

# HOW TO RENT

## A guide for current and prospective tenants in the private rented sector in England

### APRIL 2025 EDITION

This official government guide helps both prospective and existing tenants understand their rights and responsibilities when renting in the private sector. With the implementation of the Renters (Reform) Act 2023, this guide has been updated to reflect important changes to rental laws in England.

### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is for people who are looking for a house or flat to rent, those who are about to enter a tenancy agreement, and existing tenants who want to understand their rights and responsibilities.

#### In this guide:

- What you need to check before renting
- Understanding your rights as a tenant
- How to maintain a good relationship with your landlord
- What happens at the end of a tenancy
- What to do if things go wrong

This guide does not cover lodgers, social housing tenants, or people living in holiday lets.

**This information is frequently updated. Search for 'How to Rent' on GOV.UK to confirm you have the latest version.**

### BEFORE YOU START

#### Renting from a landlord or a letting agent?

Key questions to ask:

- Is the landlord registered with a Property Ombudsman scheme?
- How long do you want the tenancy for? You can ask for a tenancy for a fixed period (like 6 or 12 months) or a periodic tenancy from the start.
- What can you afford? Consider the rent, council tax, utility bills, and any other costs.
- Is the property in good condition and meets the Decent Homes Standard?
- Are you eligible for benefits or financial support with your housing costs?

#### Which documents do you need?

Landlords and letting agents must check that all people aged 18 or over who will live in the property as their only or main home are legally allowed to rent in England.

Most landlords and agents will ask for:

- Proof of ID (passport, driving license)
- Proof of immigration status (if applicable)
- Proof of current address
- Proof of income or employment
- Reference from a previous landlord

### **Is the letting agent reputable?**

Check if they are a member of a redress scheme. All letting agents must be members of one of the following schemes:

- The Property Ombudsman
- Property Redress Scheme

## **LOOKING FOR YOUR NEW HOME**

### **Things to consider:**

- Is the area suitable for your needs (transport links, amenities, etc.)?
- Does the property meet your requirements?
- How much is the deposit and how is it protected?
- How much is the rent? Does it include bills?
- What is the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating? (Legal minimum is E)

### **Check the property:**

- Are there smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors?
- Is the property secure with working locks?
- Is the electrical and gas safety up to date with certificates?
- Is the property in good condition, meeting the Decent Homes Standard?
- Has the landlord made reasonable adjustments for disabled tenants if needed?

## **WHEN YOU'VE FOUND A PLACE**

### **Check the paperwork**

Make sure you have:

- A written tenancy agreement

- A copy of this How to Rent guide
- A gas safety certificate
- Electrical safety documentation (EICR)
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- Record of any deposit protection
- Contact details for the landlord or agent
- The building's fire safety instructions

## **Understanding your tenancy agreement**

Most tenancies are Assured Tenancies or Assured Shorthold Tenancies. With the Renters (Reform) Act 2023, all ASTs will eventually be converted to periodic tenancies, which provide more security.

Your agreement should clearly set out:

- Your name, your landlord's name, and the address of the property
- The date the tenancy begins
- How much rent is due and when it should be paid
- Any rent review terms (maximum one increase per year)
- Information about how the tenancy may be ended

## **Paying your deposit**

Your landlord must protect your deposit with one of these schemes:

- Deposit Protection Service
- MyDeposits
- Tenancy Deposit Scheme

They must provide you with information about which scheme is used within 30 days of paying the deposit.

With the introduction of lifetime deposits, you may be able to transfer your deposit to a new tenancy in the future.

## **LIVING IN YOUR RENTED HOME**

### **The tenant's responsibilities:**

- Pay the rent on time
- Pay utility bills and council tax (unless included in the rent)
- Look after the property

- Be considerate to neighbors
- Not sublet without permission
- Report needed repairs promptly
- Provide access for maintenance and safety checks
- Check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms regularly

### **The landlord's responsibilities:**

- Maintain the structure and exterior of the property
- Keep installations for supply of water, gas, electricity, sanitation, space heating, and water heating in working order
- Ensure the property meets the Decent Homes Standard
- Arrange annual gas safety checks
- Ensure electrical safety is checked every 5 years
- Provide an Energy Performance Certificate
- Protect your deposit
- Provide their name and address
- Give at least 24 hours' notice before entering the property
- Consider pet requests reasonably and cannot unreasonably refuse

### **Rent increases**

Under the Renters (Reform) Act 2023:

- Rent can only be increased once per year
- You must receive at least 2 months' notice of any increase
- You can challenge excessive increases through the First-tier Tribunal

### **Request for changes**

If you want to make changes to the property:

- Get written permission from your landlord first
- For reasonable requests (like hanging pictures), landlords should not unreasonably refuse

### **Pet ownership**

The Renters (Reform) Act 2023 gives tenants the right to request keeping pets:

- Landlords must consider requests and cannot unreasonably refuse
- They must respond within 28 days

- Refusal must be based on reasonable grounds relating to the suitability of the property

## **IF THINGS GO WRONG**

### **Communication is key**

If you have issues with your tenancy:

1. Contact your landlord or letting agent first
2. Keep records of all communications
3. If your landlord doesn't resolve the issue, you can:
  - Contact your local council (for property condition issues)
  - Use your landlord's Property Ombudsman scheme
  - Get advice from Citizens Advice or Shelter

### **If your landlord wants to evict you**

Under the Renters (Reform) Act 2023:

- Section 21 "no-fault" evictions have been abolished
- Your landlord must have legitimate grounds to evict you
- Valid grounds include:
  - Rent arrears
  - Anti-social behavior
  - Property damage
  - The landlord intending to sell or move in
- The notice period will depend on the grounds being used
- A court order is always required before you can be evicted

## **ENDING YOUR TENANCY**

### **If you want to leave**

1. Check your tenancy agreement for the notice period (usually one month)
2. Give notice in writing
3. Pay your rent until the end of the notice period
4. Return all keys
5. Leave the property in the condition you found it (allowing for fair wear and tear)

### **If your landlord wants the property back**

They must use one of the legal grounds for possession and obtain a court order.

## Getting your deposit back

At the end of the tenancy:

1. Request your deposit back promptly
2. Agree with your landlord any deductions for damage or unpaid rent
3. If you disagree with proposed deductions, use the deposit protection scheme's dispute resolution service

## FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- GOV.UK: [www.gov.uk/housing](http://www.gov.uk/housing)
- Citizens Advice: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- Shelter: [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)
- The Money and Pensions Service: [www.moneyandpensionservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyandpensionservice.org.uk)
- Local council housing departments
- Landlord accreditation schemes

## COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

If you have a complaint about your landlord or agent:

1. First raise it with them directly
2. If not resolved, contact their Property Ombudsman scheme
3. For deposit disputes, use the relevant deposit protection scheme's resolution service
4. For property standards issues, contact your local council's housing department

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**This information is a guide and should not be used as a substitute for professional legal advice.**

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