



Information on renting from the private sector



Where should I start looking?

Ask around

As a starting point, you may notice adverts on notice boards/shop windows, around university etc. with landlord/letting agent contact details.

Online

There are lots of websites advertising properties available to rent. To start, you could have a look at:

EasyRoommate

<http://easy-apartments-to-rent.com/>

Enter your details and this site will provide you with a list of flatshares in your area.

Lettingweb

<https://www.lettingweb.com/>

Rental properties across the UK, plus register to receive email and SMS alerts when a new property is added that meets your requirements.

Letting in Scotland

<http://www.letting-in-scotland.co.uk/>

Lists rental properties across the country.

Property Squirrel

<http://www.property-squirrel.com/>

Rental properties in Edinburgh, Glasgow and across the UK.

Spare Room

<https://www.spareroom.co.uk/>

Flatshares in your area.

Accommodation for Students

<https://www.accommodationforstudents.com/>

There are a lot of letting agents and private landlords in Edinburgh. Although we can't recommend any specific letting agents or landlords, a simple internet search should bring up plenty of options. Some larger letting agents in the city include DJ Alexander, Umega Lettings, Southside Property Management etc.

Be Aware!

Websites such as Gumtree are not regulated - be cautious when looking at any adverts on these websites and make sure to check the landlord is registered (more information on this below).

Things to consider when looking at flats to rent

- **Area** – how far away is the flat from uni/work etc?
- **Transport** – are there good bus links to and from the flat?
- **Rent** – is the rent affordable (remember you will likely have a deposit to pay in addition to your first month's rent)
- **Safety** – is the area lit well i.e. if you are walking back in the dark would you feel safe?
- **Amenities** – How close is the nearest supermarket/ pub/ shops etc.

I have a viewing - what next?

Remember, when you go to view potential flats, always follow these safety guidelines:

- **Don't go on your own** - always take someone with you when you visit a flat.
- **Always let other people know where you're going**, who you're meeting and when you should be back.
- **Arrange to call someone afterwards** to let them know you're safe.
- If you arrange to meet someone over the internet to view a property, be extra cautious - **people on the internet aren't always who they say they are.**

What questions should I ask or look out for during a viewing?

- In Scotland, all landlords should be registered with the local authority. This means they are deemed to be a "Fit and proper" landlord. As a registered landlord, they will have a registration number. If the number was not included in the property advert, make sure to ask them what it is.
- Are there any signs of damp/mould on the walls or carpets?
- Does the flat have gas/electric heating? Ask what an average fuel bill would be – you will have to factor this into the affordability of the flat.
- Is furniture provided with the flat?
- Do the electrical appliances look safe? Landlords should have these checked every 12 months. Usually an electrician will put a sticker on appliances advising when the last check was.
- Are the fire detectors/ fire blanket/ fire extinguisher in working order/do they look okay?
- Do the locks for the flat seem secure?
- Can your landlord show you a certificate of gas safety provided by a Gas Safe Register engineer within the last 12 months?
- Is the landlord a member of the accreditation scheme? Try to rent from a landlord who's a member of Landlord Accreditation Scotland or an accreditation scheme run by the council. In order to join an accreditation scheme, your landlord has to show that their letting policies and their properties meet the standards required by the scheme.

I really like the flat and the landlord has asked for a deposit - what next?

It is likely your landlord/letting agent will ask for a deposit, normally in addition to the first month's rent.

Please note a deposit can be no more than 2 months' rent.

In Scotland, most landlords (there are some exceptions i.e. family members/holiday lets/live in landlords) have to register your deposit in a tenancy deposit scheme. This means that your deposit is safe for the duration of your tenancy and your landlord can't just keep all your deposit at the end of your tenancy if there is any dispute.

If there is a dispute at the end of tenancy i.e. a stained carpet – the deposit scheme will make a decision on how much/if any should be returned to the tenant after consulting with both tenant and landlord.

Ask your landlord what deposit scheme they are using.

Be Aware!

Some landlords/ letting agents may ask for a "holding fee" - a sum of money that will mean that they stop advertising the property and will hold it for you. Landlords should not ask for a holding fee - this is deemed as an "illegal fee".

What type of tenancy will I have and what are the key things I should know about it?

As your tenancy is starting after December 2017 you will be given a Private Residential Tenancy or PRT under most circumstances. There are exceptions for holiday lets, live-in landlords etc, so please check and make sure.

Here are some of the key things to note with a PRT:

- **No more fixed terms** - private residential tenancies are open ended, meaning your landlord can't ask you to leave just because you've been in the property for 6 months. There is no fixed term i.e. 6/12 months (even if they say there is!)
- **Rent increases** - your rent can only be increased once every 12 months (with 3 months' notice)
- **Longer notice period** - if you've lived in a property for longer than 6 months, your landlord will have to give you at least 84 days' notice to leave (unless you've broken a term of the tenancy).

Yay, I've moved in! What should I do next?

- Take lots of photos when you first move in, paying closer attention to any damages/wear and tear. This will help if there is a dispute at the end of your tenancy for damage that you were not responsible for.
- Look at the inventory provided by your landlord/letting agent and flag up any missing/broken items.
- If you do have any concerns/something doesn't seem quite right, get advice!

Where to get advice:

Shelter

<https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>

There is lots of information on Shelter Scotland's website and you can also arrange an appointment with a housing adviser.

ENSA – Edinburgh Napier Students Association

<https://www.napierstudents.com/advice/>

ENSA can advise on lots of different issues including tenancy, landlord and accommodation issues

Citizens Advice Bureau

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/>

Lots of information is available on the Citizens Advice Bureau website and you can arrange to speak with an adviser.