

TIPS FOR STUDENT RENTERS

All landlords who rent to students are required to register the tenancy with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). Search “RTB register” to check that your tenancy has been registered.

All providers of property services (Letting Agents, Auctioneers, Estate Agents, Management Agents) in the Republic of Ireland are required to hold a PSRA licence. Students should ask to see the property service provider’s licence and note the licence number. This number can then be checked on the Register of Licensed Property Services Providers to ensure that the licence is not only valid and in date, but that the provider’s details match those on the Register. Search “PSR register” to check.

You cannot be discriminated against because of your age, gender, race, membership of the Traveller Community, or sexual orientation. If you feel you have been discriminated against you can contact the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

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All rented accommodation is required to meet basic minimum standards. This includes:

- It must be free from damp and in good structural repair
- Hot and cold water must be available
- Sanitary facilities must be separated from other rooms, well ventilated, in safe condition, and good working order
- All rooms must have adequate ventilation and heating, which tenants can control
- For leases of less than 10 years, appliances must be in a good and safe working order. A 4-ring hob, oven, grill, fridge/freezer, microwave and sink that supplies safe drinking water, hot water and adequate draining must be provided. There must also be adequate storage to separately store food and cleaning products
- Electrical wiring, gas and water pipes should be in good repair. Properties should, where necessary, have a carbon monoxide alarm. These should be in suitable locations and in good working order
- In houses there must be access to a fire blanket and fire detection and alarm system. In multi-unit buildings, there must be a fire detection and alarm system, an emergency evacuation plan and emergency lighting in common areas.

- Where there is no access to a yard / garden, access to communal laundry facilities, such as a washing machine and a dryer, must be provided
- All habitable rooms must have natural lighting and adequate artificial lighting
- There must be suitable safety restrictors attached to a window which has an opening through which a person may fall and the bottom of the opening is more than 1400mm above the external ground level. Suitable safety restrictors must secure the window sufficiently to prevent such falls. Lockable restrictors that can only be released by removable keys or other tools should not be fitted to window opening sections
- Each bathroom or shower room should contain a permanently fixed heater that is properly maintained. The room should be properly ventilated
- Information must be provided to tenants on the property, building services, appliances and their maintenance requirements
- Efforts must be made to prevent infestation of pests and vermin
- There must be access to suitable and adequate facilities to store refuse that are safe from pests and vermin

If your accommodation does not meet these standards, contact your Local Housing Authority. Your landlord can also inspect the property, but they should provide adequate notice.

A landlord of a SSA (Student Specific Accommodation) tenancy cannot ask you to pay more than one month's rent as a deposit. Only pay a deposit if you have viewed the property. Avoid paying a deposit in cash, and always ask for a receipt that clearly states the date and amount paid.

The landlord will hold the deposit until the tenancy ends, at which point it should be returned. It is important to follow the terms in the tenancy agreement, otherwise the landlord may be entitled to keep all or some of the deposit.

If you are sharing accommodation with friends or other students, be clear at the start of the tenancy that you are all aware of the information contained within the tenancy agreement, and your rights and responsibilities as tenants. For example, if three people sign a fixed-term tenancy agreement, and one tenant leaves the tenancy early, the other two tenants are now responsible for ensuring the total rent is paid. Tenants should make sure they have the contact details of the landlord or agent working on their behalf and should maintain open lines of communication with their landlord.

Your landlord must provide you with a rent book or other document such as a lease, which you keep. It is used to record all rent, deposit, and any other payments made by you. The rent book or lease should contain other useful information on the tenancy including an inventory list of all items provided as part of the tenancy, your details, and the name, address, and contact details of your landlord and their agent if they have one.

All payments must be recorded either in the rent book or, if you pay through the bank, by receipt stating the amount, the purpose, the date of the payment, and the period to which it relates. Where a payment is made by any other method, for example direct debit, your landlord must, not more than 3 months after receipt, either record it in the rent book or provide you with a written statement of the amount, purpose and the date of the payment and the period to which it relates.

If your tenancy is in a Rent Pressure Zone, rents cannot be increased by more than general inflation and the rent previously set, or cannot increase by more than 2% year (whichever is lower) . This can apply to new and existing tenancies . To check whether your tenancy is in a RPZ and if you are being charged the correct amount of rent, check out the RTB's Rent Pressure Zone Calculator.

At the start of a new tenancy in an RPZ, landlords are required to provide the following information in writing:

- The amount of rent the previous tenant was paying
- The date the rent was last set (when the previous tenancy started) / the date the landlord previously set and served the notice of rent review
- A statement as to how the rent was set, with regard to the RTB Rent Pressure Zone Calculator which reflects the latest HICP

Not all tenancies located in Rent Pressure Zones are subject to the Rent Pressure Zone rules. If a property is new to the rental market and has not been rented at any time in the previous 2 years, it does not fall under the Rent Pressure Zone restrictions. Properties which are considered a protected structure or that have undergone a substantial change are also excluded from the Rent Pressure Zone restrictions. Check the RTB website for more info.

Students and tenants in the private rental sector cannot be made to pay more than one months rent in advance during a tenancy. However, students in Student Specific Accommodation can pay more than one months rent in advance if they want to.

Students in Student Specific Accommodation are only required to give 28 days notice to end a tenancy agreement. Students can give a longer notice period if they want to, but there is no legal requirement.

DIGS

If you are living in the same accommodation as the landlord (including digs), then this is a licence arrangement, and normal landlord/tenant laws do not apply, and the RTB will not be able to settle disputes.

It is still recommended to have an agreement in writing that covers issues such as deposit, rent, bills, house rules, and how to end the letting. If you have difficulties getting your deposit back at the end of the letting you may be able to refer a case to the small claims court.

If you are renting a room from another tenant, then this may also be a licensing agreement that normal landlord/tenant laws do not apply to.

There is little legal protection for licensees - they do not have to be registered with the RTB, there are no minimum standards, rent book regulations or minimum notice periods required. If there is a dispute it cannot go to the RTB and whilst the small claims court may be an option for getting back a deposit this is not always the case.