

Your housing journey

SEPTEMBER

Start of term and welcome events. See our website for moving in tips

OCTOBER

Settling in and making friends. Think about who you want to share with next year

NOVEMBER

Don't rush to book accommodation for next year! Come to our Accommodation Fair to find out your options

FEBRUARY

House-hunting continues! Make a shortlist of properties and contact landlords/agents

JANUARY

Don't feel pressurised to make a decision. Get to know your potential flatmates.

DECEMBER

Continue your accommodation search at astonstudenthomes.org
Register to receive properties

MARCH

House-hunting continues! There will still be plenty of properties available. If you have found a property and have any queries about your contract, contact the ARC at advice@aston.ac.uk

APRIL

Staying in Birmingham over the Summer? Check out the short lets on our website

MAY

Getting ready to move out? Don't forget to recycle. Check the ASH website for tips on getting your deposit back

AUGUST

Prepare to move in to your new place in September

JULY



Enjoy the summer!

JUNE

Move in to your summer let (if applicable)



HOW TO AVOID A RENT SCAM

ALERT

Beware

SCAM

- **Ring the ARC for advice** 0121 204 4848
- **Let us check your Tenancy Agreement** before you sign it and do not pay a deposit until it's been checked. It is a contract.
- **Visit the Property** with the landlord: if you are not in the UK, get a friend to check it for you
- **Use the Land Registry** to check the landlord actually owns the property: don't trust the landlord's own website – scams can be very sophisticated - the property may exist, but does he own it? Ask to see his ID, eg driving licence/passport, and take his address
- **Be wary of adverts** with no landline numbers or where the email address is a free one (e.g. Hotmail or gmail); check that the phone number works and is not a fax number
- **Use a website to check** on the landlord, e.g. RentProfile.com
- **Do not pay rent or deposit** until you have checked the property and that it belongs to the landlord and you have signed the contract
- **Ask the landlord** to show you gas and electricity safety certificates
- **Landlords are obliged** to put your deposit in a Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS): check your prospective landlord is registered with the scheme he claims he is
- **Do not be rushed** by the landlord saying he has a lot of people looking at the property: if *bona fide*, he should give you the facts you need to make your decision
- **Do not transfer or pay money** to secure the property: do your checks first, even if you are given a tenancy agreement; be sceptical if asked to transfer money via Western Union or Money Gram etc – use these only for people you know and trust
- **Ask questions** about the property: a genuine landlord should know the answers
- **Ideally use a landlord** who is a member of a professional body, e.g. National Landlords Association, Residential Landlords Association: landlords.org.uk



The official accommodation support service



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Email - astonstudenthomes@aston.ac.uk | Tel - 0121 204 4893

TENANCY AGREEMENTS



A tenancy agreement is a contract between you and a landlord and sometimes the managing agent. It gives certain rights to both you and your landlord. For example your right to occupy the accommodation and your landlord's right to receive rent for letting the accommodation. It also sets out the legal terms and conditions of your tenancy.

ASSURED SHORTHOLD TENANCIES

- The most common form of tenancy and most new tenancies are automatically this type
- Also known as an AST or contract
- Landlord can only evict you with a court order

FIXED TERM The contract runs for a set period of time

PERIODIC Runs week-by-week or month-by-month

LICENSES

- A contract typically used by Homestay landlords (when the owner lives in the property)
- You are known as an excluded occupier rather than a tenant
- Your only right is to stay until your landlord asks you to go or for as long as your agreement says
- Your landlord can evict you by giving you reasonable notice, which can be verbal, and doesn't need a court order

? CONFUSED ABOUT YOUR CONTRACT/LANDLORD? ARC CAN HELP

FREE contract checking service for all students living in private accommodation.

Email advice@aston.ac.uk before you sign and an ARC Adviser can make you aware of any unfair terms and explain anything that you are unsure about.

You will need to book an appointment.



INDIVIDUAL TENANCY AGREEMENTS

When each tenant signs a separate contract with the landlord.



- ★ Contract only has your name on, as the tenant
- ★ You are only responsible for paying your own rent
- ★ Responsible for damage in your own room and a share of damage in communal areas
- ★ If another tenant moves out, you have no say over who replaces them
- ★ If you wish to move out before the end of your tenancy, the landlord may agree to release you, but you may have to find a replacement.

JOINT TENANCY AGREEMENTS

When all tenants are listed on one contract.



