

# Top Tips for Tenants!



Top tips from the Students' Union to  
ensure your tenancy runs smoothly

# Moving in....

Moving house can be exciting, exhausting and confusing! Read your contract thoroughly before signing.... There is likely to be an inventory of everything in the house. Many houses will come fully furnished, some part furnished, others unfurnished. Make sure you know what you'll need when moving in.... does it come with a kettle?

## **Check your inventory**

Before you start unloading your belongings, take time to wander through the house with the inventory and a camera, making notes and taking photographs of anything that is damaged. In every room take pictures highlighting any areas of damage, staining or cause for concern. One of the most common reasons for disputes about returning deposits at the end of a tenancy is cleanliness, especially in kitchens and bathrooms. At the end of the tenancy the photos you took will help you prove the condition the house was in when you moved in. Not only should you keep a copy but you should either send or email a copy to your landlord or agent.

## **Electricity, Gas & Water**

As soon as you arrive at the property, make a note of the gas, electricity and water (for some) meter readings. Usually they are located under stairs or in hallways. If you can't find them check your inventory for their location or ask your letting agent or landlord.

## **Council Tax**

As a full-time student living in a student household you are not liable to pay Council Tax. However you must prove that you are a full-time student. To do this, visit: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk) and fill out the online form with the details of all your housemates. If you're a full-time student at Sussex or Brighton University, your registration number should prove your status.

## **Alarms**

Smoke, Gas, Fire Alarm: you should check all these are working. Again they are all basic simple things, but can be of paramount importance when it comes to your safety. Ideally they should be connected to the main electricity supply, however if they are battery operated it is an investment, not a cost, to replace the batteries for new ones. They will last a year at least.

## **TV license**

If you will be watching live programmes on a computer or TV set you'll need to get a TV license. If you get caught without one (and you probably will), you can end up with a big fine and criminal record. Visit [www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk) for details.

## **Insurance**

Think about taking out contents insurance or find out if you are covered by your parents' policy, particularly if you are keeping valuable electrical goods at the property. Your landlord won't reimburse you for any theft or damage!

## **Introduce yourselves to your neighbours**

Go and say hello! Knowing your neighbours is a good thing. You feed their cat for the weekend, they let you borrow the lawnmower (in an ideal world anyway!)

# Harmony in the Household

If you have chosen a house or your housemates, it might be helpful to have a formal discussion before you start living together, covering each person's expectations about various household issues including:

## Cleaning

Creating a plan might be a good idea to make sure everybody does their part and make sure there's a shared agreement on hygiene. Is it OK to leave your dishes in the sink for 3 days, or should people wash up immediately? Be clear about who does what housework and how regularly. A cleaning rota for communal areas is a good idea. You should decide between yourselves what needs to be done and how often.

It goes without saying, you should clean up after yourself as you go and leave each room how you would expect to find it. (That means removing your ball of hair from the bath plug after a shower and cleaning up after yourself when you've been cooking) There's nothing worse than not being able to get the kettle under the water tap because the sink is piled high with someone else's dirty dishes..... Grrrrr!

Below is a cleaning template. You may live in a 6 bedroom house with 3 bathrooms and a garden, so customise it to the needs of your household.

### Kitchen

Week 1

Dave

Wipe down all surfaces

Wipe cupboard doors

Clean out Microwave

Clean rubbish & recycling bins

Clean sink & draining board

Wipe down cooker top

Clean grill-pan & line with foil

sweep & mop the floor

### Bathroom

Week 1

Zhi Peng

Clean bathtub (and plughole!)

Wipe down tiles

Recycle empty bottles

Clean shower screen/curtain

Thoroughly clean toilet, Use the toilet brush and bleach/ toilet cleaner

Clean sink, taps, toothbrush holders and splatters from the mirror

Sweep & mop the floor

### Lounge, Hallways & Stairs

Week 1

Sara

Plump up sofa cushions & Hoover up any crumbs slipped down the sides

Wipe down tables and ledges

Recycle any old newspapers

Hoover everywhere

## Sharing food or other stuff

You need to decide if you want to have a shared cash fund to pay for food in general or simply for shared things like toilet paper. It might also be helpful to have an understanding of what food is ok to be shared and what is not. A labelling system might be helpful where you write down on a sticker whose food it is and what day it went in the fridge - this helps the fridge stay clean too.

