

Ready to Rent: Tips for Trainers

About this guide

This guide is designed to help you deliver Ready to Rent in your institution with confidence and impact. It will help you:

- Make your workshops engaging and empowering through good facilitation
- Adapt your workshop to suit the size of group you are working with and the time you have to deliver it
- Maximise the number of people participating in Ready to Rent
- Use the Ready to Rent Hub to promote and monitor your training

About Ready to Rent

Ready to rent aims to support the development a new generation of discerning, confident and influential student renters. These renters will have good experiences in rented housing, will grow a culture of active renting amongst students, and will have a positive influence on the quality of the wider rented housing sector.

It will achieve this by providing thorough training resources for students' unions to engage, inform and empower their students, including:

- A 2-hour **Ready to Rent workshop guide** with supporting resources that informs students of their rights as renters and helps them to build confidence in asserting these rights
- An online **Ready to Rent Hub**, through which students unions can promote their Ready to Rent workshops, register students, download the resources needed to deliver the training, and where students can access further resources for renters

These resources will enable students' unions who have less capacity and expertise in housing to deliver engaging training to student renters on their rights, as well as enabling more developed students' unions to enhance the support they offer to student renters.

There is a workshop guide and a set of resources for trainers in England and Wales, as well Scotland-specific and Northern Ireland specific scripts and resources.

Who can deliver the Ready to Rent Training?

We want to ensure that the Ready to Rent training workshop can be delivered in any educational institution, including those with little experience of supporting student renters. As a result, the training workshop has been designed to be delivered by anyone who wants to support student renters, whatever your level of understanding of the issues surrounding rented housing. So there's no need to worry that you don't have enough knowledge of rented housing or experience of delivering training to run Ready to Rent.

All the information you need to deliver the training is included in the workshop script, PowerPoint slides and workshop resources. The activity-based format of the workshop, in contrast to traditional housing talks, means that you will be mostly supporting students to draw out key conclusions themselves, rather than spending a lot of time imparting information. However, if you're new to the area of rented housing you might want to read through the additional resources listed at the end of this guide.

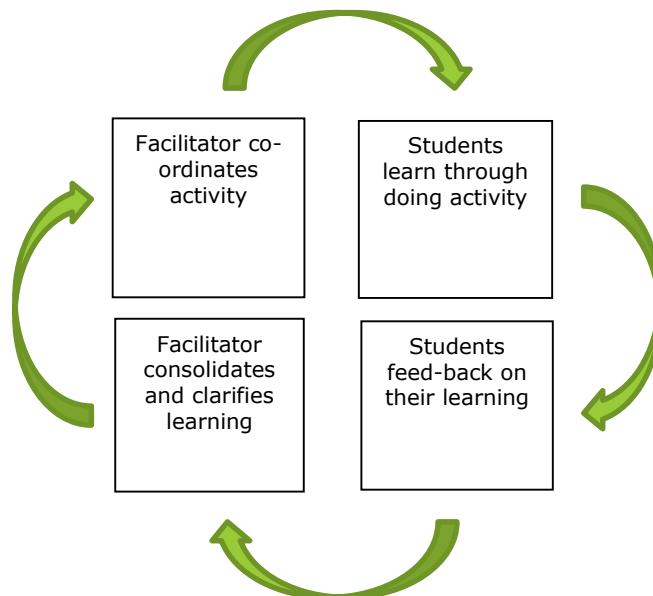
Being an effective workshop facilitator

Thinking about how you facilitate your workshop will have a big impact on how effective your training workshop is at meeting its aims. It can make the difference between a workshop where students feel confused, frustrated or bored, and one where they feel inspired and empowered.

The role of the facilitator

The Ready to Rent workshop has been designed around a series of informal and interactive group activities, rather than in a traditional talk or lecture format. Instead of the trainer simply imparting information, the workshop requires that participants work together when faced with different tasks and scenarios to come to their own realisations.

The role of the trainer or **facilitator** is to enable students to engage with these activities, support them to draw conclusions, and consolidate their learning with slides and supporting resources that communicate key messages. As the workshop progresses, learning from previous activities provides knowledge that enables students to complete the next activity:



Here are our tips for facilitating a great workshop:

Be prepared

You'll be much more confident at facilitating activities and communicating key information throughout the workshop if you are familiar with the content and know what's coming next.

