

# Your Guide to Renting in Guildford



The University of Surrey  
**Students' Union**



**Hoods Residential**

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# Introduction

This guide has been developed to aid you in being a good tenant and to provide you the correct information to protect yourself in complicated housing situations.

If you need further support, you can email [ussu.advice@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.advice@surrey.ac.uk) and/or [enquiries@hoodsresidential.com](mailto:enquiries@hoodsresidential.com)

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## Choosing a Room

Disagreements and fallouts may happen when choosing rooms, with most houses having at least one very small room.

Some suggestions to make this more fair are:

- Choosing at random using for example a random name generator or picking rooms out of a hat
- Allocating different prices on the rooms based on their size, i.e. those in bigger rooms pay proportionally more per month and those in the smaller rooms pay less
- If no-one wants the biggest or smallest room for the whole year, you can swap halfway through the year. That way if the price of the biggest room or the size of the smallest one are issues, they can be fairly distributed.

When viewing houses, sometimes not everyone moving in can go to a viewing. Even though it is best that everyone sees the house, if someone does not, make sure to be transparent with them regarding the rooms to avoid arguments early on.

## Cleaning

The condition of the property is also a source of disagreement amongst the tenants. Before moving in, have a discussion with your potential housemates regarding setting expectations. You might expect the house to be cleaned every week while for someone else the expectation is once a month.

Communicate and compromise to establish a common ground. If you cannot reach a compromise on this, you might want to rethink your living arrangements as cleaning will be a big part of your year.

A suggestion to avoid frustration once you have moved in, is to establish a cleaning rota. This might seem minimal, but by assigning tasks you can ensure that there is a responsible person to complete the task.

Make sure to -

- Discuss the rota and agree it with everyone.
- Ensure people are not always stuck with tasks like cleaning the toilet and bins.
- Keeping the property in good condition also means tenants are more likely to have their deposits returned.

## **Neighbours and Noise**

The most common complaint from members of the community is regarding parties and noise, especially elderly, families with young children, or neighbours who simply need to get up for work in the morning. You might have also noticed posters around certain parts of Guildford encouraging tenants to be quiet at night.

Reach out and introduce yourselves to your neighbours. This can help build a relationship and avoid any miscommunication. It might also encourage your neighbour to reach out and express dissatisfaction with the noise, instead of contacting the university or the police. This can also help you with other issues with your neighbours such as regarding waste and gardening.

Simply by having open communication with your neighbours, making them aware if you are having a gathering or simply feeling comfortable enough to approach each other if you have any concerns or questions, this can save a lot of hassle throughout the year.



## Maintenance

Tenants must report maintenance issues to either their landlords or letting agents. Report any issues pre-existing as you move in to ensure you are not held responsible for damage that did not occur during your tenancy. Make sure to also take pictures of your room and the house before you unpack your things. These might be useful during inventory when you are moving out.

Any damage that occurs throughout the year, report it as soon as possible. This means that you are getting the best from the home you are renting, as the damage will be repaired, but you also avoid the problem becoming worse, and therefore, expensive.

# Council Tax

Students are eligible for council tax exemption, but you must apply for it. You can either use the opt-in option upon registration so that the university can share your student status with the council, you can contact the council directly to apply when you move in, or you can contact the council upon receiving a bill for the council tax, however this can be more stressful and time consuming.

Even if you do receive the bill, do not stress. Contact the council and explain you are a student.

# Bills

There will probably already be energy and water connected when you arrive, but you should set up the accounts for utilities as soon as you move in. If your agent/landlord offers to set up utilities for you, we would advise that you tell them you'd like to handle them yourself to get the best deal.

To change your energy or gas supplier:

- Ask your landlord/agent to confirm who the current suppliers for gas, water and electricity are.
- Take meter readings on the day you move in (or check the inventory to see if they're recorded there).
- Water is not always metered, so you might instead be charged a fixed amount depending on the size of the household.
- Research your local suppliers to find the best deals and sign up.
- Include ALL tenants' names on ALL accounts and share the account details with all tenants.
- Diarise your payment dates and amounts, set up standing orders if necessary.

## TV Licence

If you watch or record TV as it is being broadcast live, then you will need a TV licence. You can be fined up to £1000 if you get caught without one so don't delay!

## How to Leave Early

Leaving accommodation before the end of the contract can be possible but tricky.

### Off-campus

- Check your contract. Some contracts have a clause that allows to leave in 6 months.
- Advertise for replacement - Many landlords will allow a replacement, even if the contract doesn't have a break clause but do not assume this without discussing with the landlord. Be aware until your replacement is in you will remain liable for the room
- Secure alternative accommodation but do not commit to payment before you are guaranteed of replacement or break clause in your existing room - you may end up paying two rents!
- For more information look at: [https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/private\\_renting/how\\_to\\_end\\_a\\_fixed\\_term\\_tenancy\\_early](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/how_to_end_a_fixed_term_tenancy_early)

### On-Campus

Speak to accommodation at [accommodation@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@surrey.ac.uk) and seek advice from [ussu.advice@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.advice@surrey.ac.uk)



# Contract

Your contract is the most important document you have, regarding your accommodation. It outlines the agreements and expectations between yourself and the landlord / agency. It should also make clear the type of tenancy agreement you have.