## Visitors or partners

Different people can have different ideas about what is acceptable in terms of how often visitors and/or partners are around, so it's useful to discuss these details in advance. It might also be useful to have discussions about issues such as whether or not others can have their own key, and whether or not the partner contributes money towards utilities or food if they're over a lot of the time.

## Utility bills

Have a clear strategy for paying bills from the start - whose responsibility is it? How are payments made? Who should be responsible for collecting money and making payments for shared bills (gas, electric, TV Licence etc), Assuming you do split the bills fairly, they're likely to cost each person about £50 a month (though this will vary depending on the number of people in your house, how much you consume, and the number of bills you have to pay).

It's a good idea to split the bills up amongst yourselves. Paying by direct debit for some utilities also reduces the cost. Keep a 'House Folder' with all the bills in, with details of who paid what and when. Visit [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk) for some handy hints about how to keep bills to a minimum - and do the environment a good turn in the process!

## Respect

Remember that respect is a two way process. If you respect your housemates then they are more likely to respect you too. This means accepting that you will arrive at University having had different life experiences and you may have differences of opinion sometimes. Those differences do not need to be a source of conflict and if you are able to keep an open mind then you will find it much easier to live with others.

There will be times when all of you will want to use the bathroom / TV / oven at the same time. Remember that you all have an equal right to the space that you share, so don't expect that your rights will take priority. When negotiating, make sure you ask yourself how important it is that you cook dinner at that exact moment. If it can wait until later then it's probably not worth getting into conflict over it. Even for the most easy-going of people, living in a shared environment can sometimes be a struggle. Problems do arise from time to time and it is worth remembering that confronting things quickly and directly is often the best approach.

## Noise

Some people like getting up early, others prefer to stay up late. Nuisance caused by noise is often the biggest cause of complaints from other housemates and neighbours. To help minimise the effect of noise position stereos, TVs, computers etc. away from adjacent walls and don't put speakers directly on the floor.

## Be a good neighbour

Brighton and Hove is a fairly small city with an enormous student population! So when you move into a local community it's important to establish good relationships with your neighbours. Don't be shy... introduce yourself to your neighbours. This will help establish and build a positive relationship. Your neighbours are a source of useful information about your local area and they may also be able to help keep an eye on your house during weekends and holidays.

It's understandable that there will occasionally be noise coming from yours and your neighbours' properties, but it's important to understand the need for peace and quiet too.

Please treat others around you as you would like to be treated and consider that your neighbours may have young children, there may be older people living in your street or your neighbour might be another student with an important exam the next day! Also most people will have to get up for work early in the morning, so won't want to be kept awake by noise during the night. When coming home late at night, keep voices down and be careful not to slam car doors or front doors.

### Having a party?

Although you may wish to have the occasional party or gathering, please be aware that if yours or your guest's actions impact negatively on those around you (for example if neighbours are disturbed by noise) then this may generate complaints to the council or your landlord or letting agent.

Be considerate and ensure that you let your neighbours know about your party giving plenty of notice (remember that making your neighbours aware beforehand, does not mean that it's OK to make excessive noise until an unreasonable time). Let your neighbours know when your party will start and expect to finish and stick to that time. Keep the music down and keep regular checks on noise levels, especially the bass! Leave them a telephone number to contact if they need to ask you to turn it down.

If you get on well with your neighbours, why not invite them too? When it comes to the party itself, stick to your agreed arrangements and ask your guests to be considerate when leaving.

## Tenants' Responsibilities

As a tenant you should expect to be treated fairly, but you also have to keep your side of the bargain, and that means showing consideration, not just for your landlord and neighbours, but also for the property you're renting and the local environment.

