

FREE • CONFIDENTIAL • IMPARTIAL

Welcome to our Housing Advice Guide!

This guide will give you hints and tips for how to enjoy a trouble-free tenancy. You will find handy information about;

- [What to check when you're viewing a potential house](#)
- [Understanding Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes](#)
- [Safety and security in your home](#)
- [Dealing with mould and condensation](#)
- [Moving-in](#) and [moving-out](#) checklists - to ensure that the whole process goes smoothly, with nothing important forgotten!

If you would like to speak to a Student Advisor about any difficulties with housing, simply get in touch with us!

We hope you find this guide helpful!

Things to check when you're viewing a house

Cost: What is the deposit? Is the rent affordable?

Location: How far is it from University? Is the area well lit? Will you feel safe walking to/from University? If you have a car, is there suitable parking?

Condition of the Property: How does the property look? Are there any signs of dampness or condensation, such as mould on the walls or carpets? Do all the lights work? Is there hot and cold running water?

Furniture and Fittings: What is the condition of the furniture? Is there adequate storage space? Are any appliances provided and are they in good condition? Does the cooker and fridge work?

Safety: Is there an in-date gas safety certificate? Have all the appliances been PAT tested in the last 12 months (look for stickers on the plugs)? Are there working smoke alarms? Is there a fire blanket in the kitchen and fire extinguishers elsewhere in the house? Is there an evacuation plan? How secure are the locks on the bedroom doors, windows and front/back doors? Does the door have a bolt or chain?

Outside Space: Is there a garden and is it secure? Who is responsible for maintaining the garden?

The Landlord/Agent: Would you feel able to approach them if anything went wrong? Will an inventory be provided when you move in?

Moving-In Checklist

☐ ***Check through the inventory and report any defects.***

You should be given an inventory when you move into your property. An inventory is a list of the rooms in the house – stating the standard of décor and furniture in-situ. Note down any defects that you see in the rooms; e.g. damage to any furniture, scuffs on the walls, cracked tiles or any other issues. Be sure to check that all light switches and plug sockets are in safe working condition, that all the plumbing works well, if there are any ceiling cracks or signs of damp and also check the state of any household appliances (i.e. the oven, microwave, washing machine and dish washer). It would also be beneficial to take photographs of each room, and any of the defects that you have noted. If anything needs to be fixed; either send an e-mail or a letter (sent recorded delivery) to your Landlord stating which of the items need to be fixed or replaced.

☐ ***Take all meter readings and report them to the utility companies.***

On the day that you move in, be sure to take all meter readings and contact the utility companies to report them.

☐ ***Check the fire alarms.***

Ensure that all of the fire alarms contain batteries and are in working order.

☐ ***Check for/install a carbon monoxide detector.***

A carbon monoxide detector should be installed, check that is in working order.

☐ ***Find the mains water stop-cock and fuse box for the electricity supply.***

In the case of an emergency, or if repairs need to be made by an engineer, it is important to know where these are. If you can't find them, ask your Landlord.

☐ ***Notify the University (and University Medical Centre) of your new address.***

The University may need to send letters to your term-time address; therefore, update your 'Student Record' section on Studynet with your new address. You can notify the University Medical Centre by completing and submitting a 'Change of Address' form.

☐ ***Apply for Council Tax exemption on Studynet.***

Log on to your Student Record; be sure that you have updated your term-time address to the address for your new home. Follow the directions under 'My Actions'.

☐ ***Purchase a TV licence and Contents Insurance***

Understanding Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes

The Law states that when you pay a deposit for your rented property, your Landlord (or Lettings Agent) must ensure that your deposit is protected by a government-backed Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme within 30 days of the commencement of your Tenancy Agreement. This applies to all deposits that were paid for assured short-hold tenancies that were started, or renewed, from 6th April 2007 onwards.

Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes ensure that a Tenant's paid deposit is kept safe, so that it could be returned to them at the end of their tenancy.