Be aware of everything within it and do not sign and agree to terms or price structures beyond your means; that are illegal; or more restrictive than you will be able to keep - you will be expected to adhere to anything you sign.

The different types of tenancy agreement and the rights and responsibilities they ensure can be found here:

[https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing\\_advice/private\\_renting/types\\_of\\_renting\\_agreement](https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/types_of_renting_agreement)

# Deposits

Before you sign a tenancy agreement, you usually have to pay rent in advance and a tenancy deposit. Most fees for private tenants are banned. You cannot be asked to pay for things like credit checks or references when agreeing a new tenancy.

Some landlords and agents ask for a holding deposit to reserve a property while they do a credit check or chase up references. You should usually get this money back if the landlord decides not to rent to you.

Check who's responsible for utility bills, you may have to budget for these costs soon after moving in. Most landlords ask for at least 1 month's rent in advance before you sign the agreement and move in.

You could be asked for more if, for example, you:

- Have a poor credit rating or low income
- Cannot provide a guarantor or references
- Arrived in the UK recently

There's no legal limit on how much rent in advance you can be charged.

## Conflict Resolution

Before signing anything, it is worth having a written agreement with your other housemates about who pays what and what share of the rent each will pay. Having a written agreement can help if there are disputes further down the line.

Disagreement and conflict among housemates can often be over small issues or misunderstandings. These issues can begin without intent or knowledge.

It is best to attempt to be honest and open and willing to mutually compromise as early as possible to try and avoid small conflicts escalating into larger issues.

Where this isn't possible there are a number of services that can be contacted to try and help resolve situations:

- <https://mediationsurrey.org/>
- <https://accommodation.surrey.ac.uk/living-halls-residence/conflict-resolution>
- <https://accommodation.surrey.ac.uk/living-halls-residence/residential-life-team>

# Safety

Before you move into your new off-campus accommodation, you should receive the following documents from your landlord or agent:

- A Gas Safety Certificate issued within the last year.
- Evidence of an electrical inspection within the last five years.
- Tenancy deposit protection scheme information.
- Energy Performance Certificate.
- Information about who manages the property i.e. if the landlord or agent is responsible for maintenance/repairs.
- Confirmation in writing if your bills are included, either in an email, letter or in your tenancy agreement.
- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors should be fitted by your landlord – it's the law.
- Get any promises of repairs or new furniture in writing.
- Check under which circumstances you could leave the tenancy early without still being liable for rent.

# Cleaning

At the end of a tenancy, there is a responsibility on the tenant to leave the property as clean as it was when they moved in. It's advisable to take plenty of photographs of the property at the start of the tenancy, which provide evidence of its cleanliness, or otherwise, at the time.

The landlord should also provide a written inventory of everything provided for the tenant, describing the condition of each item. So if the carpets are described as "clean throughout", that's exactly how they should be left, allowing for fair wear and tear which is often described in contracts as "reasonable use of the premises by the tenant and the ordinary operation of natural forces."

Failure to do so is likely to result in a landlord retaining a portion of the deposit to pay for cleaning. For a detailed explanation see: <https://www.alanboswell.com/news/end-of-tenancy-cleaning/>

## Emergency Support

All of these emergency support services are available 24/7.

## Security on Campus

Security are an on-campus service trained to provide an immediate response to all reported incidents, working closely with internal departments and external agencies when required. They are there to help, with a focus on care in their pastoral role.

General security enquires 01483 682002 / 01483 689114

**Emergency only 01483 683333**

## Surrey Police

Surrey Police are there to serve and protect the local community. If a serious offence is in progress or has just been committed or someone is in immediate harm please use the emergency contact.

Non-Emergency 101, 01483 571212 or 18000 textphone if you have a speech or hearing impairment

**Emergency only 999** (or 999 textphone service if you have a speech or hearing impairment).

## **NHS 111**

NHS 111 can help if there is an urgent medical problem. When calling, you will be asked questions about your symptoms by a fully-trained adviser.

Advisers can then connect callers to a healthcare practitioner, organise face-to-face appointments, find out what local services can help or provide advice about medication.

## **Do you have any more questions?**

If there is a specific area or topic of support missing or a service you feel students would benefit accessing that isn't in the guide, please contact the VP Support to make amendments.

Email: [ussu.vpsupport@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.vpsupport@surrey.ac.uk)