

Ready to Rent Trainers’ Guide: Tenancy Troubleshooting

England and Wales Version

Workshop Aim & Outcomes

Ready to Rent is a training programme designed to give students the knowledge and confidence needed to find good quality housing and assert their rights as renters. By the end of this workshop students should know how to solve issues that might arise in rented housing and where to go for help.

Workshop Length

This workshop is designed to take about 40 minutes.

What you will need

All workshop resources can be downloaded to print from the Ready to Rent Website. There is a pack of resources for trainers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and a pack for trainers in Scotland. Please ensure you download the appropriate resources for this guide (England, Wales and Northern Ireland version).

* PowerPoint slides
* **For Tenant Troubleshooting Activity:** Four scenario comic strips (or more if more groups), one tenancy toolkit handout per group
* Film: Tenancy Tips

In addition you will need to provide:

* Pens
* A projector and computer able to play sound

Participants

This workshop is designed for 6-40 participants. However, activities can be adapted to work for a smaller or larger number of participants, see Tips for Trainers on the Ready to Rent Website for suggestions.

Room set-up

The room should be set up informally, ideally with chairs in a circle. For the Race to Rent activity you will need to set up tables with clusters of chairs around the room.

Understanding this Guide

*Suggestions for what to say are in italics*

**[Opportunities to add local information and details of what your Students’ Union offers are included in square brackets]**

**“References to other documents are shown like this“**

Overview of workshop content

|  |  |  |
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| **Section** | **Content** | **Objective** |
| **Introduction** | Activity: Spectrum Line | * Identify levels of confidence amongst participants
* Set the tone of the training and encourage participation
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| Introduction to course content | * Highlight prevalence of difficulties faced by student renters and importance of knowing rights
* Set expectations for training
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| **Tenant Trouble-shooting** | Activity: Tenant Troubleshooting | * Increase understanding of how to tackle issues and where to find support
* Develop skills in preventing problems from arising
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| Film: Tenancy tips | * Embed the key messages of this section
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| **Summary** | Spectrum line | * Enable students to reflect on what they have learnt
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| Wrap-up and Sign-posting | * Direct students to further resources
* Encourage students to complete online evaluation
* Encourage students to join other Ready to Rent workshops and to take part in collective organising
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| **Time** | **Activities** | **What you will need** |
| **Introduction** |
| 10 mins | **Introduce aims of the course:***This training programme is all about giving you the knowledge you need to have a great time in rented housing. We’re going to begin with a quick activity to give us a sense of the experiences of everyone in the room.***Activity: Spectrum line*** Ask participants to stand on an invisible line according to how confident they feel about asserting their rights as renters, with one end of the line being extremely confident, and the other being not at all confident.
* Ask a couple of participants at different ends of the spectrum to explain why they are standing where they are.
* Thank them for sharing and ask them to take their seats

**Introduction to course content:** *NUS have designed this training because of a recent piece of research they conducted which found that fewer than half of student renters felt they knew their rights as tenants, and two-thirds felt unsupported in their attempts to rent.* *This has left students without the skills to avoid irresponsible landlords and letting agents, or to address problems when they arise.* *A quarter of students surveyed felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the management of their home and many reported problems with getting their deposit back. While 76% of those who had money deducted from their deposit thought it was unfair, only 16% had success in challenging these deductions.**This training programme aims to help you have a good experience in rented housing. In this course we will focus on your rights as a tenant and how to assert them when problems arise.**This workshop won’t cover all the issues that might arise during your time as a renter in detail, but it will equip you with some key knowledge and skills and direct you to organisations and resources that can provide further advice.**It will focus on the rights of people renting under Assured Shorthold Tenancies in England & Wales (or standard agreements in Northern Ireland) which are the most common form of tenancy in the private rented sector. Use* ***Shelter’s online “Tenancy Checker”*** *if you’re not sure what you’re being offered. If you’re living with your landlord or renting from the university you’re likely to have a different sort of contract and different rights, so seek advice from the Students’ Union Advice Centre or local advice service if you’re in this situation.* | Slide: Ready to RentSlide: The state of student renting in the UKSlide: Workshop aims and objectivesSlide: Workshop focus |
| **Tenant Troubleshooting** |
| 20 mins | **Activity: Tenant Troubleshooting****Explain:***After discussing the problems related with house-hunting and signing a contract in the previous workshops, now we’re going to decide how we could manage issues that may arise while you’re a tenant.** Divide participants into 4 groups and distribute the 4 Renter Scenarios between them. If you have a large workshop (25+) you can ask multiple groups to work on each scenario.
* Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and ask them to divide it into two.
* Ask each group to decide what they would do next to resolve the issue and write it on one side of the paper. Explain that there is a “Toolkit” on the PowerPoint to help them identify specific organisations or resources that might be helpful and give out Tenancy Toolkit handouts to explain these further.
* After 5 minutes, ask each group to move around the room so they have someone else’s scenario and solution. Ask them to write on the other half of the paper how they would prevent this issue from arising, again using the Toolkit to help them.

