

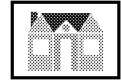
Life Skills Literacy

Things to Know About Housing

by Richard S. Kimball
illustrated by Jennifer DeCristoforo

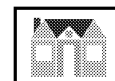
J. WESTON
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To the Teacher



Things to Know About Housing is another title in the growing *Life Skills Literacy* series from J. Weston Walch, Publisher. *Things to Know* books are reproducible, thematic compilations of information aimed at youth and adult English language learners, including ESL students new to American or Canadian culture. These books are intended to help build vocabulary, expand culturally-based knowledge, and develop real-life and survival skills. *Things to Know* books include interactive, authentic, cooperative, and idiomatic materials and activities. These books lead to success in the language and success in the classroom, the family, and the community.

The *Life Skills Literacy* series is appropriate for ESL learners at intermediate levels and for native learners reading at the fourth-grade level and higher. The vocabulary lists in this book include more than 330 words and phrases, most of them specifically related to housing. Illustrative and contextual clues offer assistance with lexical development. Verb forms are generally simple, and the use of passive voice is limited.

The pages of *Things to Know About Housing* and its companion books can help individual students build reading and writing proficiencies. They can also help full classes and small groups of students develop speaking and listening competencies. They can help all learners understand personal housing issues, and they explore related subjects like contracts and maintenance.

Their brevity and focus make *Things to Know* titles excellent resources for tutors working with individual students, whether the books are also used in the classroom or not. Their basic level makes *Things to Know* suitable for a wide range of circumstances and student abili-

ties. Their controlled language and high-interest topics give these books appeal for students as well as teachers.

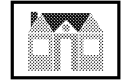
Like other books in the series, this one contains 24 three-page lessons. The first page of each lesson is for teachers. It provides information and suggestions ranging from general concept considerations to specific Internet sites you and your students might visit. The second and third pages are reproducible, for student use. The second page presents topic information and a dialogue, story, or student challenge relating to the topic. The third page includes a word list plus writing and discussion activities for individual, small group, and full-class use.

This book cannot cover all the vocabulary and topics related to housing issues students might face. Nor can it be designed to be exactly at the level of each and every student. But it can be—and is—very flexible, covering the basics at a consistently low reading level and then offering numerous ideas for moving beyond. It also provides extension activities to meet a wide range of classroom and personal needs. General ideas for use and adaptation of materials appear on the following page of Teaching Suggestions. More specific suggestions can be found on the teacher page provided with each lesson.

We believe you will find the Walch *Life Skills Literacy* series and its individual *Things to Know* titles useful for many different students in many different settings. We'll be pleased to hear how well it works for you, to know what other titles you think should be added, and—as always—to learn what more this company can do to serve you and your students.

—J. Weston Walch, Publisher

Teaching Suggestions



You can use *Things to Know About Housing* basically as is, having learners work through the two reproducible pages of each lesson in one or two class sessions. Or, you can make this book the core of a broader approach to housing issues by following the many suggestions in the teacher pages and expanding each lesson to cover several sessions.

The first step in deciding how to use these pages is, of course, to assess the needs, interests, and abilities of your learners. The second step is to consider the characteristics of your own students and community. Wherever you teach, you'll find that your classes benefit most when knowledge of personal needs and local conditions is added to the *Things to Know* mix.

The "Preparation possibilities" on the Teacher Pages provide some ideas of what you might wish to do in advance to enrich your classes, particularly if you are presenting a topic over several class sessions. However, these pages are designed for immediate use, and you need not spend hours preparing for their presentation. If you think local information will be helpful to your groups, follow the suggestions on the teaching pages and assign students to do the research. They will become true learners and enjoy themselves as well when they discover the practical value of outside projects. Or, invite outside speakers to join the class and talk about such complex matters as tenant rights.