- Download and print the workshop training guide appropriate for your location- there's an England & Wales version, a Scotland Version and a Northern Ireland version of the scripts and certain resources.
- Take time to read thoroughly through the workshop guide with the PowerPoint slides a few times, highlighting key points if it helps you. You could even do a test run-through with colleagues or friends to help you feel more confident in explaining concepts and activities.
- Read up on anything you want to understand more fully. At the end of this guide you'll find a list of great places to swat up on your housing knowledge so you feel more confident.
- Print and prepare all of the resources you need for the workshop in good time from the Ready to Rent Hub, again making sure you have the correct resources for your location.

- 📌 Give yourself time to set up on the day. You'll need a projector to show films and slides, so make sure you have time to get this working before participants arrive. You'll also need to give time to set up the room as described on page 1 of the workshop script.

Make your workshop accessible

When people register to attend your training via the Ready to Rent Hub they will enter details of any access requirements they have. Make sure you check these thoroughly and email the registered student to let them know what you are doing to ensure they will be able to participate fully, and to ask if there is anything else you can do. Note that the workshop contains activities where participants are encouraged to move about the room, so consider how you will adapt to suit those with mobility requirements. You may need to ensure there are tables provided for written activities and that there is enough space between tables and around the room for a person to navigate it in a wheelchair.

Create a welcoming environment

People are much more likely to engage in the workshop activities and the collective learning process if they feel comfortable with those around them.

- 📌 Welcome everyone as they come into the workshop, and introduce them to each other. The spectrum-line activity at the beginning of the workshop will help to get the group talking.
- 📌 Arrange chairs in a circle rather than straight lines, so that people can see and hear each other, and so that everyone feels part of the group

Be attentive to power dynamics

One of the most important roles of a facilitator is to ensure everyone is able to engage fully with the activities. In groups of people there will always be some who are confident to speak and others who are less confident. By using small group activities and discussions, this workshop is designed to create an environment where people who are less confident can contribute. There are other ways you can help to ensure that no-one feels silenced and all can contribute when they want to. Here are some handy tools:

- 📌 **Ask for unheard voices:** When asking people to respond as a large group to a question, or feedback to the whole group from small group discussions, ask whether anyone who hasn't spoken yet wants to contribute.
- 📌 **Do a "go-round":** If you are having a conversation as a whole group but are finding the conversation dominated by particular voices, invite everyone in the room to contribute their response one at a time. It's important that people don't feel forced to contribute so allow people to pass on the opportunity. This tool works best when you're asking for feedback on people's experiences of an activity.
- 📌 **Mix it up:** Encourage people to work in groups with people they haven't worked with before for each of the different activities, so that people get to work in groups with different dynamics and have the opportunity to hear different voices.

Ask questions to build understanding

Often you will be drawing attention to common-sense ideas, or ideas that may have arisen in conversations between participants. If you find yourself talking a lot, see if you can ask a question to source the same knowledge from the group. You will find the workshop scripts includes a lot of question-asking.

Keep on track

It's easy to get side-lined in a workshop where people have lots to say. Ensure you are able to complete all of the activities and discussions within the two hours by:

- Letting groups know how much time they have for each activity, and stick to it! Give groups a minute's warning before you bring them back together so they know to wrap up their conversations
- **Having a "Car Park":** Sometimes a student will want to use the workshop to explore a particular issue they may not be that interesting or relevant to other participants. A "Car Park" is a list of points of discussion that arise during the workshop that would take it off track but can be returned to at the end of the workshop.

Be clear about next steps

It's often tempting to rush at the end of a workshop, particularly if you're running out of time. But this can mean you forget to communicate important information. Before closing, make sure you tell students about all the resources that are available to them on the Ready to Rent Hub. Let them know that now they have attended the training they will be able to access these resources, once they have completed a short online evaluation. Let them know that when they complete the form they will be entered into a prize draw to win £50.

Having lots of student renters together in a room is a fantastic opportunity to encourage further involvement in housing-related events and campaigns. The final section of the workshop is designed to help you let students know the opportunities available to them if they want to get more involved, so let them know about any campaigns your SU is running, or invite them to a follow-up meeting for anyone interested in taking collective action or setting up a tenants' union.

Sign-post people

If you're asked a question and you don't know the answer, it's fine to be honest! Check through the resources that are available to students on the Ready to Rent hub before the workshop, and take a look at the resources listed at the end of this guide, so you can direct them to a place where they can find the answer.

Adapting the workshop

We want you to feel confident to adapt the training to suit your institutional context. Throughout the workshop trainer guide you will find notes in **[blue brackets]** that encourage you to add information for students about the rented housing sector locally, and about any support and advice services your students' union offers. Do your research beforehand and add your own PowerPoint slides containing locally specific information into the slides provided.