- ★ Tenants are jointly and individually responsible for paying the rent and for any damage
- ★ If one tenant doesn't pay the rent then the other tenants may have to pay what is owing
- ★ If no rent is paid by any tenants, the landlord can ask any of the tenants to pay the full amount
- ★ If a tenant moves out before the end of the contract, it is up to the tenants to find a replacement (all tenants must agree who) or pay the extra rent
- ★ Landlords cannot evict one tenant without evicting all the other tenants



TENANCY AGREEMENTS AND GUARANTORS

WHAT IS A GUARANTOR?



Landlords may ask you to provide them with the contact details of someone you know (with money), who owns property in the UK. Some landlords accept international guarantors.

This person must agree to be your guarantor and they become responsible for paying any rent that you owe or for damage to the property, should you not be able to pay.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE A GUARANTOR?

If you do not know anyone to be your guarantor, the landlord may ask you to pay a large amount of rent upfront.

There are companies who offer guarantor services, but they will charge you a fee.

WHAT DOES THE GUARANTOR NEED TO DO?

There are 2 ways to become a guarantor:

➤ On the tenancy agreement there may be a section for guarantors which they can sign

➤ A separate form for the guarantor to sign called a Special Deed of Guarantee. The tenancy agreement should be given to the guarantor too

JOINT TENANCIES AND GUARANTORS

In a joint tenancy each housemate is responsible for the rent for the whole property and the condition of the whole property. This is also true for their guarantors.



Some guarantors may think they are only responsible for money owed by the person they are guarantor for, but on a joint contract they are responsible for money owed by **ANY** of the tenants.

TOP TIP

Make sure you get a copy of the signed tenancy agreement from your landlord/agent. It must include their signature too. If it's a joint contract, all tenants should receive a copy.

TENANCY AGREEMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ **LANDLORD NAME AND ADDRESS** - Required by law, even if you do not have a written tenancy agreement
- ✓ **NAMES OF THE TENANTS** - Just your name on an individual tenancy agreement or all tenants names on a joint tenancy agreement
- ✓ **PROPERTY ADDRESS** - The property that is being let
- ✓ **START AND END DATE OF THE TENANCY** - The period of time that you will be renting the property
- ✓ **IF AN INDIVIDUAL TENANCY** - The room you have sole use of and which communal rooms you have access to
- ✓ **RENT** - How much the rent is and when it should be paid. Also, how often it can be increased
- ✓ **WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE RENT** - If the utilities are included ie. gas, electric, water and internet, check if there is an annual cap. You will have to pay for any additional bills if you exceed the cap
- ✓ **DEPOSIT DETAILS** - The amount of deposit to be paid and the deposit protection scheme chosen by the landlord
- ✓ **ADDITIONAL SERVICES** - That the landlord will provide and the cost. For example laundry, cleaning of communal areas or meals.



The official accommodation support service



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TENANCY DEPOSITS



Many private landlord and letting agents will ask you to pay a tenancy deposit. The tenancy deposit will often amount to around one month's worth of rent. It is important to be clear at the outset whether you are paying a tenancy deposit or rent in advance. This should be made clear in the tenancy agreement.

WHAT IS A DEPOSIT?

- A sum of money that a landlord/agent may ask you to pay when you sign the tenancy agreement (contract)
- The money is held in a deposit protection scheme
- It is returned to you when your tenancy finishes
- If you owe rent, left the property dirty or caused damage, the landlord can deduct the cost from your deposit.

THE DEPOSIT SHOULD NOT BE USED BY THE LANDLORD / AGENT TO PAY FOR REASONABLE, FAIR WEAR AND TEAR TO THE PROPERTY

DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEMES



Deposits taken by landlords/agents for Assured Shorthold Tenancies must be placed in a government authorised protection scheme. Schemes protect the money and help to resolve disputes between tenants and landlords.

**30
DAYS**

The landlord must put your deposit in a scheme within 30 days of you giving it to them. Then they must supply you with the details of the scheme. They can choose one of the three schemes below.

YOUR LANDLORD WILL CHOOSE ONE OF THESE PROTECTION SCHEMES:

TENANCY DEPOSIT SCHEME
www.tds.gb.com

DEPOSIT PROTECTION SERVICE
www.depositprotection.com

MY DEPOSITS
www.mydeposits.co.uk

DEPOSIT DETAILS YOUR LANDLORD SHOULD SUPPLY

- Confirmation of the amount of deposit paid
- Address of the property you are renting Landlord contact details
- Deposit scheme name and contact details
- A leaflet on how the scheme works
- The deposit return procedure
- The dispute procedure
- What happens if either party cannot be contacted
- Details of costs that the landlord can claim for from your deposit.