Some of the "Technology resources" suggested on the teacher pages assume an Internet connection and use of a search engine like Yahoo to look for information and suggested Web pages. Plugging the listed search terms into one of the major search engines will bring up a list of web categories and pages that should lead to helpful resources. If specific pages have changed or been removed since publication of this book, the procedure should still point the

way to related sites and useful information.

The word list for each lesson contains between twelve and fifteen terms. Wherever possible, highly technical terms have been avoided and more accessible words included. These should interest all learners, whatever their housing interests and concerns. The more general terms are all important to the passages in which they occur; they have been selected with reference to readability levels and vocabulary frequency-use studies. In some cases, you may want to adjust the lists to help meet the needs and interests of your own students. You can underline the words you wish to stress, tape over those you don't want, and add others you find useful. But be careful not to eliminate terms required for the fill-in sentences that follow the word lists.

The idioms and slang and the "fascinating facts" given in the teacher pages are presented as fun and informative extras for some classes. If you use the idioms and slang, consider asking students to try them in sentences and to share other terms they know. You can treat the word lists in the same way, if you like, asking students to build sentences around them and to supply related vocabulary that interests them.

All materials on the activity pages have been prepared with reference to varied thinking skills, learning styles, and the several intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner and others. But no mix can be perfect for every class; you can make adjustments to meet the needs of your own groups. For example, some students with very limited language skills will benefit from working in pairs and reading dialogues aloud to each other. More advanced students will enjoy and benefit from more creative approaches in which they make up their own parts and decide what might happen next to the characters in the story.

Lesson 4: Looking for Housing



Themes:

- Listing housing needs
- Distinguishing between essential and desirable features

Background notes: People can find housing more easily if they first identify their needs and desires, then remember the differences between the two. This lesson introduces your learners to that idea through the concept of a housing checklist and a dialogue. It also invites them to explore their own housing wants through a series of extension activities. As is often the case in this *Things to Know* book, the emphasis here is on apartments. But many of the ideas proposed can also be applied to the purchase and ownership of houses.

Preparation possibilities:

- Think about: housing available in your area
- Bring to class: printed information for consumers seeking housing; one helpful book is *The Savvy Renter's Kit*, written by Ed Sacks and published by Real Estate Education Company

Technology resources:

- Search topics: *real estate and consumers*
- Web pages to try: Real Estate Education Company, Internet Real Estate News

Student pages:

- Page 11 includes: an introduction to a housing checklist; a dialogue between two friends trying to find an apartment
- Page 12 includes: a word list you can adjust for your class and student activities

Especially for ESL: The housing known by your students in other countries may vary widely from what they find in the United States and Canada. If that seems to be the case, you might invite them to bring in photographs to share.

Extra idioms and slang to introduce:

- *High-rent:* expensive
- *Rathole:* a bad place to live

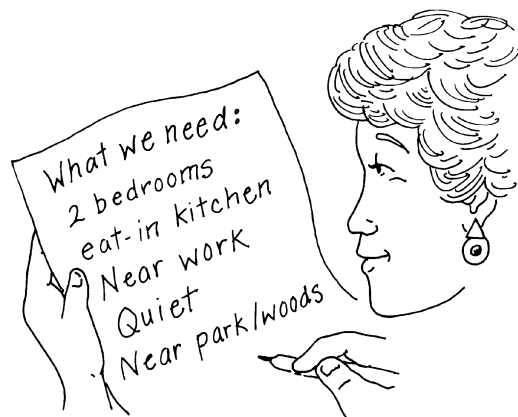
Thoughts to share with learners: You don't need to spend all you can on housing. In fact, some people say that spending less than you can afford is a good way to feel rich. That's because you should have some money left over for other things. Some people spend extra money for housing with things like swimming pools, then don't use them.

Questions to ask learners: What are some of the extras you can find in apartments near you? Do you have to think about the difference between essential and desirable things when you buy food? When you buy clothes? Whenever you buy anything?

Projects to assign learners: What do other people think is most important when they look for housing? Ask some friends and family members. Share what you find with your class.

