



# YOUR GUIDE TO STUDENT HOUSE- HUNTING

warwick  
**SU** students' union  
advice centre  
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All you need to know about house-hunting

[warwicksu.com/housing](http://warwicksu.com/housing)

# YOUR GUIDE TO HOUSE-HUNTING

Check out our Housing pages online at [warwicksu.com/housing](http://warwicksu.com/housing) for more info.

Relax, take your time, and make a good, informed choice. There are lots of houses available and plenty of time to find a suitable place!












## PLANNING IS EVERYTHING

Making a well-informed accommodation choice is vitally important. A poor or hurried choice could mean a difficult year.

Points to consider include:

-  **Who** am I going to live with?
-  **Where** do I want to live?
-  How much will it **cost**?
-  **What type** of property do I want?

## Important points to be aware of when house-hunting:

-  **Don't be pressurised** into renting the first house you see. If you have any doubts, don't take it.
-  The **supply of houses exceeds demand** and no-one will end up homeless. Act as a consumer: negotiate on price and don't accept poor quality.
-  Your **friendship group may change** or someone may have to drop out. Be aware that as soon as a group signs a joint contract, everyone in the group is responsible for all the obligations of the tenancy.
-  Once you have signed for a fixed-term tenancy it is extremely difficult to end it early.
-  Your deposits must be protected in an **authorised Deposit Protection Scheme** and you must be given the prescribed information within 30 days of paying it.
-  Before you sign a **contract**, have it **checked** by the Students' Union Advice Centre.
-  When you are asked to **pay any money** by a landlord / agent:
  -  Know what the payment is for.
  -  If you are being asked to pay large sums of money or several months' rent in advance – get advice.
  -  If possible, make the payment by **bank transfer**.
  -  Get a **proper receipt**.

# RENTING ACCOMMODATION

Looking for accommodation might seem like a big challenge, but there is plenty of support - the **Students' Union Advice Centre team** can help you.






Remember, with planning and care it need not be stressful. It is important to understand the options available to you, and the rights you have depend on the option you choose.

Students at Warwick University will generally choose accommodation that falls into the following categories:

## PRIVATE RENTED: ASSURED SHORTHOLD TENANCY

Most accommodation with a private landlord, where the landlord is not living at the property, will be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, regardless of what the contract says. There are certain statutory terms implied into every contract for an Assured Shorthold and these terms cannot be excluded.



The main rights of an **ASSURED SHORTHOLD TENANCY** are:

-  To live in your accommodation for a fixed period of time – for students this is usually for 10-11 months, or it might be a periodic tenancy continuing from month to month.
-  You have a right to certain information when you pay your deposit and at the beginning of the tenancy.
-  You control your home so that you can stop other people from freely entering. If the landlord does not respect this right, s/he might be in breach of your right to quiet enjoyment.
-  There are statutory and common law rights for certain repairs.
-  The landlord cannot force you to leave your accommodation until s/he gets a court order to evict you.

## WARWICK ACCOMMODATION

In addition to their campus accommodation, they also have off campus-managed properties available to all students. There are many advantages to renting a property from **Warwick Accommodation**, though as a tenant you have less legal protections than renting privately. Full details at [warwick.ac.uk/accommodation](http://warwick.ac.uk/accommodation)

## LIVING WITH A RESIDENT LANDLORD

-  You **share accommodation** with your landlord, or
-  You live in the **same building** as your landlord and share accommodation with a member of your landlord's family.








If this describes your accommodation, then you are likely to be what is known as an **excluded occupier**, and have very limited rights, without the legal protections that most tenants have.

If you start to have problems with your accommodation, it is important that you get advice and find out what your rights are. Generally as an excluded occupier your only right is to stay until your landlord asks you to go, or for as long as your written agreement/contract says.

# LOOKING FOR OFF-CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION



Looking for accommodation can be a little daunting and finding the right housing for the year can make all the difference to your experience as a student.

