



# TOP 10 APARTMENT MARKETING IDEAS FOR STUDENT HOUSING

We work with a lot of student housing properties, and we've been with our clients through the execution of a lot of different apartment complex marketing ideas over the years. While we've witnessed the occasional flop, we've also seen the power of a great idea executed flawlessly. Believing that good ideas are meant to be shared, we wanted to put together some of the best real estate marketing strategies we've seen in action, so that property managers, leasing staff, and apartment marketers are empowered to make bold choices and see big results.

So without further ado, let's dive into the top ten apartment marketing ideas we love for student housing properties. These ten strategies are perfect when you need to raise lease rates and minimize the stress of the seasonal turn student housing properties face every summer.

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## SHOW RESIDENTS YOU CARE WITH SEASONAL EVENTS & INITIATIVES

The seasonality of the student housing market can be challenging and stressful, but it also provides opportunities to wow your residents. The beginning and end of the school year can be fraught times for students—why not show them some support and cheer them on with resident appreciation initiatives or events?

Themed events provide stressed students with the opportunity to unwind, and they'll appreciate the effort you put into showing them some love during these times. Celebrate the start of the Fall semester with a Back-To-School event, or support your students during finals by handing out Finals Survival Kits. Every opportunity you take to support your residents through their school year is another reason for your residents to renew their lease, refer a friend, or leave a glowing review. Plus, you can share what you do on social media for some original and heartfelt content.

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## TEAM UP WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

Every college campus attracts local businesses looking to capitalize on student traffic, and there's no reason you can't band together with these businesses to strengthen your marketing profile. Partnerships like these strengthen both parties while also communicating to your prospects that your property is keyed into the local community students will be a part of.

An easy place to start is by exchanging print media like brochures and flyers, asking your partner to display marketing materials in their business while you also display theirs. But your options go beyond this traditional back-scratching. Consider working with a local business to create some co-branded swag to provide to your residents, either in welcome kits or as a giveaway.

You could also work with a local business to provide coupons or other discounts for prospects who tour your property or residents who sign a lease, or invite a local business to join your on-site staff for a sponsored/catered resident event.



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## 3 HOLD A GIVEAWAY

Speaking of giveaways, holding a giveaway is a classic go-to that we've seen drive big results. However, it's easy to execute a lackluster giveaway that results in wasted money and time, so if you're planning to implement this strategy, there are a few mistakes to avoid.

First of all, your giveaway needs to excite. Don't waste your time on a prize that offers barely any value to the winner—you won't garner any attention this way. Pick a prize that is both on-brand for your property and valuable to college residents.

Second, be loud about it. This giveaway isn't going to market itself, no matter how enticing your prize is. Share information on your social media accounts, send emails to all your residents and leads, you might even make flyers to post around the area or mail to residents and local prospects.

Finally, tie giveaway entries to an action that benefits your property. Don't make it hard or annoying, or you'll prevent people from entering, but do make it valuable. For example, students might enter by providing their email address, posting about the giveaway on social media with a branded hashtag, or referring a friend.

## 4 OFFER REFERRAL SPECIALS

Finding ways to drive referrals can make a huge impact for student housing properties who deal with regular turnover from their transient student residents. Try incentivizing referrals with rent discounts, waived fees, or giveaway events.

Whatever method you choose to incentivize referrals, know that referral specials work best when they benefit both the person making the referral and the person being referred. Whatever you offer to your current resident, extend the offer to the potential resident as well; you'll find that people are more willing to refer their friends when they know their friend has something to gain too, and folks being referred will have that much more reason to sign with your property.

## 5 HOST A BRING-A-FRIEND EVENT

Referral specials can drive lease signings, but even just getting potential residents to visit your property can go a long way. Encouraging current residents to bring a friend to a community event is essentially providing a prospect with a partial property tour while giving them a chance to see your property not just as a name but as a real community.

In our experience, pool parties, team activities like sports and games, and holiday activities like pumpkin carving make great excuses for a bring-a-friend event. Whatever the theme of your event, consider asking folks to RSVP, and make sure you're poised to make a great first impression by ensuring your property is looking beautiful and your event is well-prepared with supplies and friendly staff.



