



# Comprehensive Guide to Managing Your Review Platforms

---

Multifamily

binaryfountain

When the time comes to find a place to live, more and more renters are looking to third-party review sites to help them decide. Managing online reviews of your properties can sometimes prove challenging. While some reviews are detailed and glowing, others are complicated and overtly negative. Responding to these reviews is vitally important to how your property is viewed. In this ebook, you will learn the importance of managing reviews efficiently as well as how to claim your listings, and improve the marketability of your properties.





## Online Review Platforms Are Gaining In Popularity With Consumers – What's Your Strategy for Managing Them?

An increasing number of consumers are using the internet to find local businesses, and a large majority of those consumers are consulting online reviews to help form their opinion about a business.

Multifamily housing is not immune to this trend, and unless you are monitoring multiple review sites in real time and responding to comments, you might be losing business to your neighboring competitors.

- **97% of consumers used the internet** to find a local business, up from 95% in 2016.
- In 2017, **68% of US consumers** said that positive reviews made them more likely to use a business.
- Reading negative reviews makes **40% of consumers** not want to use a local business.

Source: [BrightLocal](#)



# Table of Contents

---

3	Introduction	19	Apartment Ratings
6	Google	22	Rent.com
9	Facebook	26	Apartment List
13	Apartments.com	27	Responding to Reviews

# Managing Reviews Beyond the Obvious Places

Many properties have a Facebook page and have assigned someone to actively post to it and check it for interactions from renters—and potential renters—in the form of comments, posts, and, most importantly, reviews.

That is a very important place to start, but the world of online reviews far surpasses just your

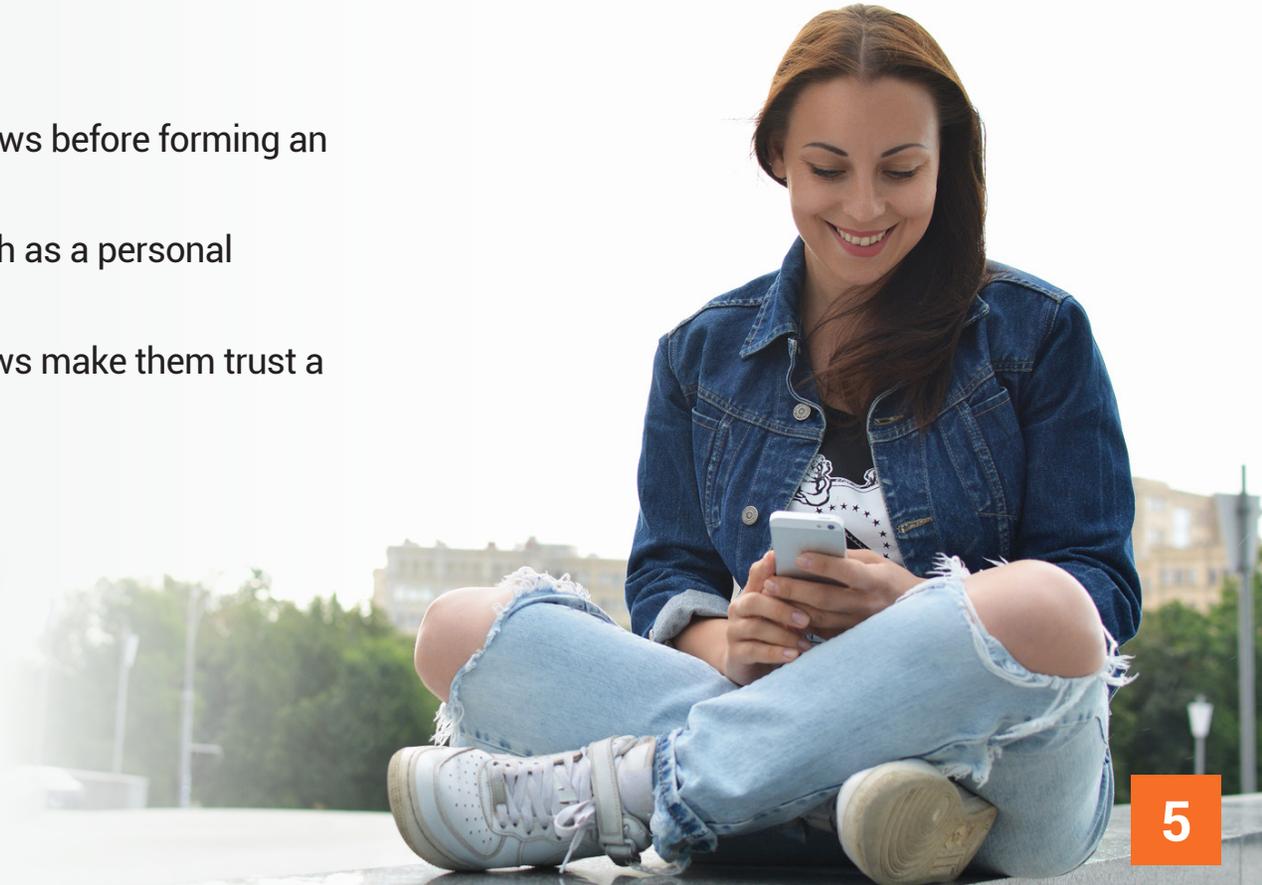
property's website or Facebook page.

