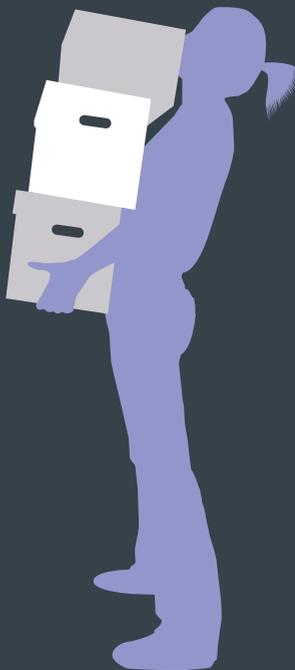


A clear, impartial guide to...

# Renting a property

Tenant | Moving in | Checklist



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# How an RICS member can help you rent a property

This guide has been written by RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) and explains the basic legal and practical issues involved in renting a flat or house. It gives a checklist of the process you will need to go through and also explains how an RICS letting agent can help if you need any professional advice.

**As the world's largest professional body for property professionals, RICS offers clear, impartial, expert advice on renting a property. Using the services of RICS members offers real peace of mind because:**

- They give you clear, impartial and expert advice
- They follow strict rules of conduct – including having insurance to protect you
- RICS members have a specific set of rules and best practice guidance, the Blue Book Residential Property Standards designed to help ensure RICS letting agents provide exceptional service
- RICS members have to update their skills and knowledge throughout their careers, so you can rely on their expertise
- You are protected by a complaints procedure.

Look out for firms that are 'Regulated by RICS' and that follow the standards laid out in the Blue Book. Lettings and managing agent firms that are regulated by RICS will be easier to spot as they will be using 'Regulated by RICS' on their stationery and advertising material.

# The process

Once you have decided on the type of property you are looking to rent, here is the process you need to follow to secure your property:

## 1. Finding a property to rent

There are number of factors to consider before finding a property to rent. These will largely depend on your personal circumstances, location and needs.

## 2. Role of the letting agent

Once you have decided on a property, check the letting agent is an RICS member, the firm is 'Regulated by RICS' and follow the standards laid out in the Blue Book.

## 3. Agreeing the let

Once you have found a suitable property, you will have to agree the terms of the let which will involve some negotiation. On agreement, formal documentation will need to be signed between the landlord and tenant setting out the terms and conditions of the let.

## 4. Moving in

You will not be able to move in until you have paid your deposit, first month's rent and any fees.

# 1. Finding a property to rent

**Whether you have rented before or this is your first time you have rented a home there is a lot to think about:**

## Does the property meet your needs?

Many factors need to be considered, including:

- Cost – how much is the rent and will you need to pay extra for bills?
- Local amenities e.g. shops, doctors, schools etc?
- Infrastructure – are there good transport links e.g. trains, buses etc?
- Size – will the property accommodate your needs e.g. number of bedrooms required?

## What type and length of tenancy should you have?

If the rent on the property is less than £100 000 per year and you do not live with the landlord, the tenancy automatically becomes an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). An AST usually lasts for 6 to 12 months unless you agree a longer fixed term for the tenancy in advance with the landlord.

## What happens at the end of the tenancy?

When the fixed term of the tenancy has expired, the landlord is able to gain back possession of the property provided they give two months written notice to the tenant. In addition, if you owe at least 2 months or 8 weeks rent, the landlord can apply to the court for possession and an order for payment.



## What can you afford?

Before you even look at a property, work out what you can afford by looking at what your basic outgoings are likely to be.

