from property owners and community associations seeking services.

Backed by expert advice and relentless support, Buildium enables you to outperform across all facets of your business with intuitive software that balances power, simplicity, and ease of use.

ABOUT ZILLOW®

Zillow® is the leading real estate and rental marketplace dedicated to empowering consumers with data, inspiration and knowledge around the place they call home, and connecting them with the best local professionals who can help. Get more insights and data about the rental market from their research team at www.Zillow.com/research/

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