

ARU College Top Tips on booking Private Rented Accommodation 2020/21

We have seen it before and it will happen again, it is incredibly easy to lose money and be treated badly in accommodation if you have not been careful and done your research.

Here are our tips on how to reduce the risks and find the best choice for you.

1. **NEVER pay for your accommodation before viewing:** It is common to have to pay a deposit before you move in to secure the room. But do not make it easy for someone to take your money and leave you with nothing. See more ways to do this overleaf.
2. **Make sure you have a signed contract:** Read it carefully, make sure all the details are correct and that you are happy with the rent instalments/contract duration/address/release clause (fixed term or flexible) and all other conditions. Do not sign it until you are happy with all details and you are sure you can afford it.
3. **Obtain landlord / agent contact details:** Phone, email, website, bank details. Verify the person you are in contact with and store their details for future contact if you have questions or need to report issues. You can also ask to see your landlord's identification.
4. **Know what is included in your contact:** Most students are exempt from council tax, but you may have to pay extra for gas/electricity/water/TV Licence. Ask your landlord/estate agent for details before signing.
5. **Make sure you can afford it:** Weekly or monthly payments can sound affordable, but over the length of the contract these can add up to more than you realise, so do the math before you sign your contract and don't run out of money.
6. **Conduct a thorough inventory:** Make sure you know what is in the accommodation and what condition it is in. Report damages/maintenance issues immediately so that you do not get charged at the end of your tenancy. You can also take photos for proof.
7. **Find out who you will be living with:** How many people share the bathroom? Does the landlord have a young child? Are pets allowed? What are the house rules you will have to live with; and can you live with these?
8. **Location, Location, Location!** Cambridge and Chelmsford are not big cities and it is easy to get around. But find out how far from the college, shops and town centre you are.
9. **Find out where your deposit will be held:** Landlords are required by law to protect tenant's deposit in a DPS - Deposit Protection Scheme within 30 days of payment. This means your deposit is safe under government guidelines. Ask your landlord/agent to verify and go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/deposit-protection-schemes-and-landlords>

10. **Get everything in writing:** If you have agreed dates/rent/property condition/special requirements verbally, then get this in writing so you have evidence of all agreements.

Remember; if it seems too good to be true, it probably is!

You can always ask us for more tips and advice; accommodation@arucollege.com

Checklist to help avoid scams, frauds, scoundrels and losing money

Always view the accommodation before committing.

If you cannot view, ask a friend/family member to view on your behalf.

If no-one can view before you arrive, then NEVER pay the full deposit and rent in advance.

Most landlords/agents will reserve the room for a minimal amount e.g. £150, until you view.

Speak to the landlord on the phone/skype. Check the letting agent website/phone number/email.
Don't make it easy for them to disappear if you need them.

Triple check any bank details you are paying money to and confirm them over the phone or in person. Emails and transfers can be intercepted by frauds.

Be careful if someone asks you to pay by money transfer websites such as Western Union, World Pay or TransferWise. It is much easier for them to disappear with your money this way.
Transferring direct to a bank account is generally safer, but always be sure before you pay.

Send £1 first to make sure the money arrives in the correct account.
You do not have to pay in Euros or another currency. Pound sterling is an accepted currency for every legitimate business in the UK.

Use the UK government website to check who the property belongs to:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/land-registry>

If your landlord does not own the property, they may not have the right to rent it out.

Do not click a link or visit a website you do not fully trust.

We have a college team available to help you with accommodation queries, so if you need help or advice then please get in touch with us! accommodation@arucollege.com

99% of all lettings and rentals are legitimate. If you follow this advice and think before you act, you will have a great accommodation experience. We look forward to meeting you