In today's multifamily market where properties are vying for the same renters, it is imperative that property managers know where renters and potential renters are talking online about their experiences with your property. It is a conversation you need to be a part of.

## The Power Of Online Reviews

1. **90% of consumers** read less than 10 reviews before forming an opinion about a business. (2016)
2. **85% of people** trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation. (2017)
3. **73% of consumers** say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more. (2017)

Source: [BrightLocal](#)





Arguably the most important site on the internet is Google. Binary Fountain research shows that Google represents 50% of online reviews in the multifamily market.

Have you checked all your Google listings recently? It could have inaccurate information and reviews attached to it. This page may very well be the first thing a potential renter sees when searching for your property online.

According to [NetMarketShare](#) research, Google still ranks at the top for search engines with 72 percent of traffic on desktop and 88 percent on mobile devices.

If you have not claimed and verified your page with Google, do a quick Google search for your property and see what comes up. In order to make edits or corrections to this page and have the ability to respond to comments, you have to first claim that page and verify with Google that you are a legitimate part of the business.

When you claim your Google business page, the search engine will pull any information you provide — contact info, uploaded photos, a Google Map and Google Reviews — and place it at the top right of the search page. Google does this automatically for all businesses with an online presence, but by claiming your business page you have more control over it.

Based on **41,000** reviews, Binary Fountain found the review site traffic breakdown to be:

<b>Google</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Apartment Ratings</b>	<b>18.4%</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	<b>13.4%</b>
<b>Apartments.com</b>	<b>13.2%</b>

## Claiming and verifying your [Google My Business Page](#)

Verification helps ensure the accuracy of your business information across Google. Verified businesses are twice as likely to be considered reputable by users. Verification also protects you from anyone who might otherwise pose as a representative of your business. Until you have completed verification, you will not be able to edit the business information that appears on Google products.

For most businesses, verification means requesting, receiving, and reading a verification postcard from Google.

# Google reports that “apartments near me” is the **22nd most popular** “near me” search. (August 27, 2018)

Source: [Google Trends](#)

Having a well-organized and monitored Google My Business page is important for your property because of the search engine's high visibility. It is ground zero for internet searchers looking for reviews of a property.

Potential residents who do not know the name of a particular property might do a Google search for “apartments near me.” The Google My Business listing that comes up will display the property's star rating, address and contact information.

If you can catch the attention of a potential renter here, they might go to your website for more information. But if the first thing they see are negative reviews, no reviews, or reviews with no interaction from you, then you have quite possibly lost a potential resident.



On page 33 of this ebook, we will address, in detail, the best practices for responding to reviews. The good, the bad and the ugly all deserve a response from your property, which, if done correctly, can in many cases take the sting out of a less-than-stellar review. A well-crafted response shows anyone looking at the review that you care.

Here are some resources that can help guide you through the process of managing your online reputation with Google and getting the most out of your Google My Business listing.