WHAT IF THE LANDLORD DOES NOT PUT MY DEPOSIT IN A SCHEME?

If the landlord/agent fails to protect the deposit or does not provide you with the details of the scheme within 30 days of receiving the deposit, then you can apply to the County Court for the deposit to be protected or returned to you.



The court can also award you compensation of 1-3 times the amount of the deposit



PROPERTY CHECKLIST

OUTSIDE

- Is there good street lighting?
- Are there good transport links?
- What is the local area like?
- Is the outside of the property in good condition?
- Are the drains and gutters clear? Dark staining underneath gutters is evidence of leaks
- Check for missing roof tiles

SECURITY

- Is there a working burglar alarm?
- Is the house easy to secure?
- Are the external doors solid?
- Are the windows double glazed?
- Do the external doors have 5 lever mortice locks?
- Do the downstairs windows have locks?

UTILITIES

- If possible, ask the current tenants how much the bills are.
- Are bills included in the rent? If so is there a cap and is it reasonable?
- Does the heating system work? Does the property feel cold?
- Does the hot water work?
- Are there enough plug sockets in each room (at least 2 doubles)
- Is there internet access and is it included in the rent? What is the package?

FURNITURE

- Has the property got enough furniture for number of tenants?
- Does any of the furniture belong to existing tenants?
- Do all soft furnishings supplied eg. sofas and beds, have a fire safety label attached?
- Is all furniture in good condition?
- Do the bedrooms have a bed, desk and storage?
- Are there blinds or curtains throughout?
- Are the carpets in good condition?

PLUMBING

- Does the shower work properly?
- Try the taps, do they all work? Do all the sinks drain?
- Does the toilet flush or leak?
- Is there any damp or mould growth?

KITCHEN

- Is the kitchen appropriate for the number of tenants?
- Is there enough freezer/fridge space?
- Is the kitchen clean and hygienic?
- Do the appliances work properly?



MOVING IN TO YOUR NEW PROPERTY



So you have signed your tenancy agreement, sorted your deposit and it's finally time to move into your new home... all exciting stuff! We have some helpful tips and advice on the practical things to do to ensure your tenancy gets off to a great start.

MOVING IN CHECK LIST

- ✓ **TAKE METER READINGS** - Give them to the energy supplier and landlord as you don't want to pay for the previous tenant's bills and keep a record for yourself. Avoid costly estimated bills by taking monthly meter readings.
- ✓ **FIND OUT HOW TO TURN OFF THE GAS & WHERE THE ELECTRIC FUSE BOARD IS** - It's important to know, just in case of an emergency and if the electric fuse trips.
- ✓ **FIND OUT WHERE THE STOPCOCK IS** - This is the mains water tap and is the off switch for all the water in your home. It is usually under the kitchen sink - check with your landlord. If a water pipe bursts you need to know how to switch it off.
- ✓ **CHECK THE INVENTORY** - This is a list of all the furniture, fixtures and fittings and their condition, usually supplied by the landlord. Check it, make any necessary amendments and return it to them. If they don't provide one, you can produce your own. Also take dated photos of any disrepair or damage, however minor and send to the landlord.
- ✓ **READ THE BOILER & APPLIANCE MANUALS** - Make sure you know how to work everything, as you don't want to cause any damage. If the manuals are missing, ask the landlord for a copy.
- ✓ **TV LICENCE** - You must have one to watch or record programmes as they're being shown on TV or live on an online TV service. This includes downloading or watching BBC programmes on iPlayer - live, catch up or on demand and applies no matter what device you use.
- ✓ **FIRE SAFETY** - Plan an escape route and a backup route. Make sure exits are always kept clear and keys are where they can be easily found, but not left in doors as this can attract burglars.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF



Say "Hi" to your new neighbours - it's a great way to start on a positive with those living around you. You may choose to live there for the academic year or longer so getting on with your neighbours keeps things pleasant and helps you fit into the local community.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Can be attended by residents, local councillors, student reps and community police. They are a great way to get involved in community issues and meet new people.

