

RIGHTMOVE'S GUIDE TO

# Renting

## THE ADVANTAGES OF RENTING

Freedom and flexibility

## FINDING A PLACE TO RENT

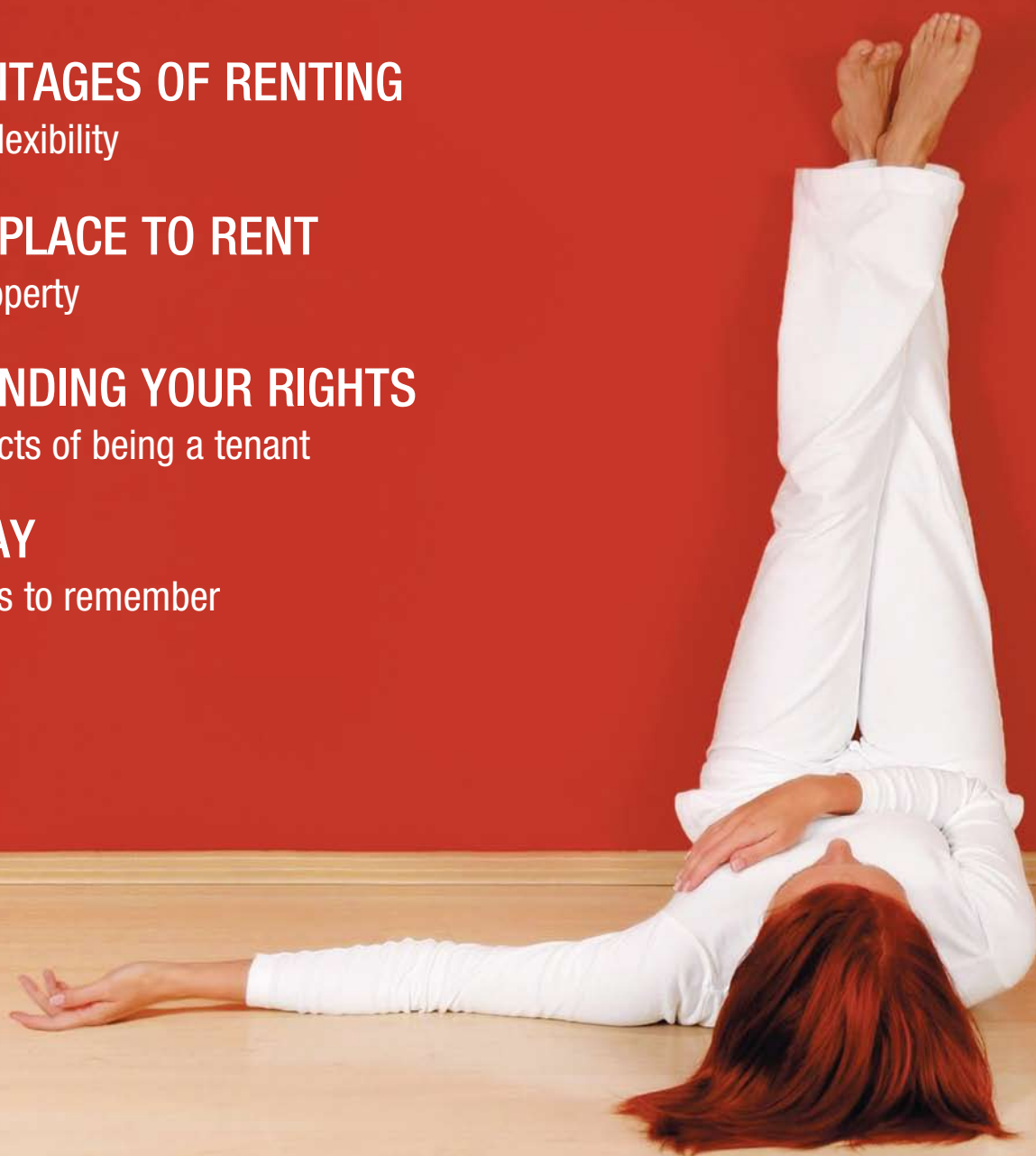
Selecting a property

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR RIGHTS

The legal aspects of being a tenant

## MOVING DAY

Essential things to remember



# Welcome to Rightmove's guide to renting property



## Guiding Right

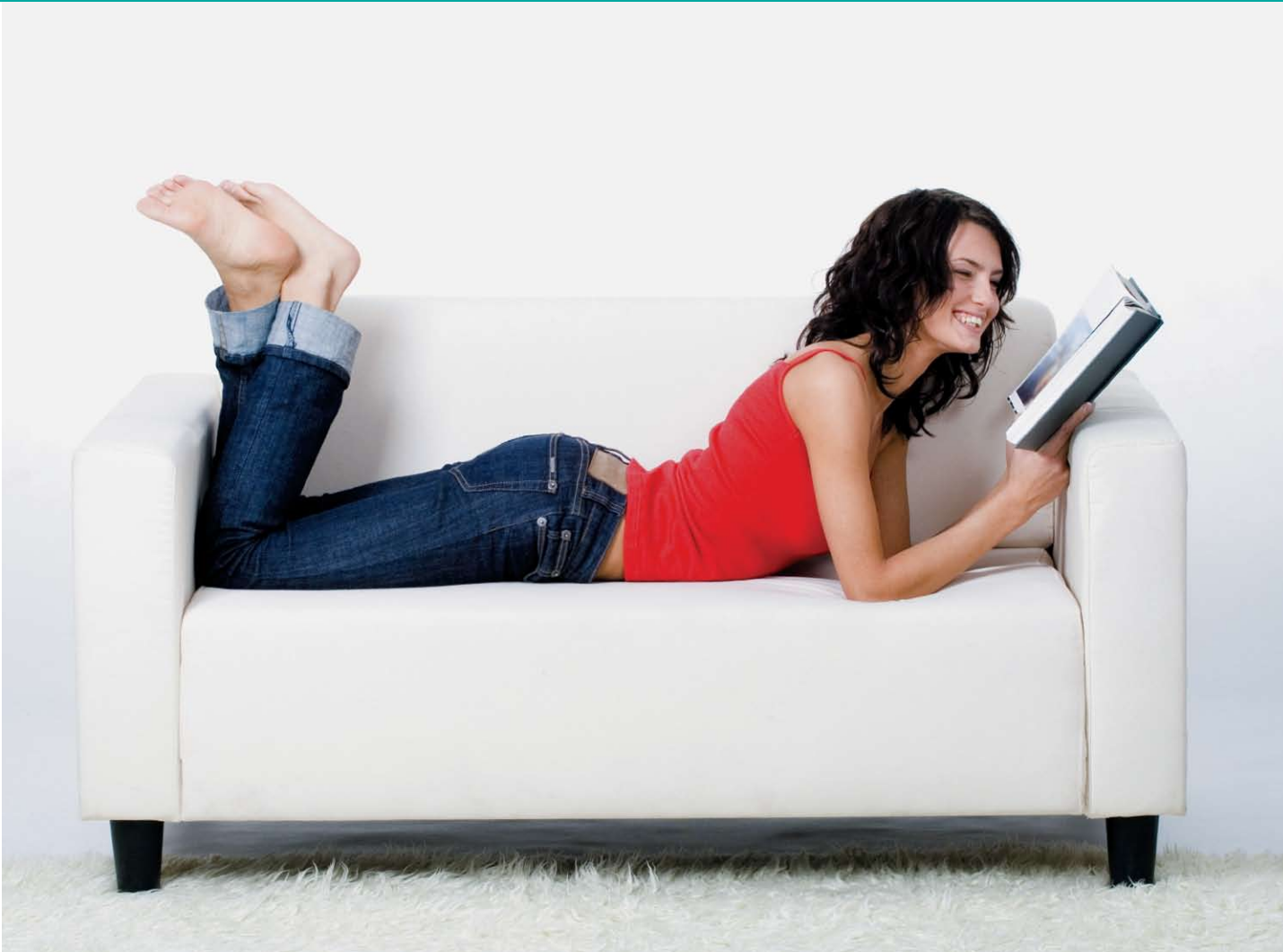
Whether you are buying, selling, renting or letting we understand that even the smoothest of transactions can be traumatic.

Therefore, we have pooled our expert knowledge of the market to develop a series of essential guides to equip you with all the information and useful tips you need to ensure your experience remains a stress-free one.

This guide to renting is made up of nine sections so you can dip in and out of what's most relevant to you. If you are also thinking of buying, letting or selling a property, you may find our **Buying, Letting or Selling Guides** useful

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# The advantages of renting

**These days, an increasing number of people are renting and the quality and range of rented accommodation is better than ever.**

Renting is usually cheaper than owning and bills are more predictable too, which is great news for those who prefer stable finances. And with fewer outgoings, you can save more.