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## 6 HOLD A GRAND OPENING EVENT

Feel free to skip past this one if it's not relevant, but for the new starts out there, know that you can generate serious buzz and foot traffic by hosting a grand opening event. This event should be open to both pre-leased residents and the public so that you can welcome new residents and drive new leases at the same time.

One idea we love for grand opening events is something we call Treasure Chest. Ahead of your grand opening, direct mail postcards promoting the opening event to prospects in the area. Attach a key to each postcard, along with the message that this key could be the winning key that unlocks a special prize at the event and encouraging folks to come by with their key to try their luck at the treasure chest.

Fill the chest with whatever you like, but make it worthwhile (think 1,000 \$1 bills, a fancy tablet computer, or a sizeable gift card). You'll drive attendees to your event for their chance to win big while also giving them a chance to fall in love with your property.

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## 7 DRIVE LAST-MINUTE LEASES WITH FLASH SALES

The dreaded turn can be a stressful time, but there are ways to ease the transition and get lease rates up fast. If you're in need of last-minute lease signings, a good flash sale could be exactly what your property needs.

To be successful, a flash sale can't just offer a great deal, it also needs to be visible to your prospects. Advertise your flash sale with a home page pop-up, a Google Ads campaign, emails to existing leads, Google My Business Posts, and other digital marketing that can be implemented quickly and reach qualified leads.

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## 8 DRIVE RENEWALS WITH RENEWAL SPECIALS

Another tried-and-true strategy to mitigate seasonal turnover is to offer renewal specials. You'll always have some turnover from graduating seniors and transfers, but if you've made a good impression, you should be able to encourage current residents to stick with you for the coming year, even if they have a lot of housing options to choose from.

One of the most common ways of implementing a renewal incentive is to offer a rent discount for early renewals. Bear in mind that you're eliminating the costs associated with finding a new tenant, so passing on some of those savings to the tenant by not raising—or even slightly lowering—their rent is an attractive incentive that still saves you money and hassle.



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## 9 ENCOURAGE REVIEW WRITING WITH COMMUNITY EVENTS

Did you know that 90% of consumers read reviews before visiting a business? In fact, student residents are particularly likely to rely on online reviews to inform their leasing decisions, with 91% of people ages 18 to 34 saying they trust an online review as much as in-person recommendations from friends or family. It's easy to see that poor reviews or few reviews online can have a big impact on lease rates.

The challenge is that people rarely take the time to leave a review unless they've had an extremely negative or extremely positive experience. You need a strategy that's going to encourage more of your residents to leave a review—and positive reviews in particular.

Legally speaking, you can't pay for reviews (unless they formally disclose your sponsorship), so incentivizing review-writing can be tricky. Don't offer a reward for review-writers, and don't force review-writing as a prerequisite for participation in a community event.

What you can do is remove the barrier to review-writing by having a computer available at a community event and thanking folks who use it in person. If you make it easy for residents to leave a review at your community events, you'll also drive more positive reviews, as you encourage people to leave their review at a time when they're most likely to be impressed by the property.

For bonus points, consider bringing reviews to life with video testimonials to use on your website and social media pages. Keep it short and sweet so you're never inconveniencing people, and be up front about what you're asking of them. For example, you could simply ask event attendees if they wouldn't mind talking about their favorite part of living at your property for 1 minute or less.

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## 10 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENT BRAND AMBASSADORS

This generation of college students is more likely than any other to be on social media, which means finding ways to influence them there can be key. Wouldn't it be nice if current residents were sharing their experience of your property online?

Working with a brand ambassador—any student resident with a large social following—can help spread the love for your property in a way that feels authentic. A brand ambassador might be particularly effective if they are in an advisory position to other students—e.g. If they lead a club or captain a team.

Just make sure that if you incentivize them (e.g. pay them or give them special treatment) to post online about your property they follow FTC guidelines for disclosure.

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That's all ten of our top apartment marketing ideas for student housing properties! We hope we've given you plenty of inspiration. If you want to hear more of our best apartment marketing ideas or get some help implementing marketing strategies that really work, don't hesitate to reach out to a Threshold team member on our Contact page—we'd love to guide you toward success!