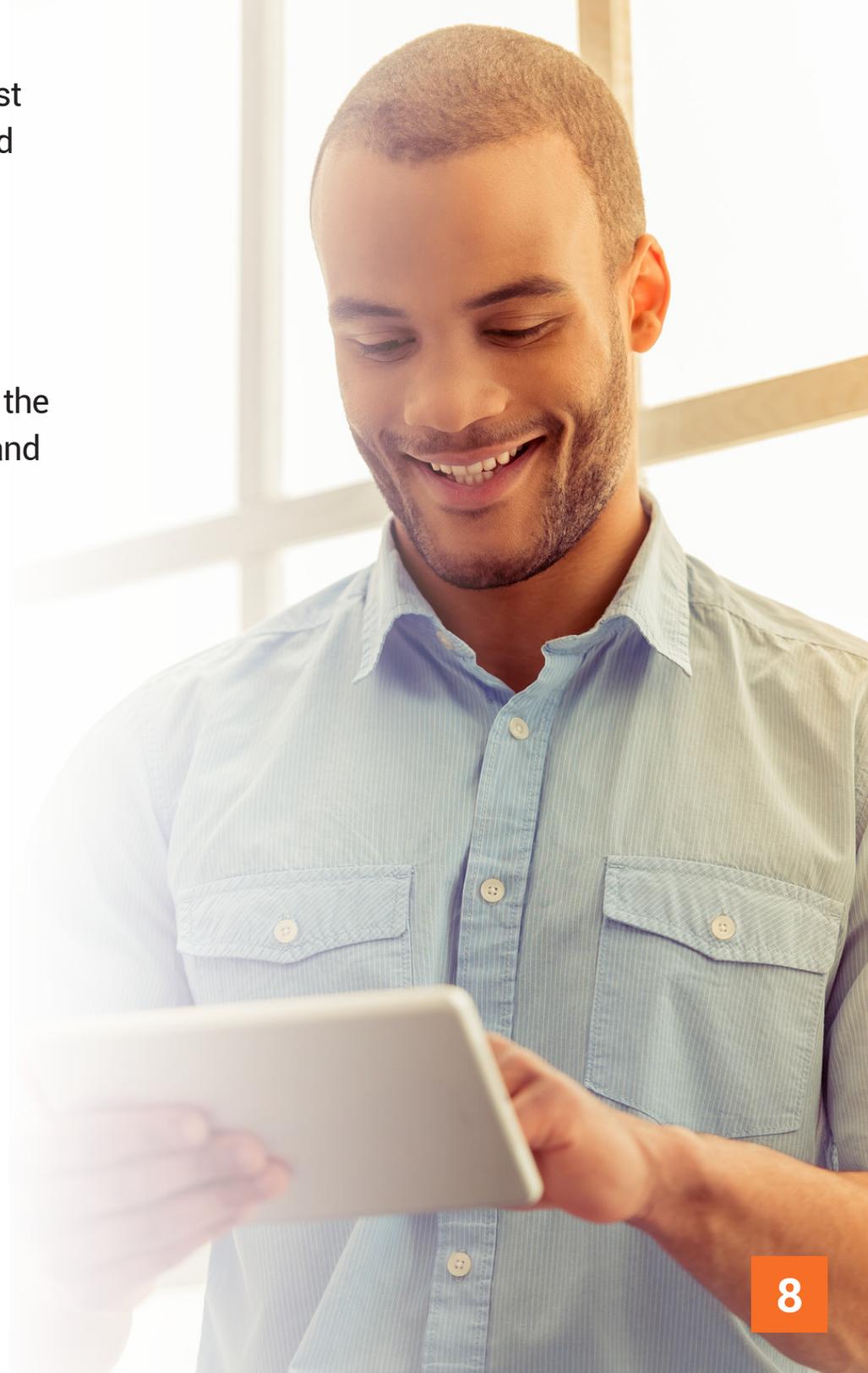
**Get the basics about posting regular updates** to keep your Google My Business listing fresh and informative.

Familiarize yourself with the Google My Business **dashboard** and the analytics you can glean from it.

