

Good landlord & tenant guide

Union Advice Centre

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HOUSING ADVICE

The relationship between a landlord and his/her tenants is an important professional relationship. Landlords make a vast financial investment in their properties, which they want to safeguard. Annually student tenants spend over half of their income on renting a house.

The tenancy agreement is the most important document in defining rights and responsibilities and both tenants and landlords should abide by it. However, because tenant and landlord responsibilities are so important, it is worth both parties making an extra effort to ensure that the relationship remains on a good footing throughout.

This leaflet looks at how student tenants and landlords can work towards a trouble free tenancy. It is meant to be helpful, but not exhaustive. We hope that landlords and tenants will take these points into account, but accept no responsibility where either party's behaviour does not comply with the suggestions given here.

Being a good landlord

- To avoid dispute at the end of the tenancy, take photos of the interior of the property on the day on which the tenants are given the keys. Date-stamped photos are even better.
- Produce a detailed inventory of the items in the property and the state of the décor, which both you and your tenants should sign, date and keep. Update your inventory at the end of each tenancy. Inventories and photos can be used as evidence if a dispute over a damage deposit arises.
- If you let your property on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy ensure you protect any damage deposits in one of the 3 approved Tenancy Deposit Protection Schemes and provide details to your tenants of which scheme you are using within 14 days of the tenancy being signed and a deposit paid.
- Make sure that any reported repairs are dealt with quickly - this will save you money. It will also avoid the tenants becoming

upset.

Bear in mind that if serious problems are not addressed within a 'reasonable time' tenants can call Environmental Health and repair orders can be placed on a property.

- Keep an eye on the exterior of the property: loose slates, broken gutters and rotten window frames cause swift deterioration of the property which can be costly to repair.
- Unless there is an emergency, make sure that you give your tenants at least 24 hours notice in writing if you or your work people want to visit. Consider how you would feel if the plumber turned up to check a leaking toilet when you were in the bath.
- Provide tenants with enough furniture of a functional standard for them to live comfortably. Check before you buy furniture that it meets the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1998, otherwise you could be prosecuted. For more information see the relevant leaflet.
- Ensure the property has a smoke alarm, fire blanket and/or extinguisher and that windows that might be used as escape routes open and are not painted closed. A few small measures will protect both your tenant and your investment in your property.
- Budget to replace household items and to re-decorate. Do not let normal wear and tear turn into dilapidation.
- Ensure you can also provide receipts and invoices for the appropriate Tenancy Deposit Protection scheme and your tenants if you need to make a deduction from the deposit.

Guide to being a good tenant

- To avoid dispute at the end of the tenancy, take photos of the interior of the property on the day on which you are given the keys. Date-stamped photos are even better.
- Notify your landlord or their agent of any repairs required as quickly as possible. Most tenancy agreements require you to notify your landlord in writing. Keep a copy of any letters you send. If ignored, a leaking bath could cause the ceiling to come down, which would be expensive for your landlord and inconvenient for you.
- Do not let equipment or areas of the property get past the stage where they can be properly cleaned - if you do, you might lose some of your damage deposit. Little and often is best as far as cleaning goes.
- Do not overload the electrical circuit. Your landlord pays for the electrical circuit to be tested regularly to ensure that it is safe. However, if you plug several adapters into one socket it can overheat and catch fire and you might be responsible for damage. If you do use an adapter make sure it is good quality and has the right fuse.
- Pay your rent on time - a standing order is usually best as it means you do not need to remember to send a cheque and that your money will come out of your account on the same date each month. Remember that if you have not paid rent for the period specified in your contract, your landlord can seek a Possession Order from the courts and try to evict you.
- Put the rubbish out for bin day - this will help avoid infestation by rats and mice and mean your house smells sweeter!
- Be aware of noise. If noise coming from your house is too loud to talk over then it's probably a nuisance for your neighbours and they could report you to Environmental Health. If your neighbours' noise is a nuisance, then you have a right to report

them - if you are concerned keep a record of the level and date of the noise. Ask at the Union Advice Centre if you need help on this matter.

- Never refuse to pay rent because there is a problem as a first course of action. Your landlord can take legal action against you and could possibly have you evicted. Always contact the Union Advice Centre for assistance if you are experiencing problems. We advise against using your damage deposit to pay for the last month's rent. Remember, if the landlord succeeds in a court action against you, you will have to pay back the money and it could affect your credit rating for the future.

We wish you a successful tenancy.

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