

HOW TO...

RENT

A SAFE HOME

A guide for current and prospective tenants in England



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This information is frequently updated. Search on GOV.UK for **How to Rent a Safe Home** to ensure you have the latest version.

The online version contains links you can click on to get more information.

If you do not have internet access, ask your local library to help.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for current and prospective tenants and supplements the Government's How to Rent guide. It gives a more detailed explanation of the main hazards you could find in a rental property which would suggest it may not be safe for you and your household to live in.

It also explains your landlord's duties and what you can do if you have concerns or need to make a complaint.



This guide covers:

1. What to do if you are worried about your rented property
2. Landlord responsibilities
3. Potential hazards
4. Additional information

Links

This guide is best viewed online as it contains hyperlinks.

If you are reading this on a computer or tablet, you can click on the links to go to other websites with more detailed information.

They are coloured and underlined [like this](#).

On Android or Windows devices, links work better if you download Acrobat Reader from get.adobe.com/uk/reader.



What to do if you are worried about your rented property

Landlords have a legal obligation to keep their properties safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm. Landlords should also not harass or unlawfully evict tenants.

Checks to make on a property before you rent

- Is there a working smoke alarm on each floor?
- Is a carbon monoxide alarm fitted (if required)?
- Have you seen a gas safety certificate?
- Where can the gas or water supply be switched off in an emergency?
- Have you seen an Energy Performance Certificate?
- Does the water and heating system work?
- When are refuse and recycling collected?
- Are all electrical installations and equipment safe and in good working order?

If you have an issue or complaint

Tell the landlord

- Report any need for repairs to your landlord and/or property agent.
- Put your concerns in writing, including by text or email, and keep a copy.
- Do this straight away for serious risks to your health and safety, such as faulty electrical wiring.
- It's also sensible to tell your landlord as early as possible about minor issues because most landlords would prefer to know sooner to make the most cost-effective repair.

What your landlord must do

Your landlord is always responsible for repairs to:

- The property's structure and exterior.
- Basins, sinks, baths and other sanitary fittings including pipes and drains.
- Heating and hot water.
- Gas appliances, pipes, flues and ventilation.
- Electrical wiring.
- Any damage they cause by attempting repairs.

Your landlord may also be responsible for repairing any communal areas of the building, like stairwells or halls. Check with your landlord who is responsible for repairs to common parts or communal areas.

Your landlord should tell you when you can expect the repairs to be done. A landlord has a right to carry out repairs and tenants must allow access at reasonable times with reasonable notice (at least 24 hours).

Your responsibilities

- The landlord does not have to pay to repair damage the tenant has caused, e.g. water leaking into another flat from an overflowing bath. Tenants are also responsible for paying to put right any damage caused by their family and friends.
- Do not carry out repairs unless the tenancy agreement says you can. You can't be forced to do repairs that are your landlord's responsibility.

What to do if repairs aren't done

Tell your council

- If the landlord does not carry out the necessary repairs you can report the matter to your [local council](#).
- Your local council may carry out a [Housing Health and Safety Rating System](#) inspection to identify what hazards exist. An environmental health or housing officer will assess the risk to you or your household's health and safety. If the council find poor conditions that are a serious risk to you or your household's health and safety, they have a legal duty to take the most appropriate action in relation to the hazard. They also have the power to take action for less serious hazards.
- The council can serve the landlord a notice requiring them to carry out repairs or undertake remedial action within a certain timescale. In certain circumstances, they might carry out emergency repairs themselves. Your council will not charge you for this.
- Local councils have powers to prevent landlords from letting out property if they have been convicted of a [banning order offence](#), such as failure to comply with a formal notice requiring safety improvements or carrying out an illegal eviction. You may wish to contact your local council for further information.

Protection from being evicted if you complain

- 'Retaliatory eviction' is when a landlord asks a tenant to leave their property because they have complained about conditions. This is unacceptable.
- If you have raised a legitimate complaint about the condition of your property with your landlord and your local council, you have protections under the Deregulation Act 2015.
- Once you have made a complaint, the local council should carry out an inspection of the property and, if appropriate, they will serve a notice on your landlord. If the most appropriate notice is either an 'improvement notice' or a 'notice of emergency remedial action' under the Housing Act 2004, your landlord cannot legally evict you for 6 months using the 'no-fault' eviction procedure (called a 'section 21 eviction').