Here are some suggestions for ways to adapt the training if you have a small or large number of participants to work with, and if you need to deliver the training in sections across the year.

Working with small or large groups

The workshop activities have been developed to work best with a group of between 6-30 participants. On the next page are some suggestions of how to adapt the three core activities if you're expecting a smaller or larger number of attendees:

Activity	With a group of 5 or fewer participants	With a group of >30 participants
Ready, Steady Rent Game	<p>Variation 1 (4 or 5 participants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Use three properties (omitting the purple house) and play the role of one landlords/letting agents yourself <p>Variation 2 (with 3 participants or fewer)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Ask the group to discuss together for a couple of minutes what they would prioritise when house-hunting 📌 Show the group the property adverts (omitting the purple house) and ask them what three questions they want ask all of these landlords/letting agents (they must ask the same questions to all landlords/letting agents). 📌 Using the landlord briefings, respond to the three questions on behalf of each property 📌 Ask them to rank the properties from 1-3 📌 Give the group the house-hunting check-list and ask them to come up with 3 further questions to ask all landlords/letting agents 📌 Using the landlord briefings, respond to the three questions on behalf of each property 📌 Ask them to rank the properties from 1-3 📌 Ask them if they would be happy to sign a contract on any of the houses at this stage, or if not, why not 📌 Continue activity from the "Don't Panic!" slide 	<p>Variation 1 (30-35 participants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Have letting agents working in pairs or threes to sell the properties <p>Variation 2 (35+)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 As above, but adding 5th group of house-hunters
Contract Hunt	<p>Variation 1 (4 or 5 participants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Run as in the original version, but working in pairs or threes <p>Variation 2 (with 3 participants or fewer)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Ask the group to work together to find: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 3 things to add 📌 3 things to ditch 📌 3 additional documents to see 	Run as in original version, working in groups of up to 6
Tenant Trouble-shooting	<p>Variation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Stick the 4 scenarios around the room, each with a sheet of flipchart paper divided into two 📌 Ask participants to go between the scenarios as individuals and add suggestions on what their next steps would be to solve this problem on one half of the paper. Encourage them to build on other people's suggestions 📌 Ask students to do the same activity but this time writing on the other half of the flipchart paper, describing how they would have prevented this scenario from escalating 	<p>Variation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 📌 Print two copies of each scenario 📌 Work in eight groups, with two groups working on each scenario 📌 Make sure all groups move to a different scenario for the second question

Staggering the training

Although the training is designed to be delivered as one two-hour workshop, you may want to split the training into two, to fit with your institution's existing housing advice programme, or to target students with timely information. For example, you might want to run a workshop focusing on house-hunting and contract signing when students are beginning to look for homes, and a workshop on dealing with common problems in student housing and getting your deposit back as students are moving in to rented accommodation. However, since many problems that students face in rented housing can be prevented by finding the right landlord/letting agent in the house-hunting stage, we encourage the training to be delivered in full where possible.

Here are some suggestions for how you could divide the training into two workshops:

Workshop	Aims	Content
Ready to Rent: Finding a home	To give students the skills and confidence needed to find a good home, negotiating with landlords and ensure their contract sets the up for a great time in rented housing	Run full Introduction Run full House-hunting section Omit Tenant Trouble-shooting Run full Collective Action section
Ready to Rent: Living in a rented home	To give students the skills and confidence needed to deal with common problems that arise in rented housing, know where they can find support, and consider how to prevent problems from arising in the first place	Run full Introduction Run these elements House-hunting section: House-hunting Film Run these elements of Contract Signing section: Introduction to Signing Contracts, Signing a Contract Film, Their Responsibility or Mine Activity Run full Tenant Trouble-shooting section and full Collective Action section

Promoting your Ready to Rent training workshop

You can download a postcard template to promote your event on the Ready to Rent hub, which can be edited to include the time, date and location of your event. The postcard directs students to the Ready to Rent Hub where they will be able to find the event and register for it once it has been created as an event by a students' union (see **Using the Ready to Rent Hub** in this guide).

To maximise the number of students benefitting from the training you could work with hall wardens/ reps in student accommodation to distribute postcards and encourage students to attend. The training will be beneficial to students already in rented housing too since it will help them to deal with problems they might be facing and to find good accommodation in future years. So make sure you also advertise widely in your students' union and advice centre to attract students who aren't in student residences.