A fascinating fact to share: Igloos are houses and other buildings made of ice and snow; they are most often made by Inuit. Lights and fires inside igloos can glow through them at night, making a beautiful sight.

Lesson 4: Looking for Housing



Make a checklist when you look for housing. Knowing what you want can make the job easier. The list can start with what you need to have, like the right number of bedrooms. These are **essentials**. The list can also say what you want to have. These are **desirable** things. A swimming pool is an **example**. It might be nice on a hot day, but it isn't necessary. Put the price you can pay on the list, too. Be **realistic** about it, and stick to it. When your checklist is ready, you can start looking.



Dialogue: What Do You Want?

First friend: I'd like to share an apartment with you. But can we agree on what to get? What's your top **priority**?

Second friend: A hot tub.

FF: A hot tub? How **practical** is that? My biggest priority is **security**. I want a safe apartment in a safe **neighborhood**.

SF: Places like that can have hot tubs. And what about a swimming pool? That would be nice.

FF: Of course. But let's think about comfort and **convenience** first.

SF: I can feel mighty comfortable in a hot tub. And a swimming pool is convenient. If you have your own, you don't need to go to the beach.

FF: That's not what I mean by "convenience." I want a place in close **proximity** to stores and banks. Close to where I work, too.

SF: How about close to the movies? That would be fun.

FF: I'm not sure we're going to agree about a place. I really do think we need to be practical.

SF: Oh, I know. I want a safe place, too. And **cleanliness** is **critical**. No rats and **roaches** for me.

FF: If there are, I'm not staying ten minutes.

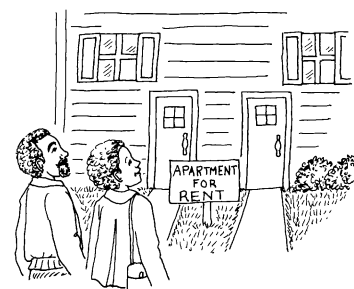
SF: The Hill Apartments on the South Side have openings. We can drive by there this afternoon. If we like what we see, we can stop to look inside. They have a pool, too.

FF: That's pretty far from where I work, but we can look. We can drive by Norris Woods, too. That's closer to my job.

SF: I like the name. There must be some woods nearby. Woods where we can walk.

FF: I don't think so. They just call it that. But it is near a bus stop.

SF: Do they have a hot tub? Or a pool? Or what about a **tennis court**? I'd like that, too.



Lesson 4: Looking for Housing



Word List

essential(s)	realistic	security	proximity	roach(es)
desirable	priority	neighborhood	cleanliness	tennis court
example	practical	convenience	critical	

Increasing Your Understanding

1. Look at the word list in the box above. If you don't know a word, find out what it means. Try to figure it out from the way it is used on page 11. Or, look it up in a dictionary.
2. Supply each missing word using the word list above. Write the word in the answer blank.
 - (a) The paragraph at the top of page 11 says a swimming pool is an example of _____ things.
 - (b) "What about a _____?" asks the second friend at the end of the story on page 11.
 - (c) The first friend wants a place in close _____ to stores and banks.
 - (d) The first friend's biggest priority is _____.
 - (e) Cleanliness is _____, according to the second friend.

Questions to Discuss

1. Which of the friends in the story is more practical? Which one would you most want to share an apartment with?
2. What kinds of things should be on a housing checklist? Brainstorm your answers.
3. How can you tell if a neighborhood is a good place to live?

Things to Write About

1. What's at the top of your priority list? Imagine that you are looking for housing. What's the most important thing to think about? Write your answer in a paragraph.
2. Write a letter about a safety problem. Think of a problem an apartment might have. It could be a broken step. Write a letter asking the landlord to fix it.

