

How To Rent



**HYBR's practical guide
for students**

Introduction

There is no denying that the house hunt, particularly in your first year is a stressful and daunting process. This largely comes from how early letting agents release houses and the rumors that circulate from other students.

We recommend you take your time to meet new people, choose your future house mates and the right house. There is no point rushing into a house that you will regret in the long run.

The aim of this guide is to help students find their perfect home, the right way, from a student platform that cares.

Here at HYBR, we provide the following:

- Accessible selection of available properties on the market, allowing you to compare student homes within different locations, different price ranges and from different independent landlords.
- We offer emotional, practical support and guidance throughout your rental journey and help you navigate potentially tricky circumstances.
- We offer direct links to affordable maintenance workers (cleaners, plumbers, electricians etc) with transparent prices whenever you need.

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How to Choose and Get on With Your Housemates

- What personality types do you get on best with? Have a think about the sort of people you would like to live with - what annoys you, what do you love about people? Make sure you have things in common. Get to know people properly before you agree to house hunt. It will save you time and grief!
- Don't just choose to live with people from your course. Try to have a mix in your house if you can, not only can this widen your social circle but it can also broaden your mind.
- Set out house rules from the beginning. For example, who is in charge of taking out the bins, what is your policy on washing up and leaving things in the sink, who wants the shower and at what time in the morning? Almost all household disagreements are avoidable in some way. It is important to set out a few ground rules right from the beginning.
- Create your own space. Spend time to make your bedroom your safe space and keep yourself separate yourself from house drama!

- We recommend to create a weekly rota with all the necessary chores to ensure everyone helps out and to avoid conflicts between housemates.
- Don't get into a fight over bills. Splitting bills such as house costs or shopping bills can be quite a hassle. There are businesses or apps that assist you to make this process easier. Businesses such as The Bunch and Apps such as Tricount, which are simple to use and can make life much easier for everyone.

How to Prepare For House Hunting

Students prefer to live close to their place of study, but this may not always be the best choice. There is always the need to balance cost, quality and convenience.

Please think about the following:

- Where is the housing located?

Can you walk, cycle, or how long is the bus ride to the university?

- What are the transport links and their costs?

You may have to decide between convenience, distance and price. However, remember to factor in your additional travel cost to ensure they do not outweigh your savings on rent.

For example, the average cost for transportation in Bristol:

- Zone 1-4 £1 and £2.50 (single fare)
- Zone 1-4 £1.90 and £3.80 (return fare)

For example, the cost of a resident's parking permit if there is not free parking. The cost will depend on how many people in your house want a permit and what neighbourhood you live in.

- Do you need a guarantor?

Many landlords require students to provide a guarantor as a condition of the housing contract. The guarantor is a third party individual that guarantees to pay the landlord any rent, and cost of any damage for which the student fails to pay.

For international students, if they don't have a UK guarantor they are required to pay 6 months rent in advance or they can ask a UK family friend.

For international students, or local students who do not have a guarantor, they can ask their university whether they can recommend a **rent guarantor scheme**, these are usually the cheapest option, or they can use a paid guarantor service available such as "Housing Hand", "Rent Guarantor" or "UK guarantor".

Students (both international and local) who will be studying at the University of Bristol can apply for the guarantor service provided. The University has established a relationship with Housing Hand, a company that offer a fully comprehensive guarantor service. UWE Bristol has partnered with YourGuarantor – an organisation that will act as the UK-based Guarantor for International/EU students seeking private accommodation.

- Watch out for scams!

Be clear who you are handing your money over to and why. Our advice is to watch out particularly on Facebook. Never pay a deposit without seeing the house, meeting the landlord or letting agent and looking up reviews.

- Do you need financial aid?

If you are in a situation where you need financial support, feel free to contact the money advice service or have a look if you are eligible for government financial support.

Viewing Tips

Be on your best form, be polite to the landlord or the person in charge of viewings as they will feed back to the letting agent/ landlord, which could help your application if you want the house.