Here is some advice from Google about **dealing with reviews** of your business.

Need to **flag a Google review** as inappropriate? Here is how to do it.

If you are looking to get more reviews on your Google My Business page, **click here** to read Google's best practices.





## facebook

As mentioned earlier in this e-book, Facebook is an obvious place your property needs to be. But managing a business page on Facebook functions a bit differently than catching up with old friends on your personal page.

The most important part of Facebook is simply being on the platform. If a potential renter types in the name of your property on Facebook and it does not appear, you may have lost potential business.

If you do not already have a Facebook page for your property, here are some pointers from Facebook on getting started.

**This Manage Your Facebook page** is your starting point. At the top right hand of the page you will see a blue button that says "Create A Page." Click there and let Facebook walk you through the rest.

**Facebook Insights** can be a great way to harness valuable analytics from your property's Facebook business page.

From the reporting tab, you can learn:

1. How many people your posts reached and how many people engaged with your posts
2. The number of people who called your business from your page
3. The amount of times you responded to customers and your average response time
4. The number of check-ins people made to your business with their posts

Once you have established your property's presence on Facebook, the reviews and ratings you will get are an important marketing tool for your business and need to be monitored carefully.

Responding to reviews is something that should be focused on, but it is important to know that you cannot remove negative reviews from Facebook. What is the sunny side of a negative review? Pages with all glowing reviews and five-stars across the board tend to make consumers question the validity of the reviews.

So take the good with the bad, respond to all of them and be compassionate and understanding in your tone.

If you do feel that something has been said in a review that is inappropriate, it can be reported to Facebook. The site has [Community Standards](#) and if an online review violates their standards, you can report it. What happens from there?

- It will be reviewed by Facebook and taken down if deemed inappropriate.
- Facebook will not include any information about the person who filed the report.
- Reporting a review does not guarantee its removal, only that it will be examined by Facebook.



Facebook owns Instagram, so there is a natural synergy between the two sites, which can boost your visibility beyond the framework of Facebook.

[This link](#) can provide some insight on leveraging Instagram for Business.

Here are the **Top 10 benefits** of having a Facebook Business Page according to [this](#) site:

1. Increased exposure to potential customers
2. Gather more leads
3. Lower your marketing expenses
4. Reach a targeted audience
5. Facebook insights
6. Build brand loyalty
7. Increase your web traffic
8. Boost SEO
9. Be mobile ready
10. Spy on your competition!



- **88% of people** read reviews to determine the quality of a local business ([Bright Local](#))
- **87% of people** say that a business needs a rating of 3-5 stars before they will use them ([Bright Local](#))
- **72% of consumers** say positive reviews make them trust a local business ([Bright Local](#))

## Resources:

### Facebook Marketing Resources:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/resource>

### Facebook Pages:

<https://www.facebook.com/business/products/pages>

### Facebook Ratings and Reviews:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/434605260012677/>

### Community Standards:

<https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/>

### Support Inbox:

<https://www.facebook.com/help/338745752851127?helpref=related>

### Reporting Abuse:

[https://www.facebook.com/help/1753719584844061/?helpref=hc\\_fnav](https://www.facebook.com/help/1753719584844061/?helpref=hc_fnav)



For multifamily property managers, Apartments.com needs to be one of the most important sites you monitor.

But effectively managing and tracking how your property is perceived is an ongoing process that needs to be done frequently.

If you are not already on Apartments.com, you need to set up your property to begin maximizing your visibility and reputation on the site. According to Apartments.com, they attract 31 million visits from potential renters per month, 13 million of which are unique.

It is simple to do. Visit [Apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com) and in the top right corner, click "Add a Listing." Basic ads on Apartments.com are free, but it can be worth the additional cost to upgrade to larger, more thorough listings.

Apartments.com is part of a vast network of online property listing sites such as [ApartmentFinder](https://www.apartmentfinder.com) and [Apartment Home Living](https://www.apartmenthomeliving.com), which can help maximize exposure of your listing.

Fill in the information boxes, add some property images and details and hit submit. Then it is time to work on your star rating and review section, which is every bit as important as property photography in this day and age.