Consider taking court action

- The law (section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985) enables tenants to take legal action against landlords for cases of 'disrepair'. Before considering taking court action, you should seek independent advice on your rights and responsibilities. More information can be found [here](#).
- If their rented houses and flats are not 'fit for human habitation', tenants can take their landlords to court under the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018. The court can make the landlord carry out repairs or put right health and safety problems. The court can also make the landlord pay compensation to the tenant. More information can be found [here](#).

Landlord duties

Landlords should keep their properties safe, healthy and free from things that could cause serious harm.

Landlords are responsible for carrying out most repairs.

Do not rent from a landlord who cannot show that they have met their legal duties and do not accept a reduced rent in exchange for poor or dangerous conditions.



Gas Safety Certificate

Landlords must make sure gas appliances and flues are safely installed and maintained by a Gas Safe registered engineer.

The landlord must provide a gas safety certificate at the start of the tenancy (before the tenant moves in), and within 28 days of each annual gas safety check, if there is a gas installation.

You should check the gas safety certificate and check for any problems highlighted.

Serial No: _____

LANDLORD/HOMEOWNER GAS SAFETY RECORD

This record can be used to document the outcome of the checks and tests required by The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations. Some of the outcomes are as a result of visual inspection only and are recorded where appropriate. Unless specifically recorded no detailed inspection of the flue lining, construction or integrity has been performed. Registered Business/engineer details can be checked at www.gassaferegister.co.uk or by calling 0800 408 5500.

Gas Safe is a registered trade mark of HSE and is used under licence.

Appliance Details							
	Location of	Type	Manufacturer	Model	Checked by Landlord/ Homeowner Yes/No	Inspected Yes/No	Type of flue
1							
2							
3							
4							

Inspection Details								
	Operating pressure in mbar and/or heat input kW/h or Btu/h	Operation of safety devices? Pass/Fail/NA	Ventilation satisfactory? Yes/No	Visual condition of flue/line termination Pass/Fail/NA	Flue operation checks Pass/Fail/NA	Combustion analyser reading (if applicable)	Serviced Yes/No	SAFE TO USE Yes/No
1								
2								
3								
4								

Any Defects Identified		GLSP classification eg. NG1, A1, C*	Warning/Advice Record insert form serial No†
1			
2			
3			
4			

Remedial Action Taken numbering should correspond to defects above.

1	
2	
3	
4	

Details of Work carried out

* Refer to separate Warning/Advice Notice

Number of Appliances tested: _____

select as appropriate and relevant	
Outcome of gas installation pipework visual inspection?	Pass / Fail / NA
Outcome of gas supply pipework visual inspection?	Pass / Fail / NA
Is the Emergency Control Valve access satisfactory?	Pass / Fail
Outcome of gas tightness test?	Pass / Fail / NA
Is the Protective Equipotential bonding satisfactory?	Pass / Fail

Record issued by: Signature _____
 Print Name _____
 Received by: Signature _____ Tenant/Landlord/Homeowner/Agent
 Date appliance(s)/flue(s) checked _____

ATTENTION

Next safety check due by:

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Do not forget to re-order your pads using reference GSR LGSR PAD2 at www.gassafetysafetyshop.co.uk

Top Copy – Landlord/Homeowner/Managing Agent Green Copy – Tenant Yellow Copy – Registered Business

This column tells you if the gas appliances in your home are safe to use. You should contact your landlord or agent if you have any questions or concerns.

*sample gas safety record image provided by www.gassaferegister.co.uk

If you smell gas or suspect a carbon monoxide leak

Call the national gas emergency helpline on **0800 111 999**.

- **Do turn off the gas** at the meter unless the meter is in a cellar/basement
- **Do put out** naked flames
- **Do open** doors and windows
- **Do keep people away** from the area affected
- **Don't smoke** or strike matches
- **Don't turn** electrical switches on or off



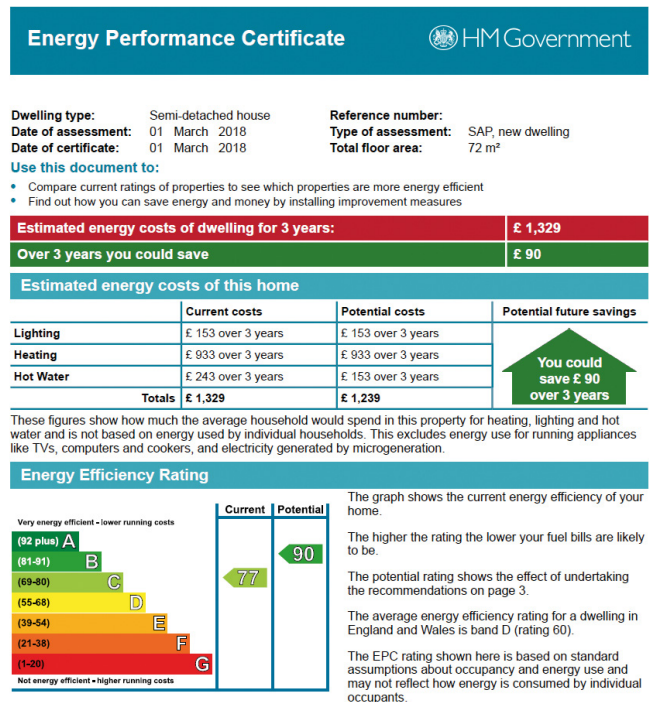
Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)

