

## **Who is responsible?**

There is often confusion as to what the landlord is responsible for and what the tenant is responsible for. Many tenants assume all Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreements (AST) are 'standard' and the same – they aren't – please read them.

It is vital that tenants read through their tenancy in detail (even small print) to ensure they fully understand their rights, responsibilities and restrictions.

We have taken the time to listen to our tenants and below are some of the most common queries.

### **Window Cleaning**

It is tenant's responsibility to ensure their home is kept clean and tidy. This includes cleaning the windows unless otherwise agreed with the landlord before the tenancy commences.

### **Changing of light bulbs**

Tenants are fully responsible for changing the light bulbs and leaving the property with the same working light bulbs as when they moved in.

### **Replacement of Smoke & CO Alarm batteries**

Despite landlords having a duty of care to ensure smoke alarms are working in properties, where batteries can be replaced easily the tenant should do as soon as the warning alarm sounds. Tenants should also test the smoke alarms on a weekly basis and report any concerns to the letting agent or landlord immediately.

### **Many rodent issue (mainly rats and mice)**

Tenants often believe that mice and rat infestations are down to the landlord to control – this is often not the case! In many instances, the tenant is more than likely to be responsible for managing the rodent situation, which may include paying for a professional to visit the property.

### **Managing some condensation issues**

Older properties especially are prone to condensation issues. Often, tenants opening windows and allowing fresh airflow throughout the property can resolve many minor issues.

### **Garden and lawn maintenance**

Tenants are responsible when moving into a property for maintaining the gardens and cutting the grass. A landlord will be within their rights to contact the tenant if the grass and gardens are not maintained appropriately. In the summer months this can mean cutting lawns 1-2 times per week.

### **Replacement keys when lost**

Although many landlords and lettings agents will try to provide spare copies of keys when a tenant loses a key, it is the tenant's responsibility to deal with this and a landlord is within their right to demand the tenant pays for locks to be changed if keys are frequently lost as this is deemed as a security risk.

### **Before move in**

Your landlord or letting agent should provide you with a tenancy agreement prior to the day of occupation, allowing you sufficient time to read it thoroughly and take any advice or raise queries before the tenancy commences. You should also be provided with a copy of the EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) ideally prior to the tenancy commencing or at least have access to view the front page and the details of the chosen tenancy deposit scheme's prescribed information.

### **Insurance**

The Tenant is warned that the Landlord's policy does not cover their possessions. A Tenant should hold adequate insurance to protect against accidental damage caused by the Tenant to the Landlords Fixtures and Fittings at the Premises as described in the Check-in Inventory and Schedule of Condition. The Tenant should consider their need for Insurance to cover their own personal possessions

### **At move in**

All tenants should ensure their agent or landlord take meter readings with the tenant on the day the tenancy commences. Ideally, you should sign to confirm these meter readings are accurate. You must also receive a copy of in-date gas safety record on the day of move in. Any agent who is managing a property should compare the inventory of the property on the day the tenancy starts.

**Decoration/Change**

So many bond/deposit issues that landlord and tenant disagree on are to do with works that tenants have carried out on properties. Many landlords say at the initial viewing that the tenant can 'make the home their own' and tenants may see this as a consent to decorate. The key is to get everything in writing whether this be in a letter, email or fax, all of these are fine as long as the landlord has signed to approve consent and any specifics.

**Going away?**

If you are going away during winter you should maintain the central heating on a low or normal setting to maintain a temperature of between 55/60 degrees F and leave the trap door to roof space open to stop pipes from freezing. If your property has flat paneled electric heaters, do not switch these off at the wall, as this can flatten the integral battery and you may be held liable for the cost of replacing it. Use the thermostat or on/off rocker switch on the side of the heater instead. On returning to the property after a period of absence (such as a holiday or student accommodation left empty) tenants should run all taps for at least two minutes.

**Build relationships with your landlords**

There is sometimes a stigma attached to landlords, that they are not interested in maintaining their property or speaking to their tenants. As this may be unfortunately true in some instances, we find the majority of landlords are more than happy to protect their investment and are keen to assist with maintenance and upkeep of the properties. Landlords also normally want their tenants to stay in the property for a number of years and enjoy the property, rather than move on after the first six months. As a tenant you are responsible for reporting faults, if you don't report a small leak, which eventually brings the ceiling through, you could even be responsible and liable for repairs! Honest, reliable tenants are hugely favoured by landlords, and you will often find a landlord more willing to invest even more in the property to keep such tenants there for as long as possible.

**Read your tenancy agreement!**

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