**Group Feedback:**Ask each group to present back the scenario they have just been working on to the other groups. If there are any key elements missing, ask other groups to feed in ideas. Then run through the corresponding scenario slide to ensure all is covered:**GuarantorGate**Next steps:* Trying to negotiate with Landlord and old housemate about repayments
* Continue to look for a new housemate
* Visiting **Students’ Union Advice Centre**

Prevent by:* Avoiding house-hunting too early
* Getting your contract and guarantor form checked by your **Students’ Union Advice Centre**
* Limiting guarantor liability to your share of rent & damages
* Communicating regularly with your housemates
* Negotiating to sign **individual tenancy agreements**

**Neighbour Nightmares**Next steps:* Communicating with your housemates and your neighbours
* Reading your rights and responsibilities: Your Landlord can’t evict you without a court order, but you may be breaching your agreement by causing nuisance to your neighbours
* Visit the **Students’ Union Advice Centre**

Prevent by:* Choosing housemates carefully and ensuring you are all clear on expectations of each other
* Proactively introducing yourself to neighbours and telling them when you’re having a party
* Getting a landlord who is part of an **Accreditation Scheme**
* Checking your rights and responsibilities in your contract

**Mould mayhem**Next steps:* Taking photos and keeping a record of communication with your landlord. Make sure communication is in writing.
* Getting evidence of any impact on your health
* Contacting your local authority’s **Environmental Health** department:they can intervene and demand action from your landlord.

*But, before taking action against your landlord, visit your* ***SU Advice Centre*** *or other advice service to assess any risk of retaliatory eviction. This is particularly advisable if you have carried on living in the property after the end of a fixed term AST, or hope to do so, or if you live with your landlord.** Report the landlord to their **accreditation scheme**

Prevent by:* Using the **NUS house-hunting check-list** and avoiding housing with evident mould problems
* Talking to the previous tenants
* Getting promised repairs written into your contract

**Deposit Disaster**Next steps:* Offering to paint the room yourself
* Using **Alternative Dispute Resolution process** co-ordinated by your deposit protection scheme provider (if both parties agree) to challenge charge for the burn mark and the cost of painting the room - this must be within 3 months of your contract ending

Prevent by:* Getting an **inventory** done or make your own, and taking photos
* Communicating better with housemates about mutual expectations
* Signing individual contracts which would involve paying individual deposits
 | Slide: Tenant Trouble-shootingSlide: Tenancy ToolkitTenancy Toolkit handoutSlide: GuarantorGateSlide: Neighbour NightmaresSlide: Mould MayhemSlide: Deposit Disaster |
| 3 mins | **Film: Tenancy Tips**Explain:*You can find information on dealing with problems like those we’ve explored and others in the* **“Tenancy Troubleshooting Guide”** *on the Ready to Rent Website and using websites such as Shelter and Citizens Advice.**This film highlights the most important things to remember when dealing with problems as a tenant.***Show Film: Tenancy Tips** | Film: Tenancy Tips |
| **Summary** |
| 3 mins | **Activity: Spectrum line**Repeat the first activity, thing time asking how confident students feel about renting after taking part in the training. Ask people who are standing in a different position on the line compared to at the start of the workshop to explain why they feel more or less confident.Thank them for their feedback and ask them to sit down. | Slide: Spectrum line |
| 2 mins | **Wrap-up and signposting**Thank participants for attending.Let them know that the resources they have used today along with much more advice can be found on the Ready to Rent Website which they can access anytime.**[Include any additional guides or support your SU can provide]**Remind them of the other Ready to Rent workshops and the ways they can get involved in collective organising, through a local renter rights group or tenants’ union, or by organising with other tenants in your SU. | Slide: What next? |