



FIRST CLASS REALTY & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

20 Questions to Ask a Property Manager

A practical interview guide for rental owners and investors.

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DOWNLOADABLE OWNER RESOURCE

Prepared by First Class Realty & Property Management

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How to Use This Interview Guide

The best property manager is not always the cheapest or the loudest. Use these questions to compare operating standards, transparency, and owner fit.

Interview standard: ask specific questions, listen for specific answers, and avoid vague promises.

This resource is a planning aid for rental owners and investors. It does not replace legal, tax, insurance, code, or licensed contractor guidance for a specific property.

1. Look for process

- Strong managers can explain leasing, collections, maintenance, accounting, communication, and owner reporting without guessing.

2. Look for transparency

- You should understand fees, approvals, markups, reserves, reports, and who actually performs the work.

3. Look for accountability

- Good answers include timelines, documentation, standards, escalation paths, and decision points.

4. Look for fit

- A manager can be competent and still wrong for your asset type, communication style, or risk tolerance.

Red Flags While Interviewing

- They cannot explain their fee structure clearly.
- They promise a high rent without discussing market competition or condition.
- They are vague about maintenance approvals, vendor oversight, or owner statements.
- They treat every property and owner exactly the same.

Leasing, Pricing + Screening

These questions test whether the manager understands how to position the property, qualify residents, and protect vacancy cost.

#	Question	What a Strong Answer Should Cover
1	How do you price a rental before listing?	They should discuss active competition, condition, seasonality, days on market, concessions, and owner goals.
2	Do you use self-showings, agent showings, or in-person showings?	The answer should match your risk tolerance, market, property type, and resident experience standards.
3	What are your application criteria?	Look for written criteria, income verification, rental history, background review, deposit standards, and fair housing consistency.
4	How quickly do you expect to lease this property?	A real answer depends on price, condition, competition, marketing quality, and showing access - not a guarantee.
5	How do you handle pets, assistance animals, and deposits?	They should distinguish pets from assistance animals and explain screening, fees, deposits, and documentation.
6	Who writes the lease and what addenda are included?	You want a professional lease process, consistent addenda, and property-specific terms where needed.
7	How do you handle renewal pricing?	They should review resident performance, market rent, turnover risk, property condition, and lease timing.
8	What happens if the property is not getting activity?	Look for a clear adjustment process: photos, price, condition, showing access, listing copy, and market feedback.

Fees, Maintenance + Reporting

These questions reveal how money moves, how approvals work, and whether you will have clean records.

#	Question	What a Strong Answer Should Cover
9	What exactly are all management, leasing, renewal, onboarding, inspection, and other fees?	You should receive clear pricing in writing with no surprise charges buried in process language.
10	Do you mark up maintenance or vendor invoices?	The answer should be direct. If there is a markup, ask when it applies and whether owner invoices are visible.
11	What is your owner approval limit for repairs?	Look for a defined not-to-exceed amount and a practical emergency exception process.
12	Who chooses vendors and how are they vetted?	They should discuss licensing when required, insurance, responsiveness, pricing, scope clarity, and invoice records.
13	How do you handle emergencies after hours?	You need to know what qualifies as an emergency, who responds, and how owners are notified.
14	What owner statements and reports will I receive?	Look for owner statements, ledgers, invoices, reserves, year-end reporting, and property-level visibility.
15	How often do you inspect the property?	They should explain move-in, periodic, renewal, move-out, and issue-specific inspection standards.

Communication, Collections + Fit

These questions separate polished sales talk from the actual owner experience you will live with after signing.

#	Question	What a Strong Answer Should Cover
16	How do you handle late rent and eviction timelines?	Look for written collection cadence, notices, escalation rules, ledger accuracy, and legal coordination.
17	Who will I communicate with after onboarding?	Ask whether you get the broker/owner, a department queue, a portfolio manager, or a call center.
18	How do you communicate property issues to owners?	Strong managers separate urgent issues, resident issues, maintenance recommendations, and financial decisions.
19	What types of properties or owners are not a good fit for you?	A selective answer is a good sign. A manager who takes everything may not protect their operating standards.
20	What would you change about my property before marketing or renewal?	This tests judgment. The answer should connect condition, rent, resident expectations, and likely ROI.

Best Answers / Notes From Interviews

Property Manager Comparison Scorecard

Use this page after your interviews. The right fit should be clear on process, money, communication, maintenance, and owner alignment.

Category	Score	Notes
Fee clarity	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Leasing and pricing strategy	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Resident screening standards	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Maintenance approval process	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Owner reporting/accounting	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Communication fit	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Portfolio/investor experience	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:
Overall trust and professionalism	1 2 3 4 5	Notes:

Final rule

Do not choose a property manager only because they are cheap or agreeable. Choose the operator you trust to protect the asset, communicate clearly, and tell you the truth before a problem gets expensive.

Final Decision

Use this page to choose with discipline instead of reacting to the best sales pitch.

Final Review Checklist

- I understand every recurring fee, leasing fee, renewal fee, inspection fee, and maintenance markup if any.
- I know who will communicate with me after onboarding and how often I should expect updates.
- I understand the manager's leasing process, showing process, application criteria, and renewal process.
- I understand repair approvals, emergency handling, vendor selection, and invoice visibility.
- I have reviewed sample owner statements, reports, lease documents, or management agreement language.
- I trust the manager's judgment and believe their operating style matches my investment goals.

Notes / Owner Decisions

First Class Realty & Property Management

Owner-focused rental management for investors who want cleaner operations, clearer reporting, and fewer preventable surprises.
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