The EPC will:

- give an indication of running costs (bills for gas and electricity);
- tell you the overall energy efficiency rating for the property;
- help you identify drawbacks to the property; such as solid walls, uninsulated roof, single glazed windows etc., which could lead to excess cold and / or increased heating costs; and
- list improvements that have been recommended; such as double-glazed windows, loft insulation etc.

Landlords must:

- provide an EPC to someone who is interested in renting the property at the earliest opportunity;
- provide a copy to any person that moves into the property at the start of their tenancy;
- show the energy rating of the home when it is being advertised;
- improve properties with Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings of F or G by carrying out energy efficiency works before they can be rented out for new tenancies. For further information go [here](#).



You can ask your landlord to make energy performance improvements based on the EPC recommendations.

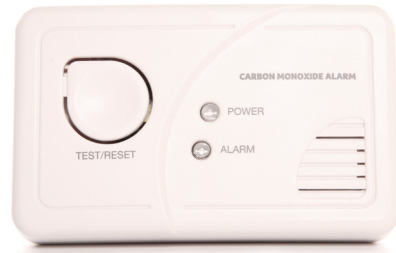
Since April 2018, unless they have been granted an exemption, landlords have not been permitted to rent out homes that have an EPC rating of F or G.



Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms

All properties must have working:

- Smoke alarms on every floor used as living accommodation
- and a carbon monoxide alarm in all rooms using solid fuels – such as a coal fire or wood burning stove.



Landlords must make sure that alarms are working on the first day of the tenancy. After that, tenants should take responsibility for their own safety and test alarms regularly to make sure they are working and replace the batteries where needed. Landlords must pay for the cost of a broken or faulty alarm.

Houses in multiple occupation usually require additional fire safety measures such as heat alarms, fire extinguishers and fire blankets. For more information, please see [this guidance](#).

Electrical Safety

Landlords also have a legal duty to make sure that electrical installations and electrical equipment supplied is safe at the outset of a tenancy and kept in good working order.

For all private rented properties, it will soon become mandatory for landlords to have the electrical installations inspected by a qualified and competent person at least every 5 years. More information can be found [here](#).

It is already a mandatory requirement for landlords of a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to have the fixed electrical installations in the property checked and inspected at least every 5 years.

Checks to make on a property before you rent

- Is there a **working smoke alarm on each floor**?
- Is a **carbon monoxide alarm fitted** (if required)?
- Have you seen a **Gas Safety Certificate**?
- Where can the **gas or water supply be switched off in an emergency**?
- Have you seen an **Energy Performance Certificate**?
- Does the **water and heating system** work?
- When are **refuse and recycling collected**?
- How do you **contact the landlord** with an issue or complaint?



Potential hazards

There are a range of potential hazards in a property that could harm the health and safety of people living or visiting there. Some hazards are more dangerous and/or common than others.

Other hazards, such as pollutants, may be equally, or more serious, but may be less likely to occur, less visible, or may affect only certain parts of the country, such as:

- Radiation (Radon gas)
- Lead
- Asbestos

Cold

A cold home is one that cannot be maintained at a temperature between 18°C to 21°C at a reasonable cost to the occupier. Living in cold conditions can cause serious health problems.

Landlords:

- Supply adequate heating in proper working order.
- Ensure the property is insulated, meeting at a minimum EPC E rating.
- Repair broken windows and doors.

Tenants:

- Check if there is [central heating](#) (radiators or air vents connected to a central heat source, such as a boiler), and that it is working properly.
- If there is no central heating, make sure there is an [alternative type of adequate heating](#), such as storage heaters.
- A low EPC rating indicates that your property does not retain heat very well and may be very cold during the winter. Ask your landlord to carry out some of the recommendations in the [Energy Performance Certificate](#).

