

## Apartment Hunting: The Apartment

What's your “dream apartment?” It's hard to say. There are a lot of different factors to consider. And, of course, everyone's taste is different. But, there are some things that most people agree on.

The **floor plan**, or 'layout,' is important. This means, the way the different rooms are proportioned and located makes a big difference. If you cook a lot, you might want a big kitchen, but if you're going to share an apartment with someone, you might want the rooms to be the same size. . . so neither of you has 'the good room.'

My wife thinks that a **balcony**—a 'room' that's open to the outside—is important in an apartment, and I don't want to live much higher than the second **floor** in our next apartment. The 'floor' an apartment is on refers to how many levels are between the apartment and the ground. In Britain, the 'floor' that you walk into when you leave the street is the 'ground floor.' If you go up a **flight of stairs**, you're on the first floor. Of course, in American English, it's different. In the U.S., the floor you walk into from the street is also the 'ground floor,' but upstairs is the second floor! With each extra floor, you have to walk up more steps if there isn't **elevator** and, because we're expecting a baby, I think the fewer steps the better!

A room has four walls, but it has six 'sides.' In addition to the walls, there's the **ceiling**, which is above the room (this is where many people mount lamps and lights) and there's the **floor**, which is the bottom of the room. (When you walk in a room, you're walking on the floor.)

Ceilings and floors can be very important to some people. A high ceiling can make a room seem more comfortable, but a low ceiling can be easier and cheaper to **heat**. ('Heating' is the process that makes a room warm in the winter. It can be very expensive!) Floors can also be important. Many people want wood floors—floors made of wood, or made to look like wood—and others want something over the floor, so that it's not too cold to walk on without shoes.

Another thing that is sometimes very important in an apartment is the size! The size of an apartment is often the most important thing! There are two common ways to measure the size of an apartment. One is to measure the area: how many square feet (in the U.S.) or square meters (in the rest of the world) the apartment has. The other way is to count how many rooms the apartment has. In the U.S., we're a little bit tricky about counting the rooms in an apartment. We don't count the kitchen, bathroom, or living room. We count **bedrooms**. So, an apartment with a kitchen, bathroom, living room, and two bedrooms is a **two bedroom apartment** in the U.S. In Germany, most people would say the same apartment is a 'three room apartment.' It's important to know how rooms are counted if you want to know how big the apartment is!

If you talk very long about apartments, you'll talk about balconies and floor plans. And

you'll talk about how many bedrooms an apartment has and how high the ceilings are. But you'll also talk about how much money you need to live in an apartment. The money you pay each month for an apartment is the **rent**. Even more than size, I think that the rent is the most important thing for me when we talk about apartments. After all, English teachers aren't millionaires!!

What is your dream apartment? What's the most important thing in an apartment for you? Is there anything you would pay extra for? Is the rent or the size the most important thing? If you're living in an apartment now, are you happy with it?