Some other ideas that unions have had for promoting the training and maximizing attendance are:

- 📌 Generating competition between societies, sports clubs or halls to see how many people they can get to attend the training
- 📌 Release the details or password that students need to access the housing list at the end of the training event
- 📌 Set up a stall with a fun prop or talking point such as a 'House of Horrors' to emphasise the need for the training and get people interested
- 📌 Running events in halls
- 📌 Working with course, community and hall reps

Using the Ready to Rent Hub

How to use the hub

You can find the Ready to Rent hub at readytorent.nus.org.uk, and this is a platform through which you can:

- 📌 Set up events online in order for students to register to attend
- 📌 Access resources which will enable you to deliver the training
- 📌 Access data about students who have registered for or attended your events

Getting started

The first step when you get onto the hub is to register your account. To do this, scroll to the bottom right, to the 'Union Trainers Registration' box. From here, you can fill in some key details and request a login. It is important that you write the name of your students' union or organisation as you want it to appear to participants as they will see this when they register. Once you have clicked 'Signup', your request will be sent to NUS to confirm your account.

If you have already been trained as a Ready to Rent trainer, you will be approved straight away, though if you have not, you will be asked to set yourself up on the Ready to Rent ULearn online platform. Once you have viewed the webinars explaining how to deliver the training, you will be approved and able to access the hub.

Setting up an event

It is very easy to set up an event on the hub. All you need to do is click on 'add event' and fill in all of the key details. You should then be told that your event has been added successfully. You will be able to invite students to the event by sharing either the Ready to Rent hub homepage, or clicking on 'register for an event' and finding your specific event page, which will be filed under your union name. When they register, they will be asked a few short questions to get a baseline level of understanding of their level of knowledge and understanding of renting.

Managing your event

The 'manage events' tab has a range of functions. Using the 'manage or edit your events' function, you can edit the details of your event. After the event has passed, you should disable the event so that it no longer shows when students come to register for a workshop. After the event you will also need to use the 'manage users' functionality to approve users – it is only once you have done this that they will be able to access all of the resources on the hub, be able to fill in the evaluation form and be entered into the competition to win one of five £50 prizes.

If students have turned up at your workshop without previously registering, get their details using the sign-up sheet available on the hub. You can then use the manual subscribe function to add their details to the hub and ensure that they can get access. You will then still need to approve them as with other attendees.

You can download the details of students who have registered for or attended training events using the download function at the bottom of the 'managing your event' page.

Accessing resources

The resources tab enables you to download all of the resources you will need to deliver Ready to Rent training including training guides, PowerPoints and resources for exercises.

How do students use the hub?

When students register for an event, they will be asked to fill in a very short form asking for their details, as well as a few questions to get an idea of their prior knowledge around renting. This will be used to get a baseline for evaluation. Once you have approved their account, they will be sent an email telling them that they can log in. This may go to junk folders, so you may want to send out an email to attendees after you have approved their accounts, thanking them for attending the training session, reminding them of all of the resources on the hub and the possibility of winning a prize, and encouraging them to check their spam folders and add Ready to Rent to their safe senders list. When they log in, they will again be asked a few short questions in order to rate the training, and give a self-assessment of whether their confidence levels have changed.

Why is it important that we use the hub?

The hub is vital both for students to be able to access key resources and continue their learning, and for evaluation of the project. Hosting events through the hub means that we can get an idea of how many students' unions are participating in the project, how many events are being run and how many students are attending. It also enables us to demonstrate the impact the training is having both at a local and national level, by collecting baseline and follow-up data.

You can also use the ULearn platform to discuss Ready to Rent with other trainers and find out how they have delivered and promoted the training at their union.

Find out more about renter rights

All the information you need to deliver the Ready to Rent training is in the trainer guide, PowerPoints and supporting documents that can be downloaded from the Ready to Rent Hub. You may find it helpful to read through the additional student resources (also available on the hub) to strengthen your understanding. These include:

- 📄 Tenancy Trouble-shooting guide
- 📄 Contract Check-list
- 📄 Moving In guide
- 📄 Moving Out guide

If you're looking to build your knowledge further, you'll find thorough information on a wide range of issues here:

England

Shelter England: <http://england.shelter.org.uk>

Gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>

Wales

Shelter Cymru: <http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk/>

Scotland

Shelter Scotland: <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>

Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent> (this is the Tenant Information pack that landlords are legally required to give tenants)

Northern Ireland

Housing Advice Northern Ireland: <http://www.housingadviceni.org/>