Safety come first!

Ask the landlord or the letting agent the following:

- Are the smoke detectors or fire alarms fitted?
- Are there emergency escape lighting routes?
- Does the house have fire doors?
- Is there a heat detector in the kitchen?
- Gas and electricity is everything checked and test?
- Is the heating in the house adequate?
- Do the electric gas/ fire work?

Location (is the area right for you?)

- Is transport easily available?
- Are there shops and services nearby?

Agent/ landlord/ owner (get to know them)

- Do you have their contact details – names, address, phone number? Do not sign a contract without this information.

Outside the property – just as important as inside

- Does the roof look sound?
- Do the gutters have plants growing out of them?
- Are the walls, garden, fences and boundaries maintained? Will these be your responsibility or the landlord?

After the viewing

- If you really like the house and if all of you are present, you might be able to sign this right away.
- Listen to everyone's opinion. We advice making a list of your four most important factors and take turns to rate the house out of 10 to see which house you like the best.

What To Look For In a House

- Price: think about how much rent you can afford to pay.

Make sure you consider how much bills will come each month and factor that into the monthly rent.

- Location: it is very important to think about the convenience of your accommodation; can you walk there? Are you near the university facilities, local shops and nightlife? Keep in mind that properties that are not in a central location can often seem cheaper, when factoring in transport costs, they may become more expensive.

- Safe and sound: the security of your accommodation, a factor that can often be forgotten amongst the excitement of starting university. It is recommended and worthwhile doing some research into the neighborhood.

- Rooms of choice: we advise picking rooms out of a hat to avoid disputes. We also think it is always fair to give the lead tenant (the person who organised and found the house) first choice! Another factor to take into consideration is whether someone would like to pay less/more of the rent for a certain bedroom.

- Facilities: find out if your room rental includes use of common area; such as kitchen, living room and garden. Look into what amenities are available to you and if any of them have restrictions. Have a look if there are additional appliances that you will need to bring.

- Reviews

Make sure to ask the previous tenants for a review of the property and the landlord or letting agent. Find out if there were any issues during or at the end of tenancy so you can see if there are any red flags. We also recommend asking them how much their bills came to so you can ensure you have budgeted accurately.

Signing a Lease

When you find your dream home, make sure that your group is in agreement and then read through the terms of your tenancy agreement carefully!

The next step would be to check the following:

- The tenancy agreement: make sure you read your tenancy agreement carefully to understand your rights and responsibilities. For example, are bills included? How much is the deposit? What is their policy on returning deposits? When is the move-in and move-out date? Read their drop out clause and make sure you think it is fair.
- Have you considered a deposit replacement scheme? if you cannot fork out a whole month or 5 weeks rent for a deposit think about using an insurance scheme where you pay a monthly fee of around £5 -10. For example, Reposit or Ome.
- Inventory: talk to your landlord about making an inventory report before you move in and as an extra safeguard take photos of any damages you see around the house. This will make things easier if there is a dispute in the future.
- Insurance: make sure that you or your letting agency has a standard home insurance.
- Meter readings: to be on the safe side take meter readings when you move in, this will make sure you don't pay the bills of the previous tenants.
- Contact details: make sure you have the correct contact details of the landlord or agent and you know who you should contact if there is an issue during the rental. As a tenant you are legally entitled to this.

Your Tenants Rights

As a tenant you have a number of legal rights, but as a student you do not always have time to research them. Here is a list for students to understand their rights and how to enforce them.

Rights to have your deposit protected and returned:

- Your landlord/ letting agent must protect your deposit with a government-backed deposit protection scheme. This should be done within 30 days of receiving the first part. You can make sure of the following deposit schemes: [deposit protection service](#), [mydeposits](#) or [tenancy deposit scheme](#).
- You have the right to demand for them to do this if they have not. If they fail to protect your deposit in time, you may demand they pay a compensation, up to three times the amount.
- Find out who manages your property. Whoever is in charge must provide you with a Deposit Protection Certificate within 30 days of receiving your deposit, by law.
- You are entitled to receive your deposit at the end of the tenancy, unless they can prove to the deposit protection scheme's dispute tribunal that damage beyond 'reasonable wear and tear' occurred during your tenancy.
- As a student, please be aware if the property you are living in is "exempt" from paying council tax. You are entitle to be "exempt" from paying if you are a full time college or university student. Read more about ["council tax for students"](#) and how to apply.

Right to live in a safe and habitual home:

- The landlord must ensure that your property is safe, healthy and free from anything that may cause you serious harm. Serious issues such as: your house is too cold, problems with the supply of hot and cold water and not enough natural light or ventilation.
- If your property does not fit in the above requirements you may start court action to demand repairs be carried out. You can also ask for compensation for having been made to live there while it was not in proper condition.

Right to enjoy your home undisturbed:

- Your landlord/agent do not have unfettered access to your property during your tenancy. Their visit should be for an actual purpose and not too frequent that it impacts on the peaceful enjoyment of your home.
- They may need access to the property during your tenancy to carry out essential repairs, do an annual safety check or to carry out improvement works. They need to always give you at least 24 hours written notice.
- If you find that they are visiting too frequently, this may amount to harassment. You have the right to ask them to refrain from doing so. You can also seek an injunction to stop them or claim compensation from them in some cases.
- The landlord or agent is prohibited from evicting a tenant without following certain procedures set by law. Examples of unlawful eviction include; a landlord forcing you to leave the property, threatening you, stopping you from entering certain areas on the property and changing the locks while you are away.

Your Responsibilities

As a tenant you need to be aware that you also have certain responsibilities. Don't get fined for silly reasons. You need to:

- Pay your rent on time: set up a **standing order** before the 1st of every month! If you are late with your rent for more than 14 days, you could be liable for a default fee. You could lose your home because you have breached your tenancy agreement. Check the terms in your tenancy agreement and clarify this with your landlord before.
- Pay any other bills on time: extra bills such as wifi, gas, electricity and water bills.
- Look after the property: make sure you get your landlord's permission before attempting repairs or decorating. If you have to decorate your room, use **white tac** instead of blue tac and using **command strips**!
- Be considerate to your neighbours: any disrespectful or anti-social behavior may be a reason for your landlord to fine or evict you. Introduce yourself to your neighbours at the beginning and build a relationship. If you want to have friends over pre-warn them so they don't call the police!
- Do not take in a lodger or sub-let without checking whether you need permission from your landlord.
- Do not forget to register to vote!

Your Landlord's Obligations

- Protect deposits within 30 days of receiving them within a DPS.
- Make sure the property is free from serious hazards.
- Deal with any issues concerning water, electricity and gas supply.
- Carry out most repairs when asked to; if something is not working report it to the landlord or agent as soon as you can.
- Arrange an annual gas safety check.
- Give at least 24 hour notice for visits.

Develop a Positive Relationship With Your Landlord

Tenants often underestimate the importance of communicating and establishing a good relationship with their landlord. It saves a lot of headaches and will make your year more enjoyable.

Here are a few useful tips:

- Be honest and communicate openly. There should be a good level of communication from both parties from the moment you sign the contract.
- Pay rent promptly. Making sure that you pay the rent on time is essential to maintaining a good relationship between you and your landlord.
- Be polite and professional. No matter what the situation is, always remember to be polite and professional, this will enable the landlord to respond quickly.
- Keep the property in good condition. Always remember to report any damages, this will prevent disputes in the future.
- Give plenty of notice to your landlord. When the tenancy agreement comes to an end, you should communicate with your landlord when you plan to leave and give a few months' notice.

Thank You!

Get in touch with the HYBR team if you have any rental questions or if you are on the lookout for your dream university home.

We are here to help.

All our love,
from a student platform that cares.



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