

Getting the right place

Use this checklist to think about places you might want to rent.

Look round the area

- Think about safety. Is it dodgy at night? Is there street lighting? Are there any streets to avoid?
- Listen out for noise. Rumbling traffic, barking dogs, and noisy neighbours could all get annoying.
- Check out the facilities. Is there a local shop, doctor, gym, college or bar?
- Find out about public transport. Is it easy and close by? Is it regular? How much is it?
- Look for available car parking or bike racks. Even if you don't have one yourself, it may make it easier for others to visit.
- Work out if it's convenient. Are you close to friends, family, work or college?

Find out about the property

- Check what condition the place is in. Are repairs needed? Does it smell damp? Would the landlord be willing to do repairs before you move in?
- Find out about heating. How much might the bills be? What about double glazing?
- Think about security. How do the windows and doors lock? Has it ever been burgled?
- Ask what furniture is provided. You'll have to buy anything that isn't. Also ask about appliances, such as a washing machine.
- Meet anyone you'll be sharing with. It can be a bit of a gamble if you don't.
- Check that there's a phone line, as installing one can be expensive.
- Make sure it's got everything you need, especially if you've got a disability, or a child to look after, for example.
- Look around the garden or yard. Are the fences and walls secure? Would it be a hassle to look after?
- Work out what your priorities are. Very few people can afford their ideal home!

Work out the total cost

- Check out how much the deposit is. Ask the landlord to confirm how much it is and when you'll get it back.
- Double-check the rent details. How much is it and when is it due, who you pay it to, and how?
- Ask about how much the bills come to. Is there a meter? And, how much is Council Tax?
- Check if the rent includes services or bills. Housing Benefit won't pay for these.
- Work out how much anything that isn't provided will cost. You may have to save up to get everything you need.
- Find out if you can claim Housing Benefit, or if you can get help to pay your deposit or rent in advance.
- Ask the estate agent about administration costs. If you used an agent there may be extra costs when you sign the tenancy agreement or when it runs out in the future.

Tenancy agreement

- Double-check what type of tenancy it is. This has a big impact on your rights and how easily you can be evicted.
- Check whose name the tenancy is in. Try to agree some ground rules with anyone you're sharing with.
- Get a detailed inventory. Take photos of the condition of your house – this could save your deposit.
- Confirm how much notice you have to give before you leave. Can you get out of the tenancy early?
- Check your rights on Shelter's website. Get advice if you have any problems.
- Keep copies of all the paperwork involved. You never know when you might need it.