The following organizations provide government-backed Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes:

- Deposit Protection Service (DPS)
- MyDeposits
- The Dispute Service (TDS)
- Capita Tenancy Deposit Service

A Landlord (or Lettings Agent) must let the tenant know the following details when their deposit is submitted into a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme:

- The Landlord/Lettings Agent's name and contact details (including postal address)
- The amount of the deposit and the tenancy address
- Details of the appropriate Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme
- A copy of the signed Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme certificate
- An explanation of the process the tenant would have to follow to get their deposit returned
- An explanation of the process the tenant would have to follow if there was a dispute.

If a Landlord (or Lettings Agent) does not protect the tenant's deposit, or submits the tenant's deposit into a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme after the first 30 days of the commencement of their Tenancy Agreement; a Court may order the Landlord, or Lettings Agent, to pay compensation to the tenant.

As long as the tenant has paid all of their rent, left the property in a good clean state, and in good repair, and has not breached the terms of the tenancy agreement - their deposit should be returned to them at the end of their tenancy.

Want housing advice? Contact our Advice Team:
advice@hertfordshire.su 01707 285022

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SUPPORT
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ADVICE AND SUPPORT

C E N T R E

Safety and Security in your Home

When Selecting Housemates

When choosing your future housemates, be sure to consider what set-up you would be most comfortable with (i.e. mixed or single-sex) and also bear in mind that you would be sharing the property with those housemates for a whole year. The key thing to look for is to live with people who share similar attitudes towards partying, security and cleanliness – as these can be the main flash-points amongst housemates.

When Viewing a Property

- When viewing a property, do not arrange to meet a stranger at a property by yourself. Arrange to view the property with a friend or family member.
- If you considering taking a property; try and visit it after dark, before you sign the contract, to check the safety of the house and the surrounding area. Ask yourself the following questions; where is the nearest bus-stop and is my journey to the bus-stop well lit? How would I get to University? And is my route safe at all times of the day?
- If you are happy with the safety of the area, it would now be worth considering the security of the building before signing the contact; Check that both the front and rear doors are solid and fitted with secure locks. Would you have a lock on your bedroom door? Ground floor windows should either be lock-in, or only able to open to about 10cm maximum. Upper-floor windows that are overlooking an offshoot, or outbuilding roof, should also have locks fitted.

Whilst Living in Rented Accommodation

- Make it a rule that all housemates lock the front door when they leave the house, and also at night-time. If possible, lock your bedroom door when you're out.
- Purchase contents insurance.
- From time-to-time your Landlord may need to visit the property to carry out various checks and maintenance tasks. Be aware that your Landlord must give 24 hours' notice, before entering the house, and their visit must be at a reasonable time of day.
- If you see someone in your house that you do not recognise, do not assume that they are a friend or a relative of one of your housemates. Either speak to one of your housemates and ask if they know who the person is, or you could ask the person who they are.

Gas Safety

- It is the legal responsibility of your Landlord to ensure that a gas safety check is carried out every 12 months for your property. When you move into your property, you will be given a copy of the most recent gas safety check certificate. If a year has passed since the last check, and another check has not been arranged by your Landlord – or if you haven't been supplied with the gas safety certificate - you must get in touch with your Landlord.
- A working carbon monoxide detector must have been installed by your Landlord; check to make sure you have one and that it is in working order. If there are any issues with the detector, contact your Landlord.
- Ensure that any gas engineer that comes to fit, fix or check an appliance in your home is Gas Safe Registered. You can check this by asking to see their Gas Safe ID card. Do not try DIY with any gas appliances.
- Keep an eye out for signs that your gas appliances aren't working properly; i.e. a weak yellow flame instead of a crisp blue one, black marks on or around the appliance or an unusual amount of condensation in the room. If you notice any of these, take action straight away.
- If you ever smell gas in your home, open all the doors and windows and shut off the gas supply (ask your Landlord if you don't know where you can do this). Then call the National Grid on 0800 111 999.

Fire Safety

- Your house should be fit with at least one smoke alarm; ensuring that it carries the British Standard BS EN 14604:2005 and the British Standard Kite mark or LPCB 'Horseshoe' mark. You must also test the batteries regularly, to ensure that they are still working.
- Minimize the risk of electrical fires by; (a) unplugging appliances that aren't in use; (b) not overloading adaptors with plugs; and (c) getting your electrical appliances tested by an approved contractor.
- Be careful with heaters, candles and smoking; keep heaters a safe distance from flammable materials and unplug when they're not in use; never leave burning candles unattended; never empty a hot ashtray into the bin and avoid smoking in bed.
- Try to make a plan for what you would do in the case of an emergency.