## HOW TO START LOOKING FOR ACCOMMODATION

-  Where do you want to live?  
Coventry, Leamington or Kenilworth?
-  Are you looking to rent a house as a group, or do you want to live on your own? If you are going to share, get the group together and talk about the types of things that are important to everyone. If you differ in opinion it may be better to form a new group.
-  Look for available properties that meet your criteria.
-  View as many properties as possible and use the checklist provided to assess the condition of the house.
-  If there are people living there, ask questions and find out what they think about living in the property.
-  Once you have made your choice, keep calm and do not rush into signing the contract – get it checked by the **Students' Union Advice Centre**.
-  Be clear about the costs involved and what the landlord / agent's process is.

## FINDING A PRIVATE LANDLORD

Landlords rent out their properties through agents. It is important to know how much you are going to be charged in arrangement fees by the landlord or agent, and that they are going to manage the property properly. If you are unsure about how your prospective landlord / agent deals with you then think about choosing another one. If the initial contact is not good, how is s/he going deal with you if anything goes wrong?

-  Talk to other students to find out if they know of a good landlord, or take a walk around the area you want live in and see which agents are there.
-  The **Students' Union Advice Centre** has info on student-friendly landlords and agents.
-  There are rooms advertised on the Students' Union Housemates Wanted Forum at [warwicksu.com/housemateswanted](http://warwicksu.com/housemateswanted)

**WHERE TO LIVE?** The main areas Warwick University students live in are:

### COVENTRY

There are many areas within Coventry where students live, eg:  
Earlsdon, Cannon Park, Canley, Tile Hill

### KENILWORTH

A small town about 3 miles from the campus that has lots of amenities and is easily reached from campus by bus.





### LEAMINGTON SPA

A large town that is very popular with students. There are good bus links. The journey takes about 30 minutes but can be longer at busy times.

Wherever you think you want to live, we recommend you visit several areas so you can make an informed decision, and choose the location that is right for you.




# ONCE YOU HAVE FOUND A PROPERTY YOU LIKE, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The landlord / agent will expect you to sign the tenancy agreement / contract and pay the deposit. Don't be rushed or pressurised into this:

-  Make sure before signing the contract that you understand it, and know what it means. The contract should make sense and be easy to understand.
-  Most accommodation will be offered as an Assured Shorthold Tenancy where the landlord will not be living at the property. This type of tenancy gives you the most security of tenure and protection.
-  If you have a resident landlord, then you will have less protection than if you have an assured shorthold tenancy.
-  If you have an assured shorthold tenancy your deposit must be protected within 30 days of you paying it.

If you have any questions or need to understand your contract better, make an appointment to see one of the Advisors in the **Students' Union Advice Centre**.

## WARNING!

-  Beware of landlords/agents who do not comply with all the statutory requirements; make sure you know your legal rights before agreeing to anything. Not all landlords/agents are honest and have integrity. We would caution about using social networking sites to find accommodation.
-  If you have any questions, make sure you ask them – if you are not happy with the landlord/agent's reply, look for somewhere else. There is other accommodation available.
-  Landlords/agents will need to check your identity or visa status as part of the 'Right to Rent' process. Find out if the landlord is going to charge you for performing this check. **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PASSPORT WITH ANYONE.**

Unfortunately there are a small number of landlords who take advantage of all students and particularly target international students. We are keen to help students avoid problems. If you are having problems with your landlord/agent, please come and talk to us – the **Students' Union Advice Centre**.

## THE STUDENTS' UNION ADVICE CENTRE IS HERE TO HELP

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or want your contract checked. For opening times, please check the SU website.

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# SIGNING ACCOMMODATION CONTRACTS







When you **sign a contract** it forms a **legally binding agreement** between you and the landlord. The contract is not just the final document but can include all the discussions and information you have been given prior to signing the tenancy agreement. It is possible to have a verbal contract, but **if it is not in writing it may be hard to prove!** If you want a contract check, please make an appointment to see an Advisor.

*The following information is for people living in private rented accommodation, but not for people living with a resident landlord or University Accommodation.*

Most student accommodation is let for a **fixed period of time with no break clause**, which means once you have signed it you will have a contractual obligation to pay all the rent for the length of the tenancy.