BE CONSIDERATE

Avoid offensive, loud or unruly behaviour and be considerate to your neighbours by respecting their property. Don't forget to park any vehicles safely and keep to any parking restrictions.

Be considerate to those around you and they will do the same.

PARTIES

- ★ Let your neighbours know your party plans well in advance and set a finishing time
- ★ Think about the number of parties you are having, could they be spread out amongst friends or could you hire a venue?
- ★ Make sure you know who is invited, avoid shouting about it on social media
- ★ During the party keep the front door closed and reduce outside noise by keeping windows closed.

NOISE



REMEMBER TO...

MEDICAL STUFF



The nearest NHS doctor's surgery/GP to Aston University is Halcyon Medical based in the Lower Ground Floor of Boots (opposite Marks and Spencer) on High St in Birmingham city centre. It is open seven days a week and forms part of the Birmingham Health Care Floor in Boots which includes additional services such as a Sexual Health Clinic, Dental Outreach and a Walk-in Centre.



Henderson's Dental Surgery (entrance on the south side of the Health Clinics building) charges £21.60 for an assessment and provides advice on the NHS or whether you would need to be referred elsewhere.

Tel: 0121 204 4310



Aston Eye Clinic, Vision Sciences Building. Students are welcome at the opticians where free eye checks are carried out by final year Optometry students under supervision. Reasonably priced spectacles, lenses and contact lenses can be purchased following the eye check if required. Appointments are available most week days from October to April. For further information or to book an appointment: 0121 204 3900 / eyecare@aston.ac.uk

PUT THE BIN OUT & RECYCLE



All non-recyclable waste should be placed in the bin with the grey lid.



Recyclable items including paper, glass, cardboard, plastic bottles, tins and cans should be put in bin with the blue lid.



If you live in an apartment block then waste should be disposed of in the large wheelie bins in the communal bin areas.

£20 is the cost you will have to pay to replace a bin

Some properties don't have the space for a wheelie bin (e.g. narrow terraced housing), and you will need to put your waste into black plastic bin bags, and recyclables into a special box for collection.

Collection and waste info:

www.birmingham.gov.uk/wasteservices

BINS NEED TO BE PUT OUT AT THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE. STORE THEM AWAY BETWEEN COLLECTION DAYS TO ENSURE THEY DON'T GET LOST OR STOLEN.

NOW LOCK THE DOOR!

Burglars are known to try door handles to check if they are unlocked.

Lock all external doors, even when you are in, to reduce the risk of theft.

NOW SECURE THE WINDOW!



DON'T INVITE UNWANTED GUESTS INTO YOUR HOME BY LEAVING YOUR WINDOWS UNSECURED

THIEVES OPERATE DAY AND NIGHT



**ASTON
STUDENT
HOMES**

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YOUR FINANCES



Living away from home or moving out of university halls means you'll have new responsibilities with your money that you probably haven't had to think about in the past. Accommodation and paying the bills will be one of your largest expenses. Here are some costs to think about and some tips on saving money in your student home.

OTHER COSTS

HOW MUCH FOR GAS AND ELECTRICITY? - It depends on a variety of factors. To get an estimate, ask your landlord/agent for the energy bill from the previous year. Also, check the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property.

ALL INCLUSIVE RENTS - If your bills are included in the rent, check your contract to see if there is a cap or limit on your fuel. If your consumption goes over this cap, you will be required to pay the extra cost. It's also best to get a copy of the bill, to check that the energy consumption is correct and not estimated.

WATER AND INTERNET - Usually the cost of water supply is included in your rent. Internet may or may not be. Ask the landlord how internet is supplied in the property and how the bill is to be paid.

TV LICENCE - You need to be covered by a TV Licence to:

- watch or record programmes as they're being shown on TV or live on an online TV service
- download or watch BBC programmes on iPlayer.

This applies to any provider you use and any device, including a TV, desktop computer, laptop, mobile phone, tablet, games console, digital box or DVD/VHS recorder.

However, if you only use a device that's powered solely by its own internal batteries, you will be covered by your parents' TV Licence. You must not install the device (e.g. plug it into the mains) when using it to receive TV. Make sure you charge it up first.

Please see www.tvlicensing.co.uk for the most up to date information.

CONTENTS INSURANCE - Check if you are covered on your parents' policy. If not, it's important you take out your own to cover your belongings. Some companies specialise in student contents insurance.