Electrical Safety

- If any electrical work needs to be done, be sure to use a registered electrician.
- Keep an eye on the condition of plugs, cables and extension leads; if there are any burn marks, funny sounds or if they feel extremely hot whilst in use – they may not be safe.
- Switch off electrical appliances at the plug when they are not in use.

We hope that you have found this guide helpful. This guide is not exhaustive, but is full of plenty of helpful suggestions to try and ensure a safe and enjoyable tenancy. If you have any concerns about your house, arrange an appointment to speak with one of our Advisors. You can contact us via the details below.

Dealing with Mould and Condensation

Bathing, washing, cooking and even breathing can cause moisture to be released into the air. Moisture in the air can cause condensation, leading to the growth of mould on the walls, and many other surfaces, in your home. Condensation can be seen in any home from time to time, usually as a result of moisture and steam being produced during various household tasks.

There are three main ways to reduce the likelihood of condensation;

To produce less moisture;

- If possible, try drying wet laundry outside; or by hanging it in the bathroom with the door closed and window open wide.
- Keep the window open whilst you are cooking, and cover pans that are producing steam.
- If you have a tumble drier, ensure that it is permanently vented to the outside of your home.

To improve ventilation in your home;

- When you are using a room, try and keep a window slightly open. Also, do not cover up or obstruct any vents that may be in rooms.
- Ensure that windows are opened when you are cooking and bathing; it also helps to shut the door, to prevent the moisture entering other rooms. If you have an extractor fan, be sure to switch it on during both of these activities.
- Do not overfill your wardrobe or cupboards, so to allow the air to circulate freely inside.

Heat your home at a constant low level;

- It has been found that a constant, low-level form of heating provides the most economical form of heat and reduces the likelihood of condensation.

If mould has built up, the best way to remove it is to use one of the many fungicidal products that are available in both home-ware stores and supermarkets. It is incredibly important to always follow the instructions for a mould removal product; it is normally recommended that you always ventilate the area, and wear protective clothing, whilst applying the product.

Moving-Out Checklist

☐ ***Remove all refuse from the property.***

Nothing must be left at the property; otherwise money can be deducted from your deposit.

☐ ***Deep clean all areas.***

Clean all rooms thoroughly, paying particular attention to the kitchen and bathroom; this involves cleaning all areas, removing all of the scum from around the shower and sink, cleaning in-between the tiles and along the skirting boards. You may also need to launder the curtains, clean the windows and clean down the furniture. All areas must be spotless; otherwise further cleaning costs may be deducted from your deposit.

☐ ***Deep clean the appliances.***

Clean the inside of the oven; on-top of the hob; inside the microwave; inside the fridge; inside the washing machine and defrost the inside of the freezer. Ensure that all appliances are left clean and ready for use by the next tenants.

☐ ***Remove any mould growth and air the property as much as you can.***

The best way to remove mould is to use one of the many fungicidal products that are available in both home-ware stores and supermarkets.

☐ ***Vacuum all of the carpets and mop all of the non-carpeted floors.***

Stains can be removed from the carpet by using special stain-removal products that can be purchased from supermarkets or home-ware stores – make sure that you follow the instructions carefully.

☐ ***Repair/replace any items that have been lost or broken.***

Keep hold of the receipt for any items that you had to purchase.

☐ ***Tidy up the garden (if you have one).***

Ensure that the garden is neat and tidy – mow the lawn if it is stated as one of the tenants' responsibilities in the tenancy agreement.

☐ ***Put furniture back in its original position.***

If you have moved furniture around during your tenancy, be sure to put it back into its original position when you leave the property.

☐ ***Take photographs of all of the rooms when you have finished moving out.***

These photographs would be helpful in the case if there was any dispute over how the property was left at the end of the tenancy.

GET IN TOUCH



advice@hertfordshire.su



01707 285022

OPENING HOURS:
Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm