

## FIRST TIME RENTING - TIPS AND ADVICE

Moving out from your family home, for the first time, is often an exciting and liberating experience. However, before venturing into the world of independence, there are several things to consider.

### LOOK FOR PROPERTIES ON REPUTABLE SITES

There are no restrictions on who becomes a landlord in the UK. Therefore some 'rogue' landlords may not have a tenant's best interests at heart. For peace of mind, it's advisable to use a reputable lettings agent. You can find reputable lettings agencies by looking online, in forums or by word of mouth. Be sure to read the reviews too. Once you've found and shortlisted accommodation, you can contact the landlord or agent to request a viewing.

### RESEARCH

Before deciding on a property and signing a contract. It's important to do as much research as possible. What do you know about the area? What is it like there - is the area known to be safe? Can you travel easily? Does the accommodation suit your personal needs? Is the property situated in a suitable location and easily accessible?

### SAFETY

Areas dominated by student accommodation can have a higher-than-average burglary rate, so security should always be a key consideration when looking for a rental home. While at the viewing, it's a good idea to check that door and window locks are in good order. If there is a burglar alarm, ensure the landlord shows all tenants how to use it, and that it is working effectively.

### TENANCY AGREEMENT (CONTRACT)

Make sure you take the time to read your contract properly. If there is anything you are not sure about, seek advice and speak to someone who can help.

### DEPOSIT

Before moving into any private property, you will be expected to pay a deposit and possibly an agency fee too. If renting in the UK, you should ensure that your money is paid into an accredited deposit scheme. This is a legal requirement in England, Wales and Scotland and will ensure that your deposit is protected and regulated.

### BILLS/EXPENSES

Depending on the tenancy agreement, your new home may or may not include utility bills. If bills are separate, then you should forecast and budget for all expenses including energy costs (gas and electric,) water rates, Internet and TV licence. Even if bills are included, you should still factor in other costs including groceries, essential household items, travel costs, utensils and furniture.

### Other tips

Consider taking out content insurance

Take photos when you first move in and inform the landlord of any issues

Set house rules

## LIVING WITH OTHERS

Sharing your first home with friends is a common route for most young people. Not only are you living with people that you like and get on with, but you also get to share living costs and expenses.

But knowing and living with people is two different things, so before agreeing to share a tenancy, it's a good idea to know if you all have similar expectations.

Living with people with the following traits is often desirable:

FRIENDLY  
TRUSTWORTHY  
MATURE  
RESPONSIBLE  
RELIABLE  
CLEAN  
CONSIDERATE

Many shared tenancies will have several joint liability clauses – meaning you are responsible for the actions of your co-tenants.

## YOUR HOUSEMATES

If you are planning to move in with strangers, then it's a good idea to get to know them beforehand.

Likewise, if you are planning to rent a room with a live-in landlord, seeing if you have a rapport before moving in is advisable.

How old are they?

Where are they from?

What are they studying or where do they work?

Do they want a sociable housemate who they can hang out with or someone quiet and private?

Are they in relationships or are they ok with you to bring a boyfriend/girlfriend home?

It might also be helpful to enquire about the morning routine – you could ask what time they all leave in the morning or return in the evening.

Of course, some of these questions may be too direct or inappropriate, depending on who you are speaking with.

Will you be a good housemate?

Here are a few tips:

- Put out your laundry once the wash is finished
  - Keep your roommates in the loop
  - Pay your share for communal items
  - Pay rent and bills on time
  - Clean up after yourself and do your share of household chores
  - Be considerate about noise levels and mindful of energy consumption
- Overall be flexible, understanding and maintain good communication levels

"I've lived with friends I ended up hating. I've lived with strangers and had a wonderful experience with them, but never hung out outside of the house."

William Palm, Facebook

## PROPERTY VIEWINGS

Before signing any contract, you should arrange to have a viewing of the property. Although you'll probably have a good idea of what you'd be getting, it's always good to gain clarification. This will also be your opportunity to give the property and its surrounding area a good inspection and to ask any important questions to the landlord or property agent.

Points to consider and questions to ask:

### Viewing checklist 1: The outside

Is there a garden and who is responsible for the maintenance?

What is the local area like? Are your preferred amenities and transport links within easy reach?

Are there any potential nuisances or red flags - passing traffic noise, a nearby nightclub?

What are the neighbours like?

Overall is the outside of the property in good condition?

### Viewing checklist 2: The inside

Are there signs of damp, flaking paint or infestations of any kind?

Are the fixtures and furnishings in good condition?

Is there central heating?

Is there hot water, and good water pressure?

Is it properly insulated – double-glazed?

Is there enough storage space?

Is there any sign of dodgy wiring, loose wires or faulty plugs or lights?

Is the kitchen equipped with white goods?

Are pots, pans and kitchen equipment in good condition?

Are the bedrooms adequate?

Check the bathroom(s) and make sure taps are not leaking. Does the shower work properly?

Are the sealants around the bath and shower intact?

Overall is the property in good condition or are any repairs needed?

### Questions

1. Are there smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors?

2. Which bills are included? Ask about the average cost of bills?

3. What is the Internet connection like?

4. Are you allowed to redecorate or put nails in the wall?

5. Are pets allowed?

6. Is there parking?

7. Where are you allowed to smoke?

8. Are parties allowed?

9. What furnishings are included

10. Can you bring guests over/have guests stay?

11. What is the best way to report any maintenance issues or repairs?

12. Is there anything else I should be aware of?

13. When can I move in?