FOOD - You may want to discuss with your housemates how to organise the food shop. The cheaper option is to do a regular supermarket shop and share popular items such as milk, bread, pasta and rice.

TRAVEL - If you are not living in the City Centre, you need to consider your transport costs both for getting to uni and for socialising. Visit - www.birmingham.gov.uk/publictransport

RENT

The rental prices for student accommodation vary according to the location, type of property, facilities and the standard of property.



If you are planning to share a house with your friends, you should decide between you what you can afford to pay for rent, having factored in all other household and living expenses.

City Centre (B1, B2, B3 and B4) properties that are closest to campus will have the highest rents. If you don't want to pay that much, you could consider properties which are a short bus ride away such as in Aston B6 (some properties in this area are within easy walking distance), Erdington B23 and B24, Handsworth B21, Perry Barr B42 and B44, Saltley B8, Newtown B19 and Highgate B5 (some properties in this area are within easy walking distance).

Remember to factor in bus fares/travel cards.



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REDUCING HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES

#1 TOP TIP

Getting the household expenses organised at the beginning will save a lot of stress later on. It's a good idea to draw up a budget of estimated household expenses so you can be prepared for when payments are due and so you know what you have left to spend on other stuff.

Save energy to save money

- ★ Turn your thermostat down. Reducing by 1 °C could cut your heating bills by up to 10%. Set your heating and hot water to come on only when required
- ★ Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows
- ★ Turn off the lights when you leave a room
- ★ Don't leave appliances on standby and remember not to leave laptops and mobile phones on charge unnecessarily
- ★ Washing clothes at 30 degrees uses 40% less energy
- ★ Only boil as much water as you need (but remember to cover the elements if you're using an electric kettle)
- ★ A dripping hot water tap wastes energy so ask your landlord to fix any leaking taps and make sure they're fully turned off!

METER READINGS

It's important to take regular meter readings and give them to the energy supplier and landlord to prevent bills from being estimated.

QUITE OFTEN ENERGY COMPANIES WILL OVER-ESTIMATE HOW MUCH FUEL YOU HAVE USED, SO YOU MAY END UP PAYING MORE THAN YOU NEED TO

It's particularly important to read the meters on the day you move in and when you move out. Give these to the landlord and energy suppliers to ensure you're not paying for the previous tenants' bill.

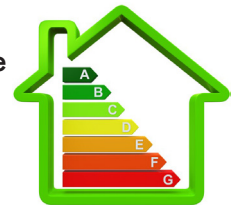


ENERGY EFFICIENCY

All rented properties that have a single tenancy agreement covering the whole property must have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). Properties where tenants have individual agreements and share facilities do not currently require an EPC

EPCs tell you how energy efficient a property is and give it a rating from A (very efficient) to G (inefficient). They let you know how costly the property will be to heat and light, and what its carbon dioxide emissions are likely to be.

EPC ratings are displayed on each property advert on the ASH website and by choosing properties that are rated more efficient you will be saving money on your energy bills.



For any new lets and renewals of tenancies from the 1st of April 2018 the minimum EPC rating is E. Some properties may be exempt.

OTHER WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR OUTGOINGS

- Look for reduced items at the supermarket, or go 10 minutes before closing time when fresh produce is heavily discounted
- Taking a packed lunch with you to the University
- Instead of cooking individually, take turns in cooking one evening meal for everyone
- Stick to the student union when you can to take advantage of cheaper prices
- Use your NUS Extra card for discounts
- Taking advantage of online vouchers
- Watch your spending when away from university, such as the summer holidays or Christmas. With so much free time, it's easy to go crazy and spend your money all in one go



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SAFETY & SECURITY



Having a nice-looking home with all mod-cons may be high up on the list of priorities when searching for your next student property, but essentially the property must be safe and secure.

Here are some tips on what security features to look for during your house-hunting, how to minimise the risk of burglary once you have moved in and keeping safe.

SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Is there a working burglar alarm?
- ✓ Is the house easy to secure?
- ✓ Are the external doors solid?
- ✓ Is there double glazing?
- ✓ Do the external doors have five-lever mortice locks?
- ✓ Are the windows secure and have locks?
- ✓ Is there good street lighting?
- ✓ What are the routes like to public transport?
- ✓ Are they well lit and would you feel safe walking at night?
- ✓ What is the local area like? Quiet or noisy?
- ✓ Is the outside of the property in good repair?
- ✓ Are there interlinked smoke alarms?
- ✓ Are there carbon monoxide monitors
- ✓ Are there fire doors and fire blankets/extinguishers?

