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Tips On Making Your Home a Quiet Sanctuary From City's Bustle

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NEW YORK — From neighbors' clanking pots to the sirens of a speeding firetruck, the city's apartment dwellers are subjected to a cacophony of noise on a daily basis.

But real estate experts say tenants in even the closest of quarters can head off a headache by taking a few key steps before they settle on a home. They shared some of their expert advice with DNAinfo.com New York.

Location, location, location

Where your apartment is situated, both within the neighborhood and within the building, can make a huge difference in terms of noise, according to [Daniel Hedaya, president of Platinum Properties](#). Hedaya said house hunters seeking a quiet pad should stay away from busy thoroughfares and seek out apartments on side streets rather than directly facing the avenues.

Neighboring buildings can also have a big influence on surrounding noise, warns [Frances Katzen](#), managing director of [Prudential Douglas Elliman](#). While it's great to live near your child's school for easy proximity to pickup and dropoff, schools don't make the best neighbors when it comes to quiet, she said.

"If it's next to school, you're in trouble for about three or four hours" per day, said Katzen, who said the morning and afternoon entry and dismissal tend to be a supercharged burst of noise of kids playing and parents chatting.

Other red flags include nearby police stations, firehouses and construction sites, said [Lee Williams](#), of [Charles Rutenberg Realty](#).

"You've got to know where the obvious items are — fire stations and police stations," he said. "Construction sites are a dead giveaway."

He said they had a listing on 10th Avenue and West 46th Street that they "couldn't show ... for a month because of the jackhammers," he said.

Katie Santoro, 24, who works in advertising, said she'd never have picked her apartment above S'Mac on East 12th Street, if she'd known diners make noise late into the night.

"A lot of people hang out in front. I hear a lot of conversations," she said. "I pretty much keep my AC on all year to drown out the noise. I wouldn't live above a restaurant again."

It's what's on the inside that counts

If the outside of the apartment looks great, be sure to remember the potential sources of noise within a building, too, Williams said.

For utmost quiet, shoppers should avoid units near elevator banks — "You can hear the whooshing," he said — and may want to pick end-of-hall apartments instead.

The most sensitive apartment hunters may also want to seek out a pet-free building, Williams said.

"If you're noise-averse or you might work from home one or two days a week, you don't want a barking dog next door to you," Williams said.

"Dogs aren't used to being by themselves. If a delivery person goes by that door, a dog can bark for a half an hour or more."

Tiled hallways can also cause problems, Williams said.

"People just in regular shoes would be making noise past the apartment," Williams said. "I've had clients say that because of the Mexican tile in the hall, it would be a non-starter."

Apartment interiors are integral, experts said.

Smooth surfaces like wood, ceramic or glass can amplify noise-levels, while cloth surfaces lessen it, experts said.

Marc Spector, principal of [the Spector Group](#), praised soft decorative materials for dampening noises — favoring padded flooring to hardwood floors, for example.

"The easy solution is to put carpet down," he said. "It doesn't have to be wall-to-wall."

Fabric on the walls, such as tapestries or thick curtains, can also help make a sound barrier.

"There have been people who have put tapestry-like treatments on the wall to keep noise down," he said, "Fabric furniture would be able to absorb sound as well."

Use smart technology

For those looking for the maximum sound barriers, experts recommend construction techniques such as professional wall and window treatments, along with soundproofing materials in the gaps between apartment walls, Spector said.

Hedaya said 200 Chambers St.'s Penthouse 2 is a great example of noise-smart building.

"The owner put in many soundproofing factors," Hedaya said.

"The ceiling is hung using a special neoprene system to isolate sound from above, the AC systems are concealed behind double doors for quiet, the floor is laid with two layers of crossing plywood to make sure it's quiet and the walls are made with special 'quiet rock' sheetrock."

Double or triple-pane windows also help insulate an apartment from sound, with experts suggesting at least 2-inch thick glass.

[Jacky Teplitzky](#), of [Prudential Douglas Elliman](#), said redoing windows can be a pricey endeavor, but there are more affordable and still effective alternatives.

"A lot of people think they have to replace windows. It's very expensive," she said.

[She recommended adding](#) an additional layer of window inside your existing window to help seal out sound and also provide weatherproofing. [Cityproof Windows](#), which is one of the companies that provide the service, charges between \$750 and \$1,250 for a 3-foot by 5-foot window, a common size in the city.

"[It] is adding another layer from the inside. That's a very effective way to make [the apartment] quiet."

4. When in doubt, check it out

Experts emphasized that the best way to detect any problems is to walk around a neighborhood at different points of the day and during the week. Sometimes, the problems don't reveal themselves between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. when many house hunters schedule their appointments for a visit.

For example, peace-seeking house hunters might never visit their future building early enough to hear when the garbage trucks come by.

If your dream apartment faces the front of the building, experts advised, make sure you ask the people who live there or the doormen about trash pickup.

"My main advice — do not make assumptions," Teplitzky said.