Things to Do

1. Act out the story on page 11 with a partner. Use your own words if you want. Decide what you think the first friend will say next.
2. What's on your housing checklist? Imagine that you are looking for housing. What do you want? List three essential things and three desirable things to look for.
3. Can you get tenants? Work with two or three other students. Make up a radio ad for the Clearview Apartments. Describe them any way you want. Share your ad with the class. Make it sound the way it would on the radio.
4. Look around your town or city for apartments. See if you can find some that are low-priced, some that are medium-priced, and some that are high-priced. Share what you find with your class.

Lesson 14: Furnishing Homes



Themes:

- Making floor plans
- Finding inexpensive furnishings

Background notes: In some communities where the population changes frequently, furniture moves about with great regularity. In some college towns, for example, students can be seen each fall rushing about installing their newly acquired furnishings into newly rented rooms and apartments. No doubt, some pieces find their way into some rooms more than once. These pages introduce your learners to ways in which they can look for used and inexpensive furniture. Learners also receive some ideas on planning what to get.

Preparation possibilities:

- **Think about:** good sources of inexpensive furnishings in your area
- **Bring to class:** ads for garage sales and similar events

Technology resources:

- Search topics: *garage sales, flea markets, used home furniture* (by area)
- Web pages to try: Lee's Flea Market Guide
- Software to consider: Planix Home Suite, CD-ROM from Autodesk, Inc; 3D Home Architect Deluxe, CD-ROM from Broderbund Software and Advanced Relational Technology

Student pages:

- Page 41 includes: an example of a floor plan; an introduction to making such plans; a story about some friends searching for a couch

- Page 42 includes: a word list you can adjust for your class and student activities

Especially for ESL: Ask: Is there a good market for used furniture in your first country? How does it work?

Extra idioms and slang to introduce:

- *Dirt cheap:* very inexpensive
- *Scrounge:* try to get things free or cheap

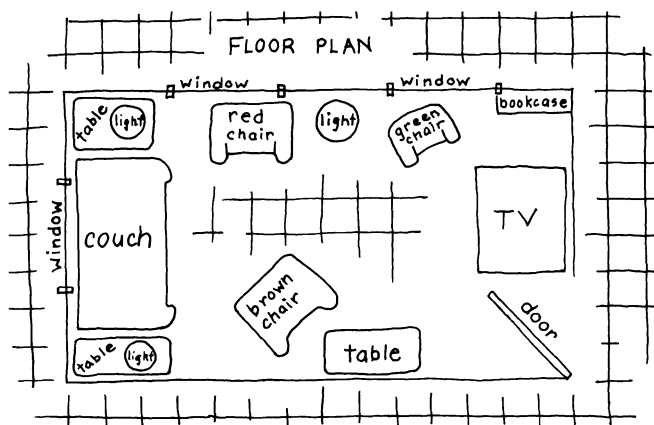
Thoughts to share with learners: Bargaining for used furniture is often possible. Try it, and see if you can get a better deal. Be careful with items like beds. Be sure they are well cared for and clean before you buy them. Paper models can help you decide how to furnish rooms. Make an outline to scale. Then cut pieces of paper to the same scale, shaped like furniture. Move them around to see what works.

Questions to ask learners: What are some good rules to follow when you buy new furniture? (One is to avoid suites unless you know you will use every piece.) Is it better to get used furniture with great quality or new furniture with poorer quality? Where can you buy unfinished furniture? Where can you find furniture people are throwing out? (Sometimes on sidewalks and in recycling centers) What's the difference between antiques and regular used furniture? (Age, quality, and value)

Projects to assign learners: Go to an auction or garage sale. Look for good buys. (But don't get anything you don't need.) Tell the class what you find. Is this a good way to shop?

A fascinating fact to share: A dealer paid more than \$12 million for an antique desk at an auction.

Lesson 14: Furnishing Homes



Here's a **floor plan** for a living room. It's a good thing to have when you buy **furniture**. It shows you what will go where. If you make a plan like this, use **graph** paper and draw it **to scale**. Let each square on the paper show the same distance. In this plan, one square equals twelve inches, or a foot. But be careful when you make your plan. **Measure** everything more than once. Don't learn the hard way. Don't buy a big bed that won't fit the room. Measure twice, don't carry the furniture twice.