KEEPING YOUR ACCOMMODATION SECURE

Students own more small, expensive and easily sold consumer items than a typical family household, which makes rich pickings for burglars. Be careful not to become an easy target.

Lock all external doors even when you are at home. When you go out close all windows

If any locks are faulty, speak to your landlord to get them fixed

Don't leave packaging from expensive goods outside next to your bin. Take it to a recycling bin or the tip

In larger properties, be careful who you let into the communal areas and who follows you into the property

If there is access at the back of the property, always make sure that gates are locked and fences are secure

Leaving for the holidays? Take your valuables with you or leave them with trusted friends/family

Security mark your valuables with your postcode and house number

Don't leave your valuables on show



SAFETY & SECURITY



FIRE SAFETY



Smoke detectors should be provided in your property. It's important to check them once a week.

Strobe light and vibrating pad alarms are available for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Contact West Midlands Fire Service for further details.

The fire service will visit your property free of charge to give fire awareness advice and where necessary, fit new alarms.

- Don't use a chip pan, instead buy a thermostatically controlled fat fryer
- Don't leave pans or grills unattended while cooking
- Never pour water onto a fat fire or attempt to carry a hot or burning pan
- Portable heaters should be at least 1 metre away from furnishings
- Some tenancy agreements state that you should not burn candles in the property. Candles should always be put in an appropriate holder and not left unattended or placed near furnishings
- Dispose of cigarettes correctly making sure they are put out properly and never smoke in bed
- If you suspect a faulty gas or electric appliance do not use it and report any faults to the landlord.

www.immobilise.com

**TO PROTECT IT
REGISTER IT**



To get started visit
www.immobilise.com

Register your property
FREE and improve your
chances of getting it back
if it is lost or stolen

IMMOBILISE
THE UK NATIONAL PROPERTY REGISTER



SECURE THE WINDOW!



**DON'T INVITE UNWANTED GUESTS
INTO YOUR HOME BY LEAVING YOUR
WINDOWS UNSECURED**

THIEVES OPERATE DAY AND NIGHT

Opening the windows to ventilate your home is important to prevent mould and damp. Secure your UPVC window by only opening to the first stage locking point. If you leave the room or the house, secure fully by locking the window with the key.

Speak to your landlord or agent if you are unsure about how to use the first stage locking point, or if keys are missing.



LOCK THE DOOR

Burglars are known to try door handles to check if they are unlocked.

Lock all external doors, even when you are in, to reduce the risk of theft.

THE SILENT KILLER

Landlords have responsibilities for gas safety. They must arrange for a gas safety check to be carried out every 12 months by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

If you think a gas appliance is faulty turn it off and let your landlord know immediately. Seek medical help if you feel unwell.

6 main symptoms to look out for



Headaches



Nausea



Breathlessness



Collapse



Dizziness



Loss of Consciousness



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HOMES

The official accommodation support service



Accommodation Search - www.astonstudenthomes.org | General Information - www.astonsu.com/housing/astonstudenthomes

Email - astonstudenthomes@aston.ac.uk | Tel - 0121 204 4893

PESTS

Pests such as rodents and insects are attracted into properties because food is left available and / or the property is not being properly cleaned. This is generally a problem caused by tenants not keeping their accommodation clean and tidy and often is not the responsibility of the landlord.

MICE & RATS (Rodents)

Finding mice in your home can be very distressing. Rodents can spread disease in their search for food and shelter, posing health risks particularly in kitchens and food storage areas. Rodents can cause other problems, so taking action to eliminate an infestation quickly is important as they can contaminate foodstuffs as pathogens in their urine & faeces can transmit diseases.



Following the pest prevention steps at the bottom of this page can help, but in most cases professional help is needed.

BED BUGS

If you think you have bed bugs in your house, the only thing on your mind will be getting rid of them as quickly as possible. Bed bugs stay close to a food source, so are found where people tend to rest and sleep, hence the name bed bug. The frustration they can cause is not only due to the emotional stress of dealing with parasites, but also the irritation of their bites and the potential for secondary infection from constant scratching.



Whilst there are do-it-yourself treatments for bed bug removal it may be necessary to call in a professional company for severe infestations. If you suffer from itchy bite marks on your body consult your GP.

