

# Want to rent a room or flat?

*Here is some useful information and some questions you might want to ask.*

Topic	Questions to ask	Information
Rent	How much is the rent? Is it monthly or weekly? On which day of the month is it due?	
Lease	How long is the lease? How much notice do I have to give if I want to leave? What happens if I want to leave before the end of the lease? Why did the previous tenants leave?	Most leases in Edinburgh are for 6 months.
Agency Fees	I have heard that it is illegal for letting agencies and landlords to charge fees as a condition of their tenancy. Is that true?	It is ILLEGAL for landlords or letting agencies to charge any fees as a condition of letting a property to you. <a href="http://www.reclaimyourfees.com/#unlawful">http://www.reclaimyourfees.com/#unlawful</a>
HMO (House of Multiple Occupancy)	Does the flat have an HMO licence? For how many people?	Landlords who rent to 3 or more individuals (strangely, a couple or a family count as 1 individual) must have an HMO licence if it is the main home of those people. HMO licenced properties must comply with many regulations (such as fire doors, fire alarms and adequate space).
Inventory	Do we go through the inventory together? How can I hang pictures on the wall?	An inventory is a list of items (and the condition they are in) that are in the property when you move in. You should be given this the day you move in. You have 7 days to change anything you disagree with before you give it back to the landlord/letting agency. Take photos of any marks, stains, cracks, scratches, dents, broken things, things not working properly, missing handles on furniture, chipped paint, etc. Most letting agents and landlords are honest, but don't give anyone a chance to keep your deposit unfairly! You should also take a photo of the gas and electric meter readings when you move in.
Deposit	How much is the deposit? When do I have to pay the deposit? Do I have to pay a holding deposit? For what reasons would you deduct money from my deposit when I move out?	Landlords must be registered with Landlord Registration Scotland. Landlords and letting agents cannot keep your deposit in their bank account. They must register it with a Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS). There are 3 TDSs in Scotland. When you move out, if the landlord wants to deduct money from your deposit (and you disagree), the TDS will mediate. <a href="https://www.safedepositsscotland.com/tenant-information">https://www.safedepositsscotland.com/tenant-information</a> A <b>holding deposit</b> is a small amount of money (usually around £250) you pay to show that you are committed to leasing the flat. The landlord/agency should then not lease it to anyone else. If you change your mind, they must return your deposit to you. <b>Warning!</b> Be careful who you pay your deposit to. There are some scams where someone pretends to be the landlord, takes a deposit, and then you never see them again. Better to pay into a bank account than paying by cash. Get a receipt!
Council Tax	What council tax band is it? What share of the council tax do I have to pay?	2013/2014 Council Tax rates <a href="http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/607/council_tax_banding/518/council_tax_banding_and_charges">http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/607/council_tax_banding/518/council_tax_banding_and_charges</a>

Heating	Does the flat have gas central heating? How does the heating system work? Is there instant hot water?	Gas central heating is the best. Electric storage heaters are not as good. Electric heaters are usually more expensive to run.
Gas and Electric	How much do I have to pay for gas and electric? Are fuel bills included in the rent? Who (which company) supplies the gas and electricity?	You can use a price comparison site to try to find a cheaper company. <a href="http://www.moneysupermarket.com/gas-and-electricity/">http://www.moneysupermarket.com/gas-and-electricity/</a>
Telephone Internet	Is there Wi-Fi in the flat? Who (which company) is the Internet Service Provider? How much does the internet cost? Is there a land line? What is the internet speed?	Consider saving money by not having a land line. How often do you use it anyway? Many people call their family using Skype. Be careful when agreeing to internet/phone contracts – there is usually a charge for ending the contract early.
TV Licence	Is there a TV Licence for the flat? Do I have to pay a contribution towards it?	TV Licences are required if you watch <i>live</i> TV. If you only watch pre-recorded programmes on your computer, you do not need a TV licence. <a href="http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/">http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/</a>
Noise and neighbours	Are there any noisy neighbours? (To the neighbour: Hi there, I am thinking of moving into the flat next door/downstairs. Is this a nice building/block/stair to live in? Are there any really noisy neighbours?).	If you are thinking of renting a flat, knock on the doors of the neighbours to find out who will be living around you. If you like to go to bed early, find out what time the upstairs neighbours go to bed! Even walking on a hard floor above your head can keep you awake at night! Be nice to your downstairs neighbours and don't wear shoes in your flat.
Windows	Are the windows double glazed?	Double glazing makes the property quieter and cheaper to heat.
Shower	How good is the shower?	Turn the shower on and check how powerful it is. British showers have a bad reputation!
Sunlight	Which direction does <i>this room/the garden</i> face?	Sun makes us all feel happy! Think about where north is as very little light will come from there! South-facing gardens are the sunniest.
The landlord	(To current tenants: What is the landlord/letting agency like? Do they fix/replace things quickly? What was the last thing that went wrong in the flat? How did the landlord/letting agency deal with it?)	
Flatmates	Who lives in the flat? Where are they from? Do they speak English? Are they sociable or do they 'keep to themselves'? Are the other tenants students or working people? Do they stay up late or go to bed early?	Try to find English-speaking flatmates – your English will improve so much faster!
Appliances	Is there a washer/dryer or just a washing machine? Is there a dishwasher?	
Cleanliness	Is there a flat cleaning rota? How do you sort out (organise) when the bathroom/hall floor gets cleaned?	
Waste	What do we do with our rubbish? When/where does the recycling get picked up?	Recycling in Edinburgh is complicated and the services depend on your area. <a href="http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/1054/rubbish_and_recycling">http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/1054/rubbish_and_recycling</a>

Garden	Is there a garden (or access to a garden)? In which direction does it face? (Does it get the sun?)	
Bikes	Is there somewhere to store bikes? Where can I chain my bike up?	

**Edinburgh City Council has an advice service for both landlords and tenants. If you have any difficulties, contact them for advice:**

Private Rented Services

Level 3, East Wing, Chesser House, 500 Gorgie Road, Edinburgh, EH11 3YJ

Tel: 0131 529 7454

Fax: 0131 529 7960

Email: [letwise@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:letwise@edinburgh.gov.uk)