Damp and mould

Damp and mould can cause or worsen respiratory problems, infections, allergies or asthma. It can also affect the immune system, particularly in young children. Damp also contributes to excess heat loss and puts up heating bills, as well as causing damage to building fabric and contents, including clothes and furniture.

Landlords:

- Tackle dampness, including if necessary making repairs to the property's structure and exterior (this includes repairs that are likely to be the cause of damp and mould, such as leaking gutters).
- Make sure that the property is properly ventilated.

Tenants:

- Look out for damp patches on walls and ceilings, mould, peeling wallpaper and condensation on windows.
- Check that the property is adequately ventilated, for example ensure you can open and close windows securely.

Heat

Excess heat in a property can cause dehydration, stroke and heart attacks, breathing difficulties and infections. This is more likely to affect older people.

Trip and fall hazards

Trips and falls can lead to significant injury, broken bones or loss of confidence. They are more likely to take place in baths and showers, on stairs or around low balconies and windows. Older people and the under-fives tend to be more vulnerable.

Landlords:

- Keep stairs and floor surfaces in good repair and free from trip hazards.
- Make sure that low-level large windows have restrictors or safety rails.
- Ensure there is good lighting on stairs and that stairs have appropriate handrails.

Tenants:

- Look for any obvious trip hazards and/or uneven surfaces (particularly on stairs, bathroom floors, at the exits of showers).

Fire risks

Fire can cause serious harm from burns and the inhalation of smoke or gas.

Landlords:

- Provide working smoke alarms on every floor.
- Situate cooking, heating and other electrical appliances away from flammable materials and fire exits.
- Regularly test appliances and maintain them in a good condition, making sure that any furniture supplied has the required labels and fireproofing.

Tenants:

- Check for working smoke alarms on each floor.
- Find the easiest way to escape in the event of a fire, and check that locks on fire exit doors can be opened without a key.

**Electrical hazards**

Faulty wiring and old, untested electrical installations can lead to shocks, burns and even death. Wired fuses or cartridges present a much higher risk and are a significant fire hazard.

Landlords:

- Make sure that electrical installations and electrical equipment supplied is safe at the outset of the tenancy.
- Regularly carry out basic safety checks to make sure that the electrical installations and appliances are safe and working.
- In large [Houses in Multiple Occupation \(HMOs\)](#), carry out [safety checks on electrical installations](#) at least every 5 years.

Tenants:

- Check that the lights turn on and off and check that plug sockets are not damaged or coming loose from the wall.
- There should be no frayed or exposed cables or wires.
- Check there are [Residual Current Devices \(RCDs\)](#) protecting all circuits. (An RCD is a safety device that switches off electricity automatically if there is a fault).



Overcrowding

It is illegal for landlords to let a property to more people than it is suitable for. Overcrowding can cause accidents and the spread of contagious disease, and can prevent quick and safe exit in the event of a fire.

For Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), local housing authorities must impose conditions as to the minimum room size which may be occupied as sleeping accommodation. A room smaller than the specified size must not be used as sleeping accommodation, and communal space in other parts of the HMO cannot be used to compensate for rooms smaller than the prescribed minimum. Before letting an HMO, landlords must ensure that the property meets local housing authority minimum standards.

Landlords:

- Make sure that rooms for sleeping and the kitchen, bathroom, living or other recreational spaces are sufficient for the number of occupants.

Tenants:

- Walk through the property and see if there is enough room for each person who will live there.
- Make sure there are adequate kitchen and bathroom facilities for the number of occupants. Look for a suitable area where you can cook and prepare food.

Security

Properties should be safe and secure. If the property is burgled and it's not the landlord's fault, the landlord will not be responsible for the loss of your belongings, so you should have your own home contents insurance policy.

Landlords:

- Make sure that windows, doors or other points of entry can be properly secured.
- Make sure access to the property is well-lit.

Tenants:

- Check there are suitable locks on the doors and windows.

Lighting and noise

Inadequate lighting and excessive noise can cause health problems, as well as things like trips and falls.

Landlords:

- Provide adequate lighting (although tenants are usually responsible for replacing light bulbs after the start of the tenancy).

Tenants:

- Make sure there are appropriate fittings for light bulbs, and that bulbs can be easily changed.

Hygiene

Poor hygiene can cause illness, so you should be able to keep your property clean, prepare meals safely and rely on well-functioning drainage.

Landlords:

- Should provide adequate cooking, bathroom and waste disposal facilities.
- In large [HMOs](#), landlords must provide enough bins for rubbish and adequate means of disposing of rubbish.