## 61% of consumers begin with an apartment listing site or a search engine.

Source: [Apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com)

According to a 2016 survey conducted by [Apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com):

- **98%** of respondents indicated they read property reviews.
- **96%** indicated they find property reviews influential.
- **79%** find reviews "highly" influential.
- **94%** are more apt to consider renting from a property that has online reviews.
- A community with just one review generates **47%** more leads than a property with no reviews.

In the whitepaper "Reviews Matter. How Online Community Reviews Influence the Renter Decision," Apartments.com surveyed more than 4,000 renters and discovered that they overwhelmingly consulted property reviews when searching for an apartment. But instead of making a quick judgement based on any particular review, research showed that renters use reviews to gain insight into the living experience at apartment communities, and they value the information they get from reviews.

The Apartments.com research clearly indicated that:

- Renters read property reviews.
- Reviews drive rental decisions.
- Consumer reviews impact most purchasing decisions.
- The more good reviews, the better.
- Reviews lend credibility and reliability.
- Renters look to Apartments.com for reliable reviews.



Apartments.com offers some sound advice for effectively monitoring and managing your property's online reputation:

1. After getting management buy-in and preparing your staff, establish a company-wide process for monitoring, sharing and responding to reviews.
2. Respond to all online feedback about your community, good and bad, in a timely, professional fashion. Responding to reviews lets future residents know that satisfaction and responsiveness is important to you.
3. When responding to critical feedback, be sure to directly address the renter's problem with an apology and information about what you are doing to make it right.
4. Do not let problems leave your office/property. Always ask renters about their experience and work to correct any issues before they walk out your door.
5. Do not forget to ask for reviews. Most people will take the time to rate your business online, if you ask.
6. Listen to your renters and use online feedback as an opportunity to make improvements in your community.
7. Make positive online feedback part of your community's sales and marketing efforts. Renter endorsements build credibility and give future renters confidence in your community.
8. Do NOT post fake online reviews.
9. Keep an eye on your performance/trends over time. Changes in performance can quickly alert you to otherwise hidden issues.

Source: [Apartments.com](https://www.apartments.com)

Now that you can clearly see the importance of online reviews about your property, how exactly do you wrangle such a wide-open public forum of online reviews, some with negative comments, and use it to your advantage? The first thing to do is stay calm. Your property is going to have some less-than-stellar reviews here and there and research shows that can actually be a good thing.

According to Apartments.com: It may seem counterintuitive, but even a few negative reviews can establish credibility for a property. According to one survey respondent, "I try to find the patterns in reviews. There are always outliers; overly positive and negative people will try to get their voices heard over most. I trust the majority consensus."



The majority of renters – **nearly 80%** – deemed that communities are trustworthy if they have at least four to six reviews. A large portion of that total number indicated that even more reviews reinforced reliability, according to [Apartments.com research](#).

While any positive review is good, [Apartments.com research](#) shows renters care about these three issues the most:

- Customer Service (Property Management, Concierge)
- Maintenance
- Neighborhood

Each online review site has its own policies on asking for reviews, so it is important you get to know each of them.

Apartments.com is one site that encourages properties to ask renters for reviews. If you want to load your listing with glowing reviews – you cannot be afraid to ask for them, according to Apartments.com. This needs to be an ongoing process so that your reviews stay recent. Something great a tenant said about your property a year ago will not have the same effect as a review posted last week.

Find opportunities to ask renters for reviews on this site. Here are two quick tactics from Apartments.com to help increase your review volume:

- Place a sign on the concierge desk asking residents to leave their reviews on Apartments.com.
- When your maintenance team completes a service request, have them leave a flyer with the maintenance notice form, asking residents to visit Apartments.com and review their maintenance service.
- Implement a monthly email campaign asking residents for reviews.