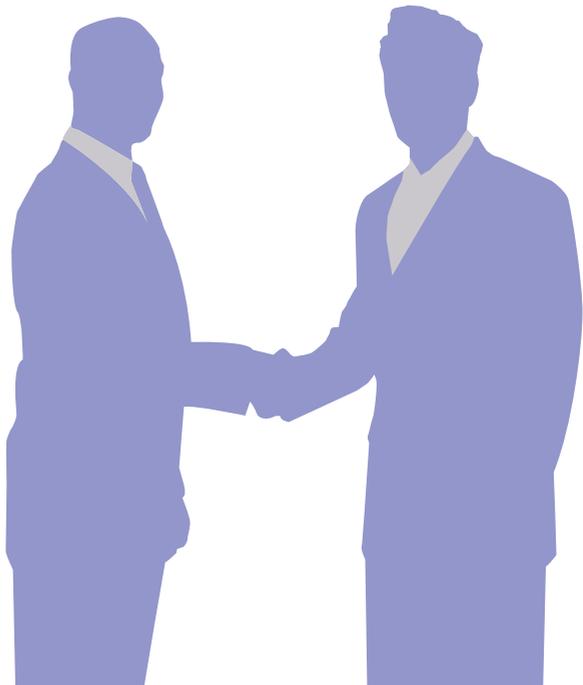
For instance:

The monthly rent	£ _____
The costs of getting your references	£ _____
Inventory and tenancy agreement costs	£ _____
The deposit and any maintenance costs	£ _____
Council tax	£ _____
Water rates, gas, electricity and telephone charges	£ _____
TV licence	£ _____
Insurance for your belongings	£ _____
Total	£ _____

## 2. Role of the letting agent

**You can find property to rent by looking in the rental property section of local newspapers, on property websites or by going to estate and letting agents in the area they are looking to move to. When you find a place to rent, it will be managed either directly by the landlord or more usually by a letting agent.**

Remember the agent is acting for the landlord and has no contractual duty to you. Check whether the agent is an RICS member and they follow the standards laid out in the Blue Book. This will ensure you are dealt with fairly. It is also important to identify whether the agent is a 'sole agent'. If not, other agents may be trying to let the same property.



## 3. Agreeing the let

### When you find a property, before you sign anything you should:

- Look at the property – is it clean, what kind of condition is it in and is anything broken?
- Find out what furniture, furnishings, and other equipment are included in the rent
- Ask about any management and maintenance costs
- Find out what your responsibilities are, such as cleaning or replacing broken furnishings.

### Health and safety requirements

You should check and get assurances or certificates from the landlord that the property complies with these regulations:

- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, amended in 1993
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Smoke Detectors Act 1991, (if the property doesn't have smoke alarms ask if they can be installed)
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994.

Visit the Department for Communities and Local Government website for more information.

In addition, you are advised to check whether electrical appliances have been PAT tested (Portable Appliance Testing) by the landlord.

### References

Once you have found a property, you will need to agree the terms and conditions with the landlord. For these purposes you will need to supply the landlord with relevant information and ensure you sign the necessary paperwork required for renting the property.

Becoming the tenant usually takes anywhere from a few days to three or four weeks.

Before you sign anything, the landlord or agent should provide you with a clear statement of rent, tenancy, deposit and any costs of setting up the tenancy. This includes the administration costs of getting your references. The letting agent will get references by contacting either:

- Your bank
- Credit referencing agencies
- Current and previous employer(s)
- Current and previous landlord(s).

If you are self-employed you may need to provide copies of trading accounts and an accountant's reference. Even if someone is going to be your guarantor you will still need references.

## Tenancy agreement and deposit

Once the letting agent and the landlord has approved your references you can sign the tenancy agreement. Before signing, read and if necessary get professional advice on any documents you are asked to sign. Check the paperwork mentions the following important points:

- Length of tenancy – most lettings are ‘Assured Shorthold Tenancies’
- How often and when to pay rent, as well as any other costs
- What the deposit is – usually either a month’s rent or the equivalent of six weeks rent
- How the deposit will be held. Tenancy Deposit Protection requires anyone holding a tenancy deposit (either a landlord or managing agent) to belong to an authorised scheme which protects the deposit during the tenancy and deals quickly and independently with any dispute over its return at the end of the tenancy.

Your landlord or agent must tell you within 14 days of you handing over the deposit which one of the three authorised schemes your deposit is protected by and provide you with details of the scheme. For more details on the authorised schemes please visit **[www.rics.org/tds](http://www.rics.org/tds)**

You should also agree with your landlord/letting agent:

- How you will get the deposit back at the end of the tenancy
- How much, and who will pay for, work at the end of the tenancy, such as checking the inventory, renewing the agreement or cleaning the property
- The contact details of the manager responsible for the property
- Whether gas, electricity and other services have been connected and that meters have been read.