Renting offers more flexibility than owning - you can move somewhere else relatively quickly - useful if you plan to move for a new job or are going away to study.

Also, it's less hassle than being an owner as you won't need to pay for property maintenance - most of that will be done for you.



## HOW TO FIND A PLACE TO RENT

### What type of property should I look for?

First of all, think carefully about the type of property you'd like to rent and which best suits your lifestyle.

For example, if you are only there during the week, a small place might do just fine. If security is important, then a ground floor flat may be out. If you have a car, then a parking space is a must.

Do you want furnished or part-furnished accommodation or would something that's just part furnished be okay? Often it doesn't make much difference to the rent.

If it's furnished and you are sharing with others, do you trust them to look after the furniture - because you may lose some or all of your deposit to pay for damage even if they are responsible for it?

Other key questions to ask yourself:

- Is a purpose built shower essential or can you make do with a shower attachment in the bath?
- Do you need a garden?
- Are you prepared to share with someone else - if so, could you share with a live-in landlord?
- What facilities are there for washing and drying clothes?
- Does the property have all the appliances you need?

### Where should I look?

It can be difficult to find good property to rent. Sifting through adverts in newspapers is hard work and the time from print to publication often means that by the time you see the ad, the property has long since been rented to someone else.

If you are prepared to share, you may be lucky and know someone who is looking for a flatmate.



If your workplace has an intranet site, find out if it has a section that lists properties for rent. Many universities and colleges have an accommodation office, so if you are a student find out what yours has to offer.

You could even qualify for a council or Housing Association property if you have sufficient points, are on the waiting list or have a specific need.

Unfortunately, it can still be difficult to find good property to rent using these methods; so that is where Rightmove comes in.

### Using Rightmove

Rightmove offers a great way to find lots of properties that are available for rent right now.

There are over 200,000 properties to rent on Rightmove, giving tenants access to a huge number of potential homes.

Most listings on Rightmove have additional information, such as extra photographs, virtual tours, floorplans and brochures, so you can really get a good idea of what the property is like.

To make your search easier, you can register for email updates to receive automatic notification in your inbox of new property listings that match your criteria.



# Renting privately or through an agent

DEALING DIRECTLY WITH PRIVATE LANDLORDS TO FIND  
A PROPERTY CAN BE WORRYING...



You'll have to meet a total stranger at a property and of course, landlords are unregulated and don't need to be part of a professional trade body or trade association.

Lettings agents offer greater peace of mind and security. Some belong to bodies such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents, which has a code of practice that members must

subscribe to. See [www.arla.co.uk](http://www.arla.co.uk) for a list of ARLA members.

Other professional bodies include the National Approved Lettings Scheme, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the National Association of Estate Agents. Check their websites for a list of members and to see what protection they currently offer.

## Rightmove agents

Rightmove has a comprehensive list of member agents to choose from that will make your search for rental property a lot easier. Your Rightmove agent will also have lots of useful information, including knowledge of what's planned for the area, council tax rates and more. Here are some tips to get the most out of Rightmove and Rightmove agents:

- Use the automatic email updates facility to alert you about new properties matching your search criteria when it is added to Rightmove
- Once you have found a property that interests you, contact the Rightmove member agent who is marketing the property to arrange a viewing. If it doesn't suit, they will be able to help

you find something else that does

- Help your letting agent by telling them what sort of property you want - and don't want!
- Keep calling your agent or they may assume you've found somewhere
- Ask the agent if you need to pay a reservation fee to hold the property (get a receipt for it) and ask what other charges the agency makes. You usually have to pay

for the drawing up of the tenancy agreement, having an inventory done and for checking references

- Also visit [aboutmyplace.co.uk](http://aboutmyplace.co.uk) where you'll find a wealth of information about the area, including proximity of train stations, local schools and aerial photos.

# What to look for ON VIEWINGS

When you have decided on properties that you like, you or your agent can arrange a viewing of the property. Make the most of this opportunity by:



- Checking how well the property has been maintained - look at gutters, windows, roofs
- Noting how much storage space there is
- Checking to see how the place is heated and how well insulated it looks - this will affect your bills
- Asking to see the gas safety certificate and operating instructions for electrical items. Are there enough sockets for your needs?
- Finding out which furnishings will be in the property when you move in. Does it meet the fire safety regulations?
- Running the taps, bath and shower, and flushing the toilet. Do they all work? Ask to be shown that the heating and hot water works - and that windows open
- Asking yourself how secure it feels? Is there access from rear gardens and alleys? What are the locks like - many insurers require five lever mortise locks on all entry doors and window locks
- For flats, asking if you have your own secure post box. How clean are common areas - how often are they cleaned and by whom? How are any common grounds maintained? If there is a vehicle space, what's parked in it now - if there is a rust heap, ask when it will be cleared
- Finding out how close the transport links are - is it an easy commute to work or university and how close are other amenities, shops, etc?
- Visiting at different times to establish how safe/quiet the area is
- Asking if road works are planned or new houses are going up nearby - this will add to noise
- Talking to existing tenants (if they are still there) and neighbours. Ask them what it's like to live there. Ask tenants what the landlord is like
- If the landlord will be looking after the management, asking if you can meet him.

## Other things you may need to consider:

- What the schools are like - essential if you have kids
- Do they allow pets?
- Is smoking permitted in the property?
- When is it available from - and for how long?

# How to beat the crowd - things you can do to put yourself at the front of the queue

**Good places go fast, so here are our tips for getting ahead of the rest to secure the best property:**

- Use Rightmove's automatic email alerts facility to notify you as soon as relevant properties become available
- Start viewing in good time. A lot of property to rent won't be available to move in to for at least four weeks, or even longer on student houses where new lets are often agreed months in advance
- Have a cash reservation fee ready (and get a receipt for it)

- Have copies of references from your employer and previous landlords available, together with your bank details, documents proving your ID and full address with postcodes for the last three years - the agent will need these for the reference check
- Be ready to sign a tenancy application form - this will allow the agent to check your references and run a credit check
- If you think you may need a guarantor, get this set up in good time (and check if the agent or landlord will accept one).

## Reference checks

If you like the property, you will have to pass reference checks. If there is a fee for this, it is usually non-refundable, even if the reference check rejects you as a tenant.

If you pass, you may be asked to pay a reservation fee or holding deposit. Normally, you will lose this if you change your mind and decide not to take the property.

# BUDGETING AND FINANCES

**Budget carefully - allow for council tax and the cost of all utilities, which you'll normally have to pay for. However, if it's a short-term let, the council tax and some utilities may be included in the rent.**



Make sure you always compare like with like - most tenancies express the rent as £X per calendar month which is about 4.35 times the cost of a weekly rent.

Once you think you have found somewhere you like, things to ask the agent are:

- What bills (if any) are included in the rent? Are there any charges for the cleaning of communal areas etc?
- How much is the deposit and when is the rent reviewed?

- If you are on local housing allowance or a student, will they consider you?
- Will they accept guarantors?
- Will there be a fixed term in the tenancy and, if so, for how long? Is the tenancy extendable after the fixed term has ended?
- How many people have viewed it already and how long has it been on the market for? If there are lots of properties available to rent locally, you may be able to negotiate the rent down.





# Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a tenant

Even before you start searching for a property to rent, it's important to understand the legal aspects of being a tenant.

When you become a tenant, you take on certain responsibilities in exchange for certain rights. Your tenancy agreement will typically be 4 - 5 pages long and is very detailed. It lists your responsibilities so read it carefully. As a minimum, it will show:

- The names of the landlord and tenant
- How much the rent and deposit is
- When the rent will be reviewed
- The address for the landlord or agent who will be looking after the property.

The main things you **must do** are as follows:

- Pay rent on time - normally one month in advance
- Pay other bills. In most long-term lets, you'll be paying council tax, utilities (including water), TV licence and telephone charges
- Respect neighbours - so no making noise, putting rubbish in the wrong place or obstructing common areas
- Look after the property.

The agent's job might be to market the property and to arrange the signing of agreements and payment of the first month's rent and deposit.

After that, you may find you are dealing directly with a landlord who will look after the management. However, most landlords tend to leave the management up to the letting agent.

The good news is that you are not expected to maintain the building - that's the landlord's job. But you should behave in such a way that the building is properly cared for. For example, you must:

- Tell your landlord if you are going away for longer than 14 days - because this will affect his/her insurance policy
- Keep the property secure at all times - so lock it when you go out and don't give keys to anyone else
- Tell your landlord when things need fixing to avoid bigger problems later - e.g. a leaking pipe, if not maintained, could make a ceiling collapse
- Do basic maintenance - e.g. change light bulbs and smoke alarm batteries.

Obviously, you must not engage in any illegal activity at the property and nor can you:

- Alter the property in any way including hanging anything on the walls or re-decorating without written permission from your landlord
- Use the property as a business
- Sub-let.

