



Before you sign:

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU SIGN THAT CONTRACT

WHAT KIND OF CONTRACT IS IT?

- Is it an Assured Short-hold Tenancy (AST) or Short Assured Tenancy (in Scotland)? *If not or you aren't sure, seek advice before signing as you may have different rights.*
- Do you know if you are signing a joint contract or individual contracts?
- If it's joint: does everyone understand that you could be asked to pay another housemate's share of the rent if they don't pay?

CHECK THESE BASIC DETAILS ARE CLEARLY SHOWN

- The correct address of the property or room you are renting
- Full name and address / contact details of the landlord and the agent if there is one
- Name(s) of the tenant(s) and contact addresses

IF YOU REQUIRE GUARANTOR(S):

- Have all guarantors seen the guarantor form and the tenancy agreement? *If not, ask for 24 hours to show them the documents before you sign.*
- If it's a joint contract: is the guarantors' liability limited to an individual tenant's share of rent and damages? *If not, you might want to try to limit their liability using the Unipol template form.*

GLOSSARY:

Deposit: A refundable upfront payment to the landlord to cover costs that they might incur during your tenancy that they aren't legally required to cover.

Letting Fees: Non-refundable payments that need to be made upfront.

Guarantor: Someone who signs an agreement to say that they will cover your rent if you are unable to pay.

HMO: A House of Multiple Occupation, with three or more unrelated tenants. These often have to be licensed as they have to meet certain safety criteria.

EPC: An Energy Performance Certificate, a legal requirement for properties with joint contracts, which shows how efficiently they use energy and how much they cost to heat.

Gas Safety Certificate: This demonstrates that gas appliances are working safely, and this should be rechecked each year.

TOP TIP:

If you don't have anyone who can act as a guarantor for you, try negotiating with your landlord or seek advice from your students' union on options which might not have this requirement.



LENGTH OF THE CONTRACT

- Do you know when the contract starts?
- Do you know when, why and how the contract can be ended?
- If it's a fixed term agreement: do you know how long the contract lasts and if there is a break clause? (these are relatively rare)

CHECK YOU CAN AFFORD EVERYTHING YOU HAVE TO PAY

- Do you know how much the rent is, and are you and any joint tenants happy to pay it for the full duration of the contract?
- Are there any other bills included in the rent (e.g. utilities)?
- If yes, have you checked the terms of this arrangement (e.g. are there any 'fair usage' clauses or maximum amounts covered)?
- Are there any other charges to pay (e.g. signing/checkout fees)?
- Does the contract detail the deposit protection scheme being used and why money can be deducted?

CHECK OTHER TERMS

- Have you read the contract in full and understood your rights and obligations?
- Are there any terms that you don't understand, or don't want to agree to, including undefined charges? *If you're not sure, seek advice about your rights before signing!*
- Have you been provided with an inventory showing what's included?
- Have you got all plans for refurbishment/ promised changes/dates of completion written into the contract?
- Have you taken it to your students' union or local advice centre first for checking? *Good landlords will let you take the contract away for 24hrs before signing.*
- Have you seen a Gas Safety Certificate, Energy Performance Certificate and HMO license (where relevant)?

IN A NUTSHELL:

Before you sign, are you happy with:

- The property?
- The landlord/agent?
- The people you are moving in with?
- The cost?
- The terms of the agreement?

It's much easier to say 'no' before you sign so think carefully before you sign on the dotted line.