In addition:

- Your landlord must, by law give you an address in England and Wales where notices relating to the property can be served
- Legislation provides that you will not be discriminated against because of sex, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status or disability.

## 4. Moving in

**You will not be able to move in until you have paid your deposit, first month's rent and any fees. But once on your way, this can be a very exciting time and it's very easy to forget a few important things:**

- Agree the Inventory, which will set out the current condition of the property, the fixtures and fittings and, where applicable, the landlords furniture and other contents. This will help to avoid any disputes at the end of your tenancy
- Insure your own belongings at the property – the landlord's insurance will not provide cover for them
- Make sure you know how all equipment in the property works and you have their manuals
- Find out the telephone number for the various emergency maintenance services
- Tell your gas, electricity, water and telephone companies the day you move in, making your own note of the meter readings
- If you are responsible for Council tax, speak to your local authority
- You may also want to speak to your local Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator or the resident's association if the property is in a block of flats.

### Looking after your rented property

You will need to pay for fixing or replacing any damage to the property while you are renting it, otherwise it comes out of your deposit. So return the property to the landlord at the end of the tenancy in the same condition as at the start, allowing for fair wear and tear.

Remember, if you are away, for whatever reason:

- You still need to pay rent on the right date
- You are responsible for keeping the property secure
- Make sure the property is not damaged by the weather
- Let your insurer and your landlord know so that insurance arrangements can be made
- Give the landlord emergency contact details.

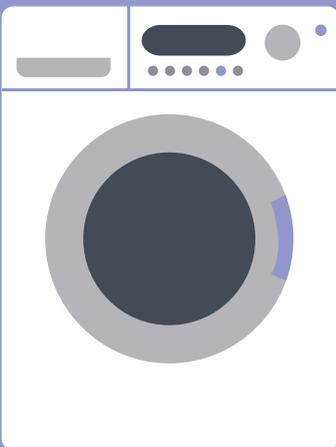
# Energy Performance Certificate

**All homes being let will require an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is broadly similar to the labels now provided with domestic appliances such as refrigerators and washing machines.**

Its purpose is to record how energy efficient a property is as a building. The certificate provides a rating of the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of a building from A to G, where A is very efficient and G is very inefficient.

EPCs are produced using standard methods with standard assumptions about energy usage so that the energy efficiency of one building can easily be compared with another building of the same type. This allows prospective tenants to see information on the energy efficiency and carbon emissions so they can consider energy efficiency and fuel costs as part of their investment

An EPC is always accompanied by a recommendation report that lists cost effective and other measures to improve the energy rating of the home. The certificate is also accompanied by information about the rating that could be achieved if all the recommendations were implemented.



# Tenant's checklist

**Here's a brief summary of the various costs you will have to consider when you rent a property:**

## Insurance

The landlord is most likely to obtain building insurance for the property although it is up to the tenants to insure their personal possessions. It is advisable to check with the landlord what exactly is covered in the policy.

## Letting agent's charges

The letting agent may make an administration charge for processing the application and for completing the relevant paperwork, including the recommended inventory.

## Reference costs

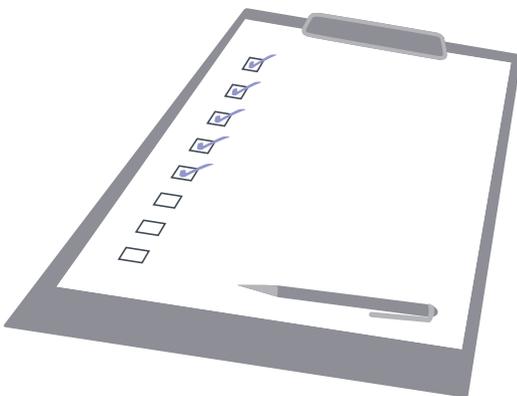
There is likely to be a cost made by the bank in order to undertake the credit checks and references.

## Removal

The cost of moving will vary depending on how many belongings you have and how far you are moving.

## Services

You should not need to pay to have gas, electricity and water reconnected or transferred into your name but there may be a charge for connecting or re-connecting the phone.