ANTS

The ant species found in the UK can be a nuisance when they get into your home. Garden or black ants aren't thought to carry diseases, the trouble is you don't know where they've been foraging outside, so you won't want them marching through your food cupboards.



- Clear up any sticky residues on worktops and tables, because most ants are attracted to 'sweet things'
- Cover up, put away or securely seal any foodstuffs which could be a source of sustenance for ants.

Many 'off the shelf' ant killers are available from supermarket and DIY stores, but the most effective are the bait traps. These are charged with poison that is taken back to the nest by the workers and kills the whole colony. Always follow the instructions.

SLUGS

Use a torch/flashlight in a darkened room to spot the dried trails from last night's invasion then follow them back to any entry points. Check for joints, holes and gaps along walls, around doors, pipes, vents and under cabinets. Placing salt around these entrances will discourage slugs. Ask your landlord to seal gaps using expanding foam for larger gaps or silicone sealant for smaller cracks.



WASPS

Wasps are most active in the warmer summer months. In the UK and cause annoyance and painful stings.



Wasps nests need to be dealt with by professionals, so if you have one, talk to your landlord.

TRY PEST PREVENTION FIRST - REMOVE SOURCES OF FOOD, WATER & SHELTER

- Store food in sealed plastic or glass containers. Garbage containing food scraps should be placed in tightly covered trash cans. Remove garbage regularly from your home.
- Don't let water accumulate anywhere in the home. Don't let water collect in trays under your house plants or refrigerator. Don't leave pet food and water out overnight.
- Clutter provides places for pests to breed and hide and makes it hard to get rid of them. Get rid of things like stacks of newspapers, magazines, or cardboard.



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CONDENSATION & MOULD

In the vast majority of cases mould occurs because tenants do not ventilate properties and allow an avoidable build up of moisture. Follow the advice below to avoid this.

What is condensation?

When it occurs and common causes

Condensation forms when warm, moist air comes into contact with cold surfaces such as windows, floors or walls. Condensation occurs mostly during periods of cold weather and can damage decorations, floor covering, clothes and bedding.



Given time, the affected damp areas then attract black mould that grows on the surface. Moisture from kitchens and bathrooms is a major cause and affects other colder parts of the property. Common causes include too much moisture being produced in your home, not enough ventilation and the temperature in your home not being kept on to an even level temperature. Condensation can be reduced by increasing ventilation and reducing the amount of moisture in the air.

Did you know...?

- Cooking and use of the kettle produces 3 litres of moisture per day
- Having a bath or shower produces 1 litre of moisture
- Washing and drying clothes indoors produces 5.5 litres of moisture per day



You can reduce the build up of condensation in your home and lessen its affects by following these simple tips:

- Do not dry washing on radiators
- Dry laundry outside, if that's not possible, use the bathroom with the window open
- Properly vent tumble dryers
- Cover pans and switch off kettles as soon as they have boiled to minimise steam
- Close kitchen and bathroom doors to prevent moisture escaping when cooking or bathing
- Maintain low-level heating such as turning radiators to a frost setting in rooms likely to be unoccupied for prolonged periods of time. Do not use portable gas heaters as they produce very high levels of condensation and are contrary to your Conditions of Tenancy
- Do not block air vents
- Use extractor fans, where provided, when cooking and bathing
- Wipe condensation from windows on a daily basis
- Run cold water first then add the hot water when having a bath, this reduces condensation by up to 90%
- Ventilate rooms daily for at least 30 minutes or use your window vents for long periods
- Keep furniture from direct contact with external walls to prevent dampness occurring



REPAIR WORK DUE TO DAMPNESS CREATED BY YOUR OWN ACTIONS MAY BE CHARGED AS A BREACH OF YOUR CONDITIONS OF TENANCY.



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MOVING OUT OF YOUR PROPERTY



When the time comes to move out of your current accommodation, it doesn't have to be a stressful experience. There are often lots of things to remember to do before moving out, so check out our handy checklist and tips to improve your chances of getting your full deposit back.