Tenants:

- Ask about how often refuse is collected, especially in any shared communal areas.
- Check there is space for and access to outdoor bins.
- Ask who is responsible for the upkeep of the garden.
- Make sure there is sufficient usable space in the kitchen for safe storing, preparing and cooking food.

Water supply

Inadequate or unsafe water supply or lack of space for personal washing and for clothes washing or drying, and lack of facilities for the removal of wastewater (blocked/broken drainpipes) can lead to illness.

Landlords:

- Keep the water supply in repair and proper working order.
- Make sure the property has an adequate water supply and drinking water is supplied from the mains, instead of a water storage tank.

Tenants:

- Check the plumbing works by flushing toilets and turning taps or showers on.
- Run the hot water and make sure there is adequate hand washing facilities.
- See if there is a cold feed for drinking water (rather than from cold water tank).

Pests and vermin

Infestations from insects, rats and mice can cause illness including vomiting and diarrhoea. Pests and vermin can also cause asthma, other allergic reactions and stress. Pests can contaminate food and preparation surfaces.

Landlords:

- Ensure the property is free of pests and vermin (in cases where these have not been caused by the lifestyle of the tenant).
- Maintain the structure and exterior of the property (helps to prevent entry by pests or vermin)
- Provide secure waste disposal facilities.

Tenants:

- Check for pests like bed bugs or carpet mites if the property is furnished.
- Look for cracks, holes or voids that would allow the entry or shelter of pests.
- Look for signs of vermin – such as mice droppings or nests.

Chemicals and hazardous substances

Asbestos was commonly used in building materials in the 1950s and 1960s as a material to resist the spread of fire. It was also used in Artex predominantly before

1985. However it was not banned from use in new buildings until around 2000. Materials containing asbestos are generally safe if they are in good condition but if broken or damaged can release harmful fibres and dust into the air. Your landlord should seek professional advice on its removal. You can find out more from: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos.

In certain parts of the country there is a risk to health from exposure to radon gas and you can find more details from: www.ukradon.org.

Lead from paint or water/waste pipes has the potential to cause nervous disorders, mental health or behavioural problems. Paint with a high level of lead content tends to be found in older houses and dissolved lead is only likely in acidic (i.e. usually private) water supplies.

Gas appliances which are faulty can release carbon monoxide, which can cause suffocation. Commonly seen carbon monoxide warning signs include stains on fireplaces and popping sounds coming from a kitchen grill which can burn when closed. For more information about carbon monoxide: www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/co.htm.

Leaking gas can cause explosions. You should know what to do and how you can [switch off the gas supply in case of a gas leak](#).

Solid fuel appliances like wood burning stoves and open fires can also cause carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide alarms are required by law for privately rented properties with such appliances.

Structural defects

Properties that have been badly maintained can lead to a risk of physical injury.

Make sure:

The roof looks in a good state of repair – look for any loose tiles or leaking gutters.

The windows open and close properly.

There are no cracks or holes in walls, loose panels or badly fitted partitions or structural elements.

You can access the property entrance and all rooms safely – you should not have to put yourself at risk of physical injury by climbing or walking on structurally unsafe ground, stairs or landings.

Additional information

This guidance is not exhaustive.

You should always seek advice from an independent organisation on any specific situation that arises.

Your local council's environmental health team will be able to advise you on specific cases.

Shelter have produced advice on [how to get in contact with your local environmental health team](#).

You can also find your local council's website here: www.gov.uk/find-local-council.

Further information about landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities can be found [here](#).

These organisations may also be able to help:

Shelter

The housing and homelessness charity.

Citizens Advice

Free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities.

Gas Safe Register

Help and advice on gas safety issues.

Electrical Safety First

Help and advice on electrical safety issues.

Accreditation Network UK

A central resource for tenants, landlords and scheme operators interested in accreditation of private rented housing.

Care & Repair England

An independent charitable organisation which aims to improve older people's housing.

Government accepts no responsibility for the content of external sites.

Also in this series

The government's '[How to Rent](#)' guide helps tenants and landlords in the private rented sector understand their rights and responsibilities.

The government's '[How to Let](#)' guide provides information for landlords and property agents about their rights and responsibilities when letting out property.

The government's '[How to Lease](#)' guide helps current and prospective leaseholders understand their rights and responsibilities.

The government's '[How to Buy a Home](#)' guide provides information to home buyers.

The government's '[How to Sell a Home](#)' guide provides information to those looking to sell their home.

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