## Resources:

### Place an ad:

<https://www.apartments.com/advertise>

### Best Practices:

<https://www.apartments.com/advertise/resources/best-practices>

### Data and Trends:

<https://www.apartments.com/advertise/resources/data-and-trends>

### Industry Research:

<https://www.apartments.com/advertise/resources/whitepapers>



Apartments.com is also affiliated with multiple other rental sites and their advertising program allows your ad to be seen on these nine different sites:

 Apartments.com™

 Apartamentos.com™

**ForRent.com**®

**ForRent**  
UNIVERSITY.COM

**ApartmentFinder**™

**apartmenthomeliving**

**Westside**Rentals

**AFTER**55.com®

**CorporateHousing.com**™



With the words “apartment” and “ratings” in the title of the web site, it is clear that renter opinions drive this site, so it is one you absolutely need to monitor to be sure someone else is not taking control of your property’s online reputation.

The site claims it is the “largest resource for apartment reviews and prices,” and “the Internet’s most comprehensive forum for renters nationwide to share renting experiences and opinions.”

To make sure your property is included in this massive opinion-database, [click here](#) to add your free property listing.

Managers can publish helpful information about the community for prospective residents for free. They can update key information about the community such as community name, address, photos, floorplans, rents, move-in specials, availability, and amenities. This can be done by choosing to have your data shared with ApartmentRatings inside your ILS portal.



## **ApartmentRatings Manager Center:**

The ApartmentRatings.com Manager Center is designed to help property managers track reviews left on their community pages and craft appropriate responses to those reviews.

Managers can respond directly to residents’ opinions with designation as a verified manager. According to the site, it is the only apartment ratings/review service that allows users to post on a website as a “verified apartment manager.”

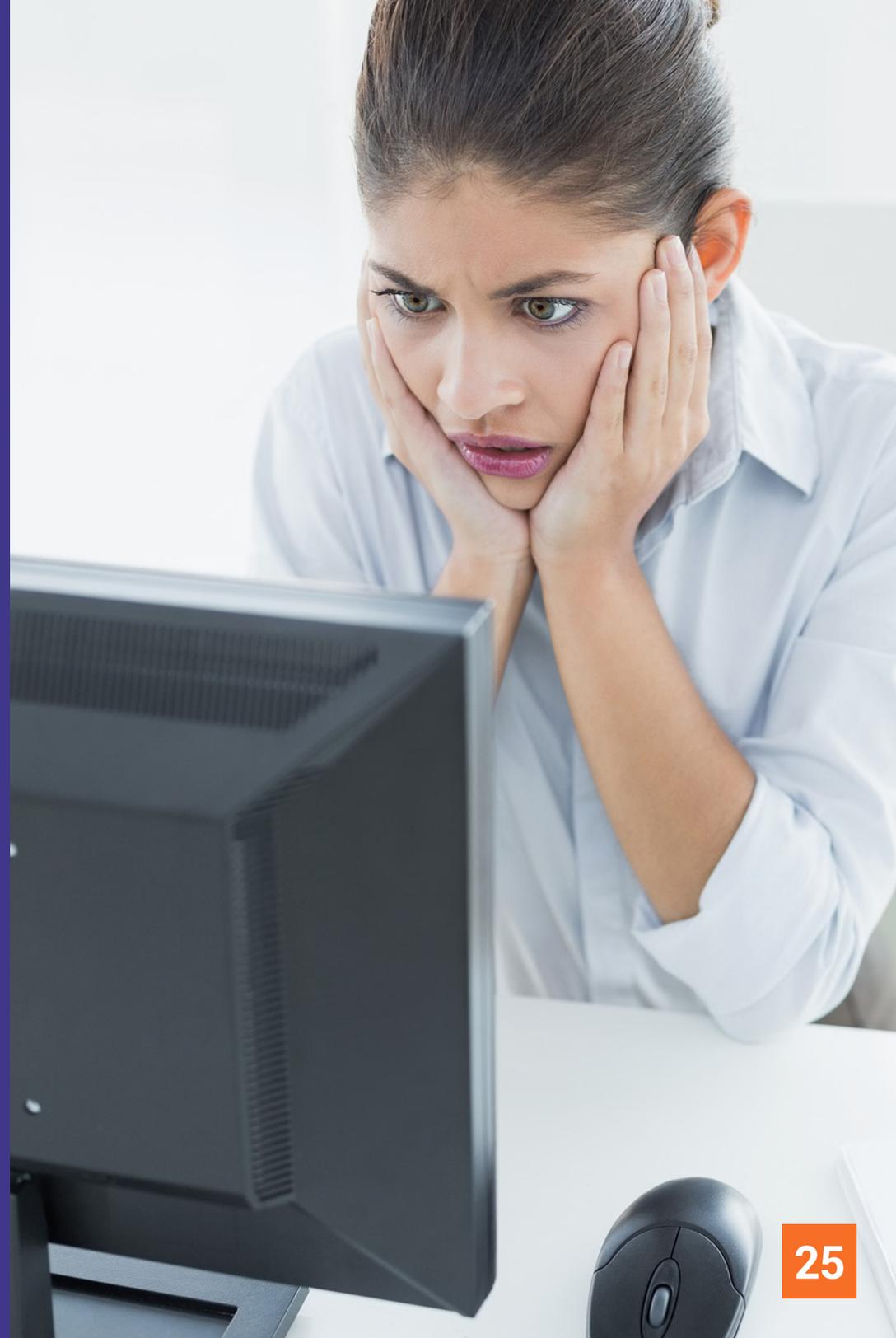
ApartmentRatings does not filter or pre-screen any of the opinions posted to the site, but says it acts as a “passive conduit” for information.