## Useful links

Here are some useful websites for advice when you are renting a property:

**Royal Institution  
of Chartered Surveyors**

[www.rics.org/renting](http://www.rics.org/renting)

**Department for Communities  
and Local Government**

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)  
[www.propertylicence.gov.uk](http://www.propertylicence.gov.uk)

**Inland Revenue**

[www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)

**Local councils**

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

**Residential Property  
Tribunal Service**

[www.rpts.gov.uk/](http://www.rpts.gov.uk/)

**Tenancy Deposit Schemes  
The Dispute Service**

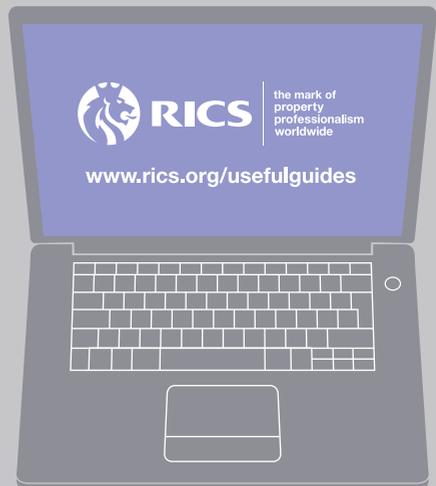
[www.tds.gb.com](http://www.tds.gb.com)

**mydeposits**

[www.mydeposits.co.uk](http://www.mydeposits.co.uk)

**The Deposit Protection Scheme**

[www.depositprotection.com](http://www.depositprotection.com)



# Free RICS guides



RICS have a range of free guides available for the property issues listed below.

- Buying a home
- Selling your home
- Property surveys
- Extending your home
- Subsidence
- Boundary disputes
- Party walls
- Right to light
- Compulsory purchase

- Letting a property
- Renting a property
- Flooding
- Property auctions
- Buying and selling art and antiques at auction

To order your free copies, visit [www.rics.org/usefulguides](http://www.rics.org/usefulguides)

alternatively email [contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)

or call the RICS Contact Centre  
**0870 333 1600**

## For more information

We hope this guide is useful to you. If you'd like to know more about renting a property, or how RICS can help, please contact us.

Visit our website  
[www.rics.org/renting](http://www.rics.org/renting)

alternatively email  
[contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)

or call the RICS Contact Centre  
**0870 333 1600**

## Consumer helplines

RICS offers telephone helplines giving you 30 minutes free advice on:

- Boundary disputes
- Party walls
- Compulsory purchase

Just call **0870 333 1600** and you will be put in touch with an RICS member local to you, willing to provide a free 30 minute initial consultation. Lines are open 0830 – 1730 (GMT), Monday to Friday.

## Find an RICS member

If you want to find independent, impartial advice from a qualified professional with good local knowledge, contact us.

Look out for firms that are 'Regulated by RICS'. Estate agents and surveying firms that are regulated by RICS will be easier to spot as they will be using 'Regulated by RICS' on their stationery and advertising material.

To find a chartered surveyor in your area visit  
[www.ricsfirms.com](http://www.ricsfirms.com)

alternatively email  
[contactrics@rics.org](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)

or call the RICS Contact Centre  
**0870 333 1600**



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**Advancing standards in land, property and construction.**

RICS is **the world's leading qualification** when it comes to professional standards in land, property and construction.

In a world where more and more people, governments, banks and commercial organisations demand greater certainty of **professional standards and ethics**, attaining RICS status is the recognised **mark of property professionalism**.

Over **100 000 property professionals** working in the major established and emerging economies of the world have already recognised the importance of securing RICS status by becoming members.

RICS is an **independent** professional body originally established in the UK by Royal Charter. Since 1868, RICS has been committed to setting and upholding the **highest standards of excellence and integrity** – providing **impartial, authoritative advice** on key issues affecting businesses and society.

RICS is a **regulator** of both its individual members and firms enabling it to **maintain the highest standards** and providing the basis for **unparalleled client confidence** in the sector.

RICS has a worldwide network. For further information simply contact the relevant RICS office or our Contact Centre.

Your local RICS member