### Take care

You have a legal duty to ensure that your house and its fixtures and fittings are treated with care and kept in good condition. As a tenant you're also responsible for day-to-day maintenance like replacing light bulbs, defrosting fridges/freezers etc. If you fail to do any of this, or if you or your visitors cause damage, you can be held responsible for repair or replacement - and it's worth remembering that your landlord can deduct the cost from your deposit. For example: If the carpet becomes a little thin, it's fair wear and tear and you shouldn't be charged for this - if you burn a hole in it, you'll probably have to pay for it.

### Pay your rent on time

Pay your rent as stated in your tenancy agreement and let your landlord know if you have difficulty making a payment on the due date. If you regularly fall into arrears, you may find yourself liable for extra charges. Unless your agreement states otherwise, you'll also be responsible for paying all utility bills (gas, electricity, water, telephone) for the period of your tenancy.

### Do's & Don'ts:

- Don't think about carrying out any alterations to your house without asking your landlord, e.g.
  - You may like turquoise walls, but the landlord may not.
  - Your tumble-drier is located where it is for a reason!
- Report breakages and problems to the landlord as soon as they arise
- Allow the landlord access to the property for the purpose of inspections or carrying out repairs when sufficient notice has been given.
- Give proper notice to your landlord when you wish to leave the property
- Heat the property adequately. If you go away during the winter leaving the property unoccupied, you may need to ensure the heating is left on a timer to keep the place warm. A burst water pipe may flood your home and be your responsibility to fix.
- Open windows and ventilate regularly. Mildew on the walls and windows is usually caused by poor ventilation (as well as wet clothes on radiators and steam from the shower).
- Don't pour fat down the sink! It solidifies as it chills, which can block your pipes or drains.
- Only put toilet paper in the toilet.
- Don't put hot pans on the kitchen work surfaces and always use a chopping board.
- If you have a garden, don't let it overgrow... you'll appreciate it in summer!

# Budgeting

There are certain periods in our lives that we'd all rather not go through, yet inevitably will. What goes hand in hand with being a student is the promise that at some point during your degree, you will be absolutely skint and foraging through your kitchen for any loose bits of pasta or bread. People generally can't budget until they're forced to, so it's worth working out in advance how you will cross that bridge when you come to it.

## Budgeting your rent

At Sussex Student Lettings, if your property is managed by us, you can pay the rent to us quarterly in line with your loan payments, to make it easier to control your income. We would hold the money in our account and release it to the landlord monthly.

## The Basics

Get online. If you bank online you can easily see your balance and any ingoing/outgoings at a glance. You can also arrange your direct debits/standing orders and cancel cheques. Visit: [www.sussexstudent.com/advice](http://www.sussexstudent.com/advice) and look at their 'Living costs and budgeting tips' section.

## Know your income

Know how much money you have coming in each month from your loan and other sources such as a job, parental assistance, bursaries and grants.

## Know your expenditure

Subtract from your income any fixed regular outgoings to obtain the amount you have left: things like accommodation, gas, electricity, water, internet, tv license and phone contract. Divide this by the number of weeks per term/year to obtain the figure for the maximum you have left to spend each week. From this figure, subtract an amount for essential food items and a book/stationery allowance.

## Work out what you have to play with

You now have the maximum amount you have to spend each week on non-essential items. Endeavour to spend less than this! Keep your receipts for everything for a week or two once term has really got going, spend an hour or two working out exactly where cash is going. If you spend too much on any one item (drink, coffees, magazines, sandwiches, etc.) try and cut back. You will soon get the hang of how much you can spend and get away with, but for the first few weeks you should make detailed notes of everything you spend.

## Keep a contingency

It is important to remember that there are occasions which may require you to unexpectedly have to spend a large amount of money. Text books are expensive and if you aren't careful nights out can cost large amounts too. There are balls and events you may wish to go to, so remember to save a bit for them. Therefore it is always good to save money as a contingency.