This leaves the door wide open for erroneous information about your property and it is up to you to find and correct it.

But like most sites, ApartmentRatings does have a method for reporting user-generated content that violates the site’s user agreement.

If you suspect a review violates the site’s user agreement, use the Abuse Reporting form to alert the staff.

The opinion will be reviewed strictly for its adherence to the ApartmentRatings user agreement. Per the site, “we are not in a position to judge the truthfulness of any author’s comments, and we will not attempt to intervene in resident-landlord disputes.”



ApartmentRatings does not have a hard rule about asking your renters to review their experience. However, the site does clearly outline an “incentive policy” discouraging incentives of any kind for providing a review.

The site considers an incentive to be any form of reward offered in return for writing a review. Rent credits, gift cards, and entries into any kind of drawing are just a few examples.

Instead, they encourage providing the best possible experience for your renters and the positive reviews should come organically.

## Resources:

### Getting started:

Information for Property Owners:

<https://www.apartmentratings.com/propertymanagers/>

### Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://www.apartmentratings.com/faq/>

### Content Guidelines:

<https://www.apartmentratings.com/content/>

### Incentive policy:

<https://www.apartmentratings.com/propertymanagers/>



# rent.com

Although not one of the most popular review sites, according to Binary Fountain's research of top multifamily review sites (see page 6), Rent.com is yet another viable site where renters and potential renters post and read about your property. It is important that you join in to make sure you are properly represented here and are part of the conversation.

To get started, make sure you claim or create your property's listing on Rent.com. [Click here](#) and select which size of property you are representing. Once you begin to establish your listing, the web site will walk you through getting your property live on the site.

[Read rent.com terms of use here.](#)



If your property is currently on Rent.com, you will need to stay on top of keeping the listing current by adding photography of new amenities and updating rental prices and other pertinent information.

But you also have to ensure you are reading and responding to any and all reviews on your page. You can see detailed guidelines on how to respond to reviews on **page 33** of this ebook.

The site asks users to “click here” to leave a review directly on your property’s page and it also sends out a resident satisfaction survey to certified residents. Residents are “certified” if the property has reached out to them directly.

The resident satisfaction survey contains various questions about the property and allows the certified resident to leave a written review. Once a review is received, a third party moderation service reviews it for profanity and other inappropriate content. If the review passes this moderation, the property manager has the ability to respond.

Rent.com focuses on property photos, amenities, floor plans, property details and contact information. Take advantage of the opportunity to make your property look fresh and lively here by keeping it updated.



**Rent.com's** user-generated content policies, which include property reviews, consists of the following guidelines that can also be found [here](#).

