# The Complete Off-Campus Accommodation Guide & Checklist for Indian Students in Germany

## Part I: Assembling Your "Bewerbungsmappe" – The German Rental Application Portfolio

### Introduction

Securing off-campus accommodation in Germany is fundamentally different from rental processes in many other countries. It is not merely a search for an available flat but a highly competitive application process, more akin to applying for a job. Landlords, particularly in popular university cities, often receive dozens, if not hundreds, of applications for a single property.1 Success hinges on presenting a professional, comprehensive, and trustworthy application portfolio, known in German as a

*Bewerbungsmappe*. This portfolio is your first and most critical introduction to a potential landlord. A well-prepared *Bewerbungsmappe* demonstrates foresight, organization, and financial reliability—qualities that German landlords prize above all else. For an international student arriving from India, understanding this cultural and procedural nuance is the single most important factor in navigating the housing market successfully.1

This guide is designed to provide the foundational knowledge necessary to build a compelling application, evaluate properties remotely, communicate effectively with landlords, and avoid common pitfalls and scams. It will culminate in a practical, one-page checklist to use during your search.

### Decoding German Rental Lingo

Before beginning a search, it is essential to understand the specific vocabulary used in German rental listings (*Wohnungsanzeigen*). Misinterpreting these terms, especially those related to cost, can lead to significant and unexpected financial strain. The distinction between "cold rent" and "warm rent" is the most critical concept for accurate budgeting.

| German Term | English Translation | Detailed Explanation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Kaltmiete* | Cold Rent | This is the base rent for the property itself, excluding all additional costs. It is the figure often displayed most prominently in listings and is used to calculate the security deposit.3 |
| *Nebenkosten* | Additional Costs | These are the operational or service charges for the building. They typically include heating, water, trash collection, building maintenance (e.g., cleaning of common areas, gardening), property taxes, and building insurance. These costs are pooled for the entire building and divided among tenants, usually based on apartment size.3 |
| *Warmmiete* | Warm Rent | This is the "all-inclusive" rent and the actual amount paid to the landlord each month. It is the sum of the *Kaltmiete* and the *Nebenkosten*.4 | **Crucially, electricity (*Strom*) and internet are almost never included in the *Warmmiete*** and must be contracted and paid for separately by the tenant.6 |
| *Kaution* | Security Deposit | A refundable deposit paid to the landlord to cover potential damages or unpaid rent. By law, it cannot exceed three months' *Kaltmiete*.10 |
| *EBK (Einbauküche)* | Fitted Kitchen | This indicates that the apartment comes with a kitchen (cabinets, sink, stove, etc.). Its absence means the apartment is just an empty room with plumbing connections, and the tenant must provide their own kitchen.12 |
| *WG (Wohngemeinschaft)* | Flatshare | A shared apartment where tenants have individual rooms but share common spaces like the kitchen and bathroom. This is a very popular and cost-effective option for students.14 |
| *SCHUFA* | Credit Report | The brand name for Germany's main credit reporting agency. A SCHUFA report is a standard requirement for most rental applications to prove financial reliability.2 |
| *Anmeldung* | City Registration | The mandatory process of registering your address with the local citizens' office (*Bürgeramt*) within two weeks of moving in.9 |
| *Wohnungsgeberbestätigung* | Landlord's Confirmation | A specific form signed by the landlord confirming that you have moved into the property. This document is legally required to complete the *Anmeldung*.9 |
| *Hausordnung* | House Rules | A set of rules for the building, often part of the rental contract, governing things like quiet hours (*Ruhezeiten*), use of common areas, and waste disposal.20 |

The financial structure of German rent requires careful attention. The *Nebenkosten* included in the *Warmmiete* are a monthly pre-payment or estimate (*Vorauszahlung*). Once a year, the landlord or property management calculates the actual costs for the entire building and issues a detailed statement called the *Nebenkostenabrechnung*. If your pre-payments were insufficient to cover your share of the actual costs, you will receive a bill for the difference. If you overpaid, you will receive a refund.5 This system means your total housing cost is not fixed and can change annually.

### The SCHUFA Challenge & Your Financial Arsenal

The single greatest hurdle for any newcomer to Germany, especially international students, is the requirement for a SCHUFA credit report.16 The SCHUFA is a private corporation that compiles data on individuals' payment histories for contracts, loans, and bank accounts to generate a credit score.14 Landlords view this report as the primary evidence of a prospective tenant's financial trustworthiness.24

This creates a classic "chicken-and-egg" problem: to get a rental contract, you need a SCHUFA report. But to generate a SCHUFA record, you first need to perform actions that are reported to them, such as opening a German bank account or signing a mobile phone contract, which often require a registered address (*Anmeldung*). And to get a registered address, you need a rental contract.14

The reason for this stringent requirement is rooted in Germany's robust pro-tenant laws. Once a tenant has moved in, the legal process for eviction due to non-payment or other contract violations is exceptionally long, complex, and costly for the landlord.1 Consequently, landlords are highly risk-averse and perform extensive due diligence

*before* signing a contract. The SCHUFA report is their standard tool for this risk mitigation.