## Budgeting with food

It's time to familiarise yourself with the economy food in supermarkets. The majority of it doesn't taste too different to the more expensive varieties - baked beans and economy orange juice are fine. In particular, things like toiletries and dried foods don't need to be plush: get the

cheapest you can and you won't really notice the difference. Make trips to your nearest Lidl or Aldi. You can get some great deals on good quality food. Think about taking it in turns to cook with your housemates. Cooking for 4 works out a whole lot cheaper than just cooking for yourself. Alternatively if your housemates can't/won't cook, then cook up batches of food and freeze the portions individually for a later date. Consider taking a packed lunch to Uni. Buying your lunch on campus every day can soon add up... even if that cheese sandwich only costs £1, a loaf of bread and a block of cheese from Aldi will still be considerably less.

## Travel

Get a bike! It'll get you fitter than your short run to the bus stop each morning, and it'll work out a lot cheaper in the long run. You can get a decent second-hand bike for around £100 and it can last years (check Gumtree, The Friday Ad and [www.g-whizzcycles.co.uk](http://www.g-whizzcycles.co.uk).)

A daily bus 'saver' (oh the irony!) bought on the bus is £4.40\* each day; that's £22\* for a five day week. If you're just using the 23, 25 & N25 buses, you can buy a weekly ticket from the driver for £8\*. If you need to use buses other than the 23 & 25, buy a weekly saver ticket that can be used on all Brighton & Hove buses in the Brighton & Hove area for £10.50\* from the Union Shop, Falmer House (on production of valid student ID). You can also buy an annual saver for £320, only available from [www.buses.co.uk](http://www.buses.co.uk).

If you're traveling by train, consider getting a Uni-Zone card. To get a Uni-Zone ID card, take a passport photo and your NUS card (available from [www.nus.org](http://www.nus.org)) to the ticket office. Once this has been issued, you can buy a weekly (£14\*), monthly (£53.80\*) or quarterly (£161.30\*) ticket which enables you to travel between all Brighton stations and Falmer as much as you like.

(\*Prices correct at the time of writing : August 2012)

## Opt for a pay as you go mobile phone

This is by far the cheapest way to run a mobile phone. Okay, you won't get the latest models every 12 months, but is that really so important? Mobile phone companies will do their best to mis-sell mobile phone contracts to students who really do not need them. When looking for a mobile phone, ask yourself if you really need all the texts and talk time on offer? Those traditional mobile phone contracts of £25 a month usually end up costing around £50 plus. Pay As You Go will only cost you as much as you decide. If you look around, you can find providers who offer call and text call bundles for as little as £10 a month.

## Get discounts, use vouchers!

Look out for deals and take advantage of money off vouchers, bogofs – buy one get one free offers - and student deals in restaurants, bars or at the cinema. Use the NUS Extra card to get money off at your favourite retailers. National and regional offers are listed on student-focused discount websites like [studentbeans.com](http://studentbeans.com), [moneysavingexpert.com](http://moneysavingexpert.com) & [vouchercodes.co.uk](http://vouchercodes.co.uk).

## If you get into trouble

At the end of the day, it might not be possible to balance the budget. So where you can turn if everything goes wrong?

The Students' Union's Advice Centre should be your first port of call. They offer online advice about all things money related specifically for students, visit: [www.sussexstudent.com/advice](http://www.sussexstudent.com/advice). You can also speak to their Advisers, email: [advice@ussu.sussex.ac.uk](mailto:advice@ussu.sussex.ac.uk), or call : 01273 877038.

# Rubbish & Recycling

To find out your weekly collection day or the location of communal bins visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk) and type in your postcode. Only put out rubbish bags on the morning of your collection, otherwise seagulls and foxes can rip them open and scatter rubbish up and down the street.

## Recycling

Most areas in Brighton have weekly or fortnightly recycling collections. Visit [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk) for your collection days or to find out where your nearest recycling bins are

### Materials you can mix together in your box

- Cans, tins and aerosols (washed and empty aerosols with lids removed)
- Cardboard (flattened to fit in box)
- Paper (including directories and windowed envelopes - with or without the plastic window)
- Plastic bottles (washed and squashed)

### Materials which must be completely separated using a bag or box

- Glass bottles and jars (washed with lids removed)
- Household batteries (in a clear bag, by or on top of your box)

PLEASE NOTE:

IF YOU DO NOT SEPARATE GLASS IN YOUR BOX, THEY WILL NOT TAKE ANY OF IT AWAY!!!

# Moving out checklist

Get organised a few weeks before your move out date and use your regular rubbish and recycling collections for anything you will not be taking with you.

Check your contract to see if there are any additional requirements that your landlord requires you to action prior to vacating the property (cleaning those windows perhaps?)

## End of tenancy cleaning checklist

### General Areas

- Cleaning and dusting throughout, including: light fittings and shades, light switches, dado rails, skirting, spindle and banisters, curtain rails, wall pictures, mirrors, fire surround and radiators.
- All furniture to be moved and carpets to be vacuumed. Get a carpet cleaner to remove any stains. Clean skirting boards behind furniture.
- All other floors to be washed using correct type of cleaning materials.
- Windows to be washed, sills to be wiped down.
- All doors and tops of doors to be cleaned and handles to be polished.
- All shelves and drawers to be cleared of any rubbish, cleaned internally and externally.

- If present, all upholstery vacuumed, cushions lifted and cleaned underneath.
- If present, all wooden furniture to be carefully wiped clean and polished.
- Remove all cobwebs from walls and ceilings

### Kitchen

- All surfaces to be washed and sanitized.
- All cupboards and drawers to be cleaned, remove old food and dispose of.
- Clean sink and taps, polish to a shine.
- Degrease wall tiles; remove mould growth (if any) from grout.
- Defrost and clean refrigerator removing grime, mildew and food deposits.
- Clean washing machine inside and out, soap drawers and rubber at the door.
- Clean exterior of all appliances including kettle, toaster. Clean microwave inside and out.
- Internal bins to be emptied cleaned inside and out.
- Thoroughly clean oven, including oven shelves, top and sides. Pull out oven and clean behind.

### Bathroom

- De-scale shower screen, clean and polish.
- Wall tiles cleaned and polished & mould growth if any removed from grout.
- Bath, basin, taps, shower and fittings to be cleaned, de-scales, dried and polished.
- Toilet and toilet seat cleaned and sanitized, de-scale toilet if required.
- Mirrors cleaned and polished.
- Floors and tiles to be washed and sanitized, If carpet, floor to be vacuumed.

### Bedrooms

- All bedroom furniture and storage units to be cleaned inside and out.
- If present, mattresses to be vacuumed.
- Remove any light dirt on walls such as finger prints and food/drink marks.

### Garden

- If you have a garden, make sure it's in as good a condition as you found it. Check your contract... it will probably specify that it's your responsibility to mow the lawn etc.

Leave your property in good condition inside and out and as you found it. Not doing so could lead to a deduction from your deposit.

Donate or recycle any items you're not taking to local charities or the recycling centre. For bulky waste pick-up (old mattresses, broken furniture etc.), call the council on 01273 608142 (please note : they charge you for this service)

Make sure you let the Council and your other utility providers know that you are moving out.

Get contact numbers for all your housemates for when the bills are finalised.

# Useful Housey info::

Rubbish is collected weekly on :

Recycling is collected weekly / fortnightly on :

Should a leak occur, isolate the water supply using the stopcock. It is located:

In the event of electrical failure and where it is safe to do so, please check trip switches and fuses. The trip switches are in your electric meter, located :

If you smell gas, think you have a gas leak, or are worried that carbon monoxide fumes are escaping from a gas appliance, please call the free Gas Emergency Services emergency line immediately on :

0800 111 999

Additional Information :