## BEFORE YOU SIGN

Make sure:

-  You have seen the property.
-  Your group is one that will 'work' if you are signing a joint tenancy – if someone drops out and stops paying their rent, the remaining tenants may be asked to pay it.
-  You have read and understood the contract.
-  The address, names, dates and amounts to be paid are correct, and it says what you have agreed.
-  If the landlord/agent has promised certain work will be done before you move in, make sure the details of the work form part of your contract.
-  That everyone understands the contract and their obligations.

Most tenancy agreements are subject to implied terms from statute and common law, which cannot be contracted out of.

**REMEMBER:** If you're unsure, don't sign the contract until you have had further advice/information.




**Don't be pressured into signing.**

## ONCE YOU SIGN

Before the tenancy starts the landlord/agent must give you the **Government 'How to Rent' Guide**, an up-to-date **gas safety certificate** and an **EPC certificate**.

## DEPOSIT PROTECTION

Once you have paid your deposit, it must be protected within 30 days with a UK government-backed tenancy deposit scheme (for details of schemes see [warwicksu.com/deposits](http://warwicksu.com/deposits)) and your landlord or agent must provide you with the required prescribed information:

-  The landlord's name & address.
-  The deposit amount paid and the address of the tenancy
-  Information on the tenancy deposit protection scheme including a signed copy of the deposit protection certificate, how to get the deposit back and what happens if there's a dispute.

If the deposit is not protected there are legal proceedings you can take to make sure it is protected.

If you **can't agree** deposit deductions with the landlord/agent when you move out, the **deposit protection schemes** provide a mediation or an **alternate dispute resolution service**.

# OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

## AGENT FEES

Only pay a fee to a private agent if you find and rent a property through them – and don't pay too much! Letting agents must also belong to one of three government-approved redress schemes that you can use if the agent fails to solve a complaint.

## CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

As well as rent, there will be bills on top for heating, insurance, travel costs, internet etc. Draw up a budget of all the likely costs and make sure that it is affordable.






## FIRE SAFETY

Try and satisfy yourself that the property is not a fire hazard and that you can safely escape from it if there was a fire. All of the soft furniture must contain fire safety labelling. Integrated smoke alarms and fire door(s) should normally be fitted in larger licensed properties.

## GAS SAFETY

Faulty gas appliances can leak carbon monoxide (CO) – **which can kill**.

CO is an odourless, colourless gas which is hard to detect without a CO alarm. Ask if an alarm is installed and look for the clues:

-  Sooting or staining on or around appliances.
-  Excessive condensation in the room where the appliance is installed.
-  Lazy yellow/orange coloured flame.
-  A strange smell when the appliance is on.
-  Rusting or water streaking on the appliance, vent or chimney.

## WATER CHARGES

Check who is responsible for paying the water charges. Is it the landlord or you?

## GROUP SIZE

Large groups (7-8 or more) may find it difficult to find a suitable house. We have found that the cost per room for a 4 bedroom house is cheaper than a room in a bigger house, and there are more 4 and 5 bedroom houses available than any other size. Consider splitting a large group and getting two smaller houses close to each other.

## HOW MUCH ARE YOU PAYING?

Work out the total amount of rent you will pay for the property. Very roughly this should normally be in the range £2,900 to £4,700 per person for the whole period you are renting. If you are paying more than this you should be getting exceptional quality and standards. Not sure about this? – get advice from the **Students' Union Advice Centre**.

## INSURANCE

Make sure your personal possessions are properly insured. Check and see whether your insurance will cover items left in the house when you are away at Christmas or Easter.

## TV LICENCE

You will need a **TV licence** if you watch or record live TV. The current cost of a licence is **£145.50**. Normally you will need only one licence for the whole house if you are joint tenants and do not have individual contracts – if you are unsure about this, get advice. For further information, see the **TV Licensing website**.

Good accommodation and group choices can make the difference between a fantastic year and the year from hell.

**GOOD LUCK HOUSE-HUNTING!**