....unless, of course, the landlord says you can.

## Tenancy types

Most new tenancies today are **Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST)** which is similar to Short Assured Tenancies in Scotland.

These usually include a 'fixed term' of 6 or 12 months. Where there is no fixed term, the tenancy is called a 'periodic tenancy'.

If annual rent is more than £25,000, the tenancy is in a company's name or the landlord lives in the property, a different form of agreement will be used. Your letting agent will be able to advise you further if this is applicable to your circumstances.

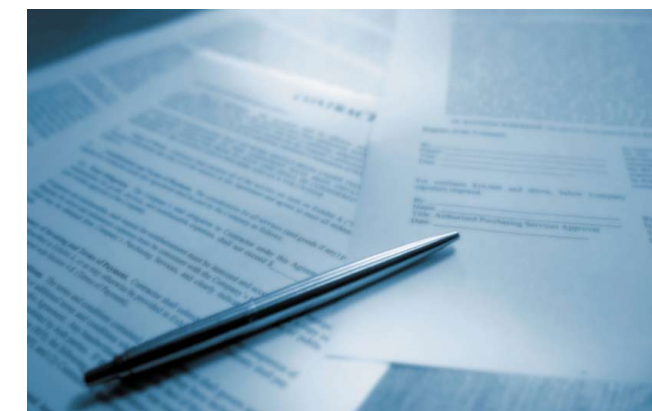
Under an AST, as long as the terms of the tenancy have not been breached, the landlord cannot regain possession until after six months (or longer if the fixed term is longer) - unless you agree he or she can.

However, after the fixed term has ended (or six months if there was no fixed term), he or she can regain possession by giving you two months notice in writing.

So, as you can see, with an assured shorthold tenancy **you don't have security of tenure.**

If you want, you and the landlord can agree to extend the tenancy so it becomes what's called a **periodic tenancy**, without needing to issue a new agreement. This can also occur by both landlord and tenant not making any arrangements at the end of the term of tenancy, resulting in the term automatically lapsing in to a periodic tenancy.

On a periodic tenancy, if your landlord wanted the property back, he or she would still need to give you two months' notice. Or if you wanted to leave, you would need to give notice - which would be a month's notice if the rent was paid monthly or four weeks if paid weekly.





If you rent a room from a **live-in landlord**, you have very few rights and your stay can be ended without the landlord having to give two months' notice.

Here are our other tips for a trouble-free time as a tenant:

- Never enter in to a tenancy unless there is a written tenancy agreement
- Get the phone numbers and email of whoever will be looking after the property so you can contact them if something goes wrong
- Keep a date record and a copy of all correspondence, including phone calls, and keep a copy of the agreement and inventory
- Check the tenancy agreement for any unfair terms, e.g. a clause that allowed the landlord to come in at any time without giving notice would be unfair
- If repairs need doing, be flexible and allow workmen to come in to the property - but confirm how long work will take first
- Don't sign up for a long, fixed-term tenancy agreement unless you really are sure you will stay that long - because if you leave early you'll probably have to pay until the end of the term
- If you have a problem, talk to the landlord or agent - most will be pleased to help and keep good tenants
- Where you are "jointly and severally liable" with others for the rent, you can be pursued for the whole rent. So pick housemates you trust!

### Deposits and inventories

In most cases, you'll be asked to pay a deposit. Get a receipt for it.

The deposit will usually be equal to around four to seven weeks' rent. You pay it to the landlord or agent and they can keep some or all of it if you cause damage to the property (beyond fair wear and tear).

If you have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in England and Wales, which started on or after 6th April 2007 where a deposit was taken, that deposit must be protected in one of the government approved **Tenancy Deposit Schemes (TDS)**.

The deposit is administered by the scheme throughout the tenancy and will be returned in full shortly after the end of the tenancy, providing the property is returned in the **same condition as you found it** at the start of the tenancy. Usually, no interest is paid on the deposit.

If, at the end of the tenancy you feel that your deposit has been withheld unfairly, the organiser of the TDS can step in and sort out disputes with your landlord.

For the latest information on Tenancy Deposit Schemes, visit the Direct Gov website.