MOVING OUT CHECK LIST

- ✓ **TENANCY AGREEMENT** - Check your contract for an end of tenancy procedure and follow it!
- ✓ **CLEANING** - Have a proper deep clean! The property needs to be returned to the landlord in the same condition as when you moved in, except for fair wear and tear. Take dated photos as evidence.
- ✓ **BILLS AND CONTRACTS** - If you pay your utility bills yourself, contact the utility companies and ensure the bills are paid in full. Also let them know the date you will be leaving the property and provide them with a final meter reading on the day you leave. If bills are included in your rent, give the final meter reading to your landlord but keep details for your records.
- ✓ **TV LICENCE** - If you have purchased a TV licence you can get a refund for the summer months if you are not living in the property. Visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk or call 0300 790611.
- ✓ **UNWANTED ITEMS** - Remove all of your unwanted items from the property. Don't forget to recycle or donate.
- ✓ **RUBBISH** - Completely clear the property of waste, including items of food as you may be charged for cleaners to remove it and it could stop you from getting your full deposit back.
- ✓ **RETURN KEYS** - Follow the instructions on your tenancy agreement on how to return the keys to the landlord/agent and ask for a receipt as proof
- ✓ **MAIL** - Use Royal Mail's post redirection service to make sure that confidential post is forwarded to another address of your choice.

YOUR UNWANTED STUFF

Leave
Birmingham
Tidy

Donate reusable unwanted items to the local community. Drop-off points on-campus before the end of academic year. Ask at your students union for details.

SUMMER LETS

We begin to advertise short-term summer lets from April for the summer. All properties are registered with us and are typically available from May/June until end of August or start of September. Check the website for details.



Aston Brook Green, just 10 minutes walk for campus, has many students wanting to sublet for all or part of the summer at very affordable rents. For further details please see - www.astonsu.com/housing/abg/abg_summer/

YOUR NEXT HOME

Rooms in private halls
Studios
Shared houses of all sizes
Homestay (living with the owner)
Individual rooms in properties



www.astonstudenthomes.org

UNHAPPY? WE CAN GIVE YOU HOUSING RIGHTS ADVICE
EVEN IF YOU LIVE IN A PROPERTY THAT IS NOT REGISTERED

Contact The Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) for help with contracts and landlord disputes -

advice@aston.ac.uk
Free & confidential



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GETTING YOUR DEPOSIT BACK

AT THE END OF YOUR TENANCY



Your landlord/agent will inform the deposit protection scheme that the tenancy has come to an end and how much deposit they think should be returned to you. You will then have a choice whether to accept this or dispute it through the deposit protection scheme.

BEST TIP

Email the landlord to report disrepair as this is dated proof of communication which can come in handy if you get into a dispute. Always follow up a phone call with a confirmation email.

WHAT CAN MY LANDLORD CHARGE FOR OUT OF MY DEPOSIT?

RENT ARREARS

If you owe the landlord rent at the end of the tenancy, they can deduct the amount from your deposit.

DAMAGE

If you have caused damage to the property and you have not fixed it. Check your tenancy agreement to understand what maintenance you are responsible for.



TOP TIPS

TO GET BACK YOUR FULL DEPOSIT



INVENTORY - the landlord may provide this at the beginning of the tenancy. Check it and note any damage or faults in the property. If the landlord does not provide one, then send an email detailing the damage/faults.

At the end of the tenancy check the inventory again to make sure nothing is missing or broken. Replace or fix as needed.



REPORT DISREPAIR - always tell the landlord straight away if there are any repairs needed or if there have been breakages, preferably in writing.



CHECK YOUR CONTRACT - for your responsibilities as a tenant and details about things you cannot do such as using Blu-Tac.



CLEAN! - keep the property clean throughout the time that you are renting it and have a proper deep clean at the end of the tenancy.

The property needs to be returned to the landlord in the same condition as when you moved in, except for fair wear and tear.



TAKE FINAL METER READINGS - you don't want to be paying the next tenant's bills!



TAKE DATED PHOTOS - as proof that you've left the property in a good condition.



RETURN KEYS - follow the instructions on your tenancy agreement on how to return the keys to the landlord/agent and ask for a receipt as proof.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE AMOUNT OF DEPOSIT MY LANDLORD WANTS TO RETURN TO ME

The tenancy deposit scheme has an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process for deposit disputes between tenants and landlords/agents. It considers evidence from both sides and will make a final decision on how much deposit will be returned. If the ADR process is not used, then the dispute may go to court.

HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE TO GET MY DEPOSIT BACK

10 DAYS

If you and the landlord agree on the amount of deposit to be returned then you should get the deposit back within 10 days of agreement.

DISPUTE WITH YOUR LANDLORD? ASH CAN HELP



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