Be aware that many leases limit or have certain requirements with regard to gatherings, such as giving advance notice to your landlord or even limiting the number of people in your apartment or house at a time. Don’t put your tenancy at risk by ignoring these lease provisions.

Unless you are prepared to monitor your guests’ alcohol consumption and take away the car keys of anyone who seems impaired, do not provide alcoholic beverages or make them available to your guests. If you serve or make alcoholic beverages available and a guest causes injuries to someone else (in a car accident, for example), you could be held legally responsible for the injuries.

Take a hint! If a neighbor or a security guard complains about loud music or noise, it’s a good idea to quiet down to avoid catching the attention of any police officers in the neighborhood.

If the police show up because of a noise complaint, turn the music down, have your guests keep quiet, and have a (preferably sober) tenant open the door partway to speak to the officers. You do not have to meet the officers outside, and the police cannot enter your residence unless they have a search warrant, see criminal activity in plain view (e.g., underage drinking), have a good-faith belief that an emergency exists, or you let them in. Politely assure the officers that you will keep the noise down and, if necessary, end the party – then make sure you do it!

Don’t give the police a reason to come back. The police cannot enter your residence to arrest you for a noise complaint or breach of the peace absent exigent circumstances. An initial noise complaint will not usually create such exigency, but creating a continuing and noxious disturbance might justify a warrantless entry and arrest. Protect your right to privacy by ending a party before the police return.

If you are bringing alcohol to a party, keep the container sealed and out of sight until you arrive. Having an open container of alcohol on public property in Amherst or Hadley can result in arrest or a $300 fine, or both.

If you are on private property, you have no right to be there except by invitation of the property owner or legal tenant. This means you don’t have any right to be on private lawns or parking lots, at apartment complexes, or at anyone’s home without permission.

Bathrooms, not bushes. Urinating in public is a crime (indecent exposure) which can result in an array of penalties, including the possibility of having to register as a sex offender. Avoid the headaches, embarrassment, and potentially life-altering consequences and find the nearest bathroom.

Know when to leave. The police are unlikely to interfere with a peaceable gathering that does not disrupt the comfort and safety of others. But if members of a group violate the law (including creating excessive noise or disturbing the peace), crowd the streets or sidewalks, throw things, damage property, or act in a menacing or threatening way, the police can intervene. Failing to leave an area when ordered to do so by the police can subject you to arrest.

If a student is arrested or summoned to court, local law enforcement will typically forward that information to the University, which could result in disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct – even if the incident occurred off campus. Sanctions for Code violations can have financial and academic consequences such as suspension, expulsion, loss of tuition and scholarships, loss of University housing, and lost opportunities for study abroad programs, internships, or jobs. Carrying a party too far isn’t worth these potential costs.