Here are our tips to help you get your deposit back and avoid disputes:



- Get a detailed **inventory** done at the start and end of the tenancy, listing everything in the property and its state and condition
- Be there when the inventory is being done. If that's not possible, then insist on seeing a copy and check it is correct. Tell the landlord or agent in writing if it's wrong
- If the landlord or agent doesn't do an inventory, make one yourself as soon as you move in
- Check and list everything carefully - look under carpets, on both sides of mattresses - and note all damages, marks or scratches, as well as how clean everything is. Take photos where possible
- Sign and date the inventory and send a copy to the landlord or agent
- Return the property and everything in it in the same condition at the end of the tenancy
- Repeat the inventory process when you move out - again, itemise everything, take photos and send it to the agent or landlord
- You may be required, as a condition of the agreement, to have carpets professionally steam cleaned
- At the end of the tenancy, you'll have to repair any damage you've caused and replace items that cannot be restored to a good condition, or you can expect to be charged for them
- If the landlord removes anything from the property during the tenancy, get them to sign for it.

### Your rights

You have a right to quiet enjoyment of the property and your landlord must give at least 24 hours notice if they want access (except in an emergency). Most lettings agents inspect a property quarterly to check everything is in order.

The landlord must also:

- Insure the property
- Look after and pay for the cost of repairs to the structure and exterior, as well as electrical, heating, hot water and sanitary installations
- Return the deposit at the end of tenancy in full, or set out why deductions have been made from it
- Only evict with a court order
- Ensure all soft furnishings comply with the **Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) Safety Regulations 1988** and are fire safety compliant. Look for the fire safety label on all furnishings
- Ensure that *gas appliances, fittings and flues are safe for your use* and that installation, maintenance and annual safety checks are carried out by a Corgi-registered gas installer. They must give you a certificate called a CP12 showing everything is safe
- Ensure that electrics are safe, with operating instructions and safety notices supplied, before a letting starts
- Make "reasonable adjustments" to accommodate tenants with disabilities.

Your landlord cannot:

- Change locks without telling you or giving you a new set of keys
- Cut off utilities
- Interfere with your mail
- Verbally or physically threaten you
- Neglect the property.

Certain shared houses (called Houses in Multiple Occupation or HMOs) have to be licensed under special rules which also require that the property meets certain extra fire and electrical safety standards.

All places built after June 1992 and all HMOS must have mains wired smoke detectors on each floor and licensable HMOS must have a full electric inspection done every five years.

A good general guide to all the regulations can be found at [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/BuyingAndSellingYourHome/RentingAHome/DG\\_4001394](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/BuyingAndSellingYourHome/RentingAHome/DG_4001394)

Before you sign the tenancy agreements, you should:

- Make sure you have seen the gas safety certificate and instructions for all electrical items
- Be satisfied that all the furniture is safe
- Have keys for all exit doors
- Check the inventory carefully and note anything that has been missed or is incorrect - please re-read our section on "Deposits and Inventories" carefully.



# Things to do before moving in and out



## Moving in day

Great, you are ready to move in. Here are some tips to make moving in day as smooth as possible:

- Use a good removal firm - seek recommendations from friends. Look for members of the British Association of Removers
- Try to avoid Fridays which is the busiest day
- Save time and cost by doing some of the packing yourself
- Check out the best value utility contracts for your new property well in advance and read your meters on moving in day
- Redirect post well beforehand
- Prepare a standard letter to notify utility providers, banks and anyone else who needs to know what your new address is
- Take out contents insurance to protect your possessions
- Set up your standing order to pay rent so it's in the agent's or landlord's account on time.

## Moving out day

Before you move out, there are lots of things to do - many are just the opposite of what you should do on moving in day.

To make sure you get your deposit back, please re-read our section on "Deposits and Inventories" carefully.

Here's our quick checklist:

- Allow lots of time to clear everything out



- Get large, bulky items disposed of - some councils need up to a month's notice
- Put furniture back in its original place
- Thoroughly clean the property back to its condition when you moved in
- Tidy gardens
- Repair damage you've caused or replace items that cannot be made good
- Be there when the check out inventory is being done.
- If no inventory is undertaken, make one yourself, taking care to itemise everything and its state and condition. Take photos where possible. Sign and date the inventory and send it to the landlord or agent
- Keep receipts for cleaning and any items that you have had replaced
- If the deposit is not returned or if you feel deductions are unfair, contact the administrator of your tenancy deposit scheme.

## Renting in Scotland

There are some differences if you are renting a property in Scotland.

Here, all landlords have to be registered in a scheme, there is currently no tenancy deposit scheme and more shared privately rented HMO properties have to have a license.

For more information on renting in Scotland, visit the Better Renting Scotland website.





# Rightmove's guide to Renting