Story: Looking Far and Wide

"Where's Sun?" asked Lenya.

"In his friend's truck," said Colin. "Out looking for **trash**."

"Why?"

"That's Sun's part of our hunt for furniture to fill this new apartment up. The city is picking up big items this week. Some people leave perfectly good things on the sidewalks. Whatever Sun finds can be ours."

"They must be rich, or they'd have a **garage sale** and get some money," said Lenya.

Mara came into the room. "Did somebody say garage sale? I'm going to three right now. Anybody want to come?"

But everybody had other ideas. Colin planned to look for chairs at a **flea market**.

Lenya was heading for a **consignment shop**. She wanted a used table and **couch**.

"I miss our old couch," she said. "I really loved it."

"I know," answered Colin. "But it went with the apartment, and the landlord had another use for it."

Tom was already at an **auction**. He was looking for kitchen equipment.

"Does everybody have floor plans?" asked

Mara. "Everything has to fit our space."

The three roommates left at about the same time.

Later that day, Mara was the first to come home. "Guess what!" she said when Colin came in. "I stopped at a church **rummage** sale and found a wonderful couch. It looks like a real **antique**. I put \$5 down. We can get it this afternoon."

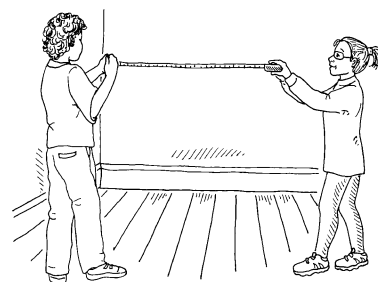
"Great!" said Colin. "And I found some boards for a **makeshift** bookcase."

Lenya and Tom came in together. "Hey guys!" said Lenya, "I got a neat table."

"And I got a wonderful couch, a real **bargain**," said Tom. "It's coming tomorrow."

"Oh-oh," said Mara and Colin together.

Just then Sun came in smiling. "You'll never believe it," he told them. "I found our old couch in the trash. The landlord couldn't use it after all. It's right outside in the truck."



Lesson 14: Furnishing Homes



Word List

floor plan	to scale	garage sale	couch	antique
furniture	measure	flea market	auction	makeshift
graph	trash	consignment	rummage	bargain

Increasing Your Understanding

1. Look at the word list in the box above. If you don't know a word, find out what it means. Try to figure it out from the way it is used on page 41. Or, look it up in a dictionary.
2. Supply each missing word using the word list above. Write the word in the answer blank.
 - (a) Colin planned to go to a _____ in the story on page 41.
 - (b) Tom found a wonderful couch. He said it was a real _____.
 - (c) Lenya went to a _____ shop. She wanted a used table and _____.
 - (d) "_____ everything more than once," says the paragraph at the top of page 41.
 - (e) If you make a floor plan, you can use _____ paper and draw it _____.

Questions to Discuss

1. What did the friends do wrong in the story on page 41? What did they do right?
2. Should it be illegal to throw good things away? Should there be a law about that? What could it say?
3. How can you tell good furniture from bad furniture?

Things to Write About

1. Think of a piece of furniture you really like. Maybe it's a couch or a chair. Write a paragraph about it. Be funny if you want to.
2. Imagine that a friend is going to sell you a couch. You can have it on December 1 if you pay \$50. Write up an agreement about your deal. Make up a name for your friend.

Things to Do

1. With a partner, role-play the parts of two people in the story on page 41. Use your own names and words if you want. Talk about where you can find good used furniture in your area.
2. Draw a floor plan of the place where you live. Show some of the furniture.
3. Make a poster for a garage sale. Use 25 Forest Avenue for the address. Make the sale sound like a great one.
4. Find out about auctions and garage sales near you. Look for signs, and look in the newspaper. Share what you learn with your class.