When adding reviews to Rent.com, that content can not do any of the following:

- Contain any material that is defamatory, obscene, indecent, abusive, offensive, harassing, violent, hateful, inflammatory, or otherwise objectionable;
- Promote sexually explicit, pornographic material or violence;
- Contain anything that is discriminatory based on race, color, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status or age;
- Infringe any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright, or other intellectual property or other rights of any other person;
- Violate the legal rights (including the rights of publicity and privacy) of others or contain any material that could give rise to any civil or criminal liability under applicable laws or regulations or that otherwise may be in conflict with these Terms of Service;
- Be likely to deceive any person;
- Promote any illegal activity, or advocate, promote, or assist any unlawful act;
- Impersonate any person, or misrepresent your identity or affiliation with any person or organization;
- Involve commercial activities or sales, or advertising; or
- Give the impression that they emanate from or are endorsed by us or any other person or entity, if this is not the case.



## Resources:

### Getting Started:

<https://www.rent.com/manage>

### Property Support:

<https://www.rent.com/company/contact/property/>

**rent.com** is part of the RentPath family of brands which also includes ApartmentGuide.com, Rentals.com, and LiveLovely.com.

# apartment list

ApartmentList is a bit of a different animal, working more as a back-end connector between your data and renters seeking an apartment. It is more like the dating app of the multifamily housing world, in that it connects residents with specific criteria to their perfect dwelling.

See a basic overview of how the site works [here](#).

The site also has an extensive database of industry research, [here](#).



## ApartmentList differentiators:

1. You only pay when a renter moves in.
2. Their software analyzes more than 35 different qualities to better qualify potential renter leads.
3. The site integrates with your property management software to provide real-time pricing and availability.
4. The site partners with Facebook, Realtor.com, and Homes.com for added visibility.

# Responding to Reviews

We have covered a wide range of review sites that you need to be paying attention to. You will see reviews you love and some... not so much. But it is ok.

Even the blow of a not-so-glowing review can be softened with a well-thought-out response. Here are some guidelines on how to craft a great response to every review, every time:

- 1. Do not respond hastily.** If you have just read a review that is downright mean, do not respond in the heat of the moment. Step away. Think about how to turn this into a positive and ask several others to vet your response. Ask yourself how your response is going to sway potential tenants.
- 2. Start your response to any negative review with a sincere apology** such as: "I am sorry your experience with us was not what you had hoped." A genuine apology changes the tone and disarms the reader immediately. Offer to take the conversation offline. This gives you a chance to get to the bottom of the issue in private. In many cases, if an issue is resolved, reviewers may go back online and publicly thank you for fixing the problem.



3. **Respond to a positive review with appreciation.** For example, begin by thanking the tenant for taking time to post a review.
4. **You should have a guideline or policy** for responding to reviews, but never cut and paste the same templated, generic response. Let your policy be a guide, but do not repeat the same language. That destroys the image that you cared enough to respond.
5. **Address specific items** in a customer review. If a resident said they loved Nicole in the rental office, reiterate that Nicole reflects your commitment to your property and tenant community.
6. **Keep it short and sweet.** Readers can get overwhelmed by lengthy responses and will not read the whole thing if it is too long.

## Here are Google's tips for responding to reviews:

Business owner responses allow you to build relationships with customers, but they are also public. When replying to your customers, keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. **Be nice and do not get personal.** This is not just a guideline—it is also a good idea as a business owner. It is difficult to win an argument with a frustrated customer, and you want to avoid burning bridges. Keep your responses useful, readable, and courteous. In addition, responses should comply with content policies of each review site.
2. **Be a friend, not a salesperson.** Your reviews are most likely current or past residents, so there is no need to offer incentives or advertisements. Tell reviewers something new about your property...or share something they might not have known.



## Request Your Free Demo

Explore how [Binary Fountain's online reputation platform](#) for multifamily properties, Social Compass, can help you manage your online reviews, engage more efficiently, benchmark yourself against the competition, and promote your brand.

[sales@binaryfountain.com](mailto:sales@binaryfountain.com)  
800.549.9552

**“When it came to reputation management platforms, Social Compass was a game changer.”**

— Emma Cook, Senior Digital Media Specialist, Gene B. Glick Company, Inc.



Connect with Us Today



**binaryfountain**

**Call: 800.549.9552**

1660 International Dr. Suite 225, McLean VA  
22102