As an international student, you will not have a SCHUFA record upon arrival. The key is not to view this as a deficiency but to proactively address the landlord's underlying concern—the risk of non-payment—by providing an overwhelming package of alternative financial proofs. Your goal is to make your application so financially compelling that the absence of a SCHUFA report becomes irrelevant.

| Alternative Financial Proof | Description & Strategic Value |
| --- | --- |
| **Blocked Account Statement (*Finanzierungsnachweis*)** | This is your most powerful tool. The blocked account, a mandatory requirement for your student visa, contains a minimum of €11,904, proving you have sufficient funds to cover your living expenses for an entire year. Presenting this document directly demonstrates to the landlord that your ability to pay rent is secured and officially verified by the German government.25 |
| **Parental Guarantee (*Bürgschaft*)** | This is a formal, legally binding letter written in German, in which your parents agree to cover your rent payments if you are unable to do so. It serves as a personal guarantee that directly mitigates the landlord's financial risk. This is a common and well-understood arrangement in Germany.2 |
| **University Letter of Acceptance (*Zulassungsbescheid*)** | This official document confirms your status as a student at a reputable German institution, adding legitimacy to your application and explaining your reason for being in the country.2 |
| **Scholarship Confirmation** | If you have a scholarship, provide the official award letter. This document, especially from a recognized provider like the DAAD, is a strong indicator of financial stability and academic merit.2 |
| **Bank Statements from India** | While less impactful than a German blocked account, providing statements from the last three to six months from an Indian bank can help demonstrate a history of financial stability. Ensure the statements are clear and, if possible, have a summary of the closing balance in Euros.16 |

### Your Document Arsenal: The Mieterselbstauskunft and Supporting Papers

The centerpiece of your application, after your financial proofs, is the *Mieterselbstauskunft* or "tenant self-disclosure form." This is a standardized questionnaire provided by the landlord or real estate agent that asks for your personal and financial details.31 It is crucial to fill this out completely, neatly, and truthfully. False statements on this form can be grounds for immediate termination of the rental contract, even after you have moved in.32

To present a professional and efficient application, you should have all necessary documents scanned and compiled into a single, well-organized PDF file, ready to be emailed immediately after a viewing or inquiry. This demonstrates that you are a serious and prepared applicant.

Your complete *Bewerbungsmappe* PDF should include the following documents in order:

1. **Cover Letter (Optional but Recommended):** A brief, polite, one-page letter introducing yourself, stating which apartment you are applying for, explaining your status as a student at your university, and briefly summarizing your financial security (mentioning the blocked account and parental guarantee). This adds a personal touch that can set you apart.1
2. **Completed *Mieterselbstauskunft*:** The self-disclosure form.31
3. **Copy of Passport and Student Visa:** Clear copies of your passport's photo page and your German national student visa.9
4. **University Letter of Acceptance (*Zulassungsbescheid*):** Proof of your enrollment.2
5. **Proof of Financial Resources:** This is the most critical section. Include:
   * The confirmation of your blocked account (*Finanzierungsnachweis*).25
   * The signed parental guarantee letter (*Bürgschaft*).2
   * Any scholarship award letters.27

## Part II: The Virtual Viewing Masterclass: Inspecting Your Future Home from Afar

### Introduction

As an international student, you will likely be conducting your apartment search from India, making an in-person viewing impossible. Therefore, a live, interactive video tour via a platform like WhatsApp, FaceTime, or Zoom is an absolute necessity. Pre-recorded videos or 3D tours are insufficient as they do not allow for real-time questions or specific requests.35 A landlord or agent who refuses to conduct a live video call should be considered a major red flag, as this is a common tactic used in rental scams to hide the fact that the property does not exist or is not under their control.37 Treat the virtual viewing with the same diligence as an in-person inspection. Prepare your questions in advance and have a clear plan for what you need to see.

### Systematic Inspection Guide

During the video call, politely but firmly guide the landlord or agent through the apartment, asking them to show you specific details. Do not let them rush or simply pan the camera around the room.

* **Walls, Ceilings, and Corners:** Ask the agent to zoom in on the corners of rooms, especially near the ceiling, and around window frames. Pay close attention to any dark spots, peeling or bubbling paint, or water stains. These are tell-tale signs of *Schimmel* (mould), a common and serious issue in German buildings, particularly older ones (*Altbau*), due to humidity and insulation issues. Also look for significant cracks (*Risse*) in the walls.40
* **Windows (*Fenster*):** Ask the agent to show you the windows up close. Verify if they are double-glazed (*doppelverglast*), which is standard in most modernised buildings and crucial for insulation against cold and noise. Poor insulation will lead to significantly higher heating costs in winter. Request that they open and close at least one window to check that the seals are intact and the mechanism functions properly.45
* **Flooring (*Boden*):** Examine the condition of the floors. Are there deep scratches in the laminate or parquet? Are tiles in the bathroom or kitchen cracked? Note any significant damage.47
* **Plumbing and Water Pressure (*Wasserdruck*):** This is a critical check. Ask the landlord to turn on the taps in both the kitchen and bathroom sinks, as well as the shower. Observe the water flow. Is the pressure strong and steady? Weak water pressure can be a persistent annoyance and difficult to fix.48
* **Electricals (*Elektrik*):** Ask the agent to point out the number and location of electrical outlets (*Steckdosen*) in each room. Older buildings may have surprisingly few, which can be inconvenient for a student with multiple electronic devices. Ask them to flip a light switch to ensure it works.48

### Navigating German Apartment Quirks

German apartments have several unique characteristics that can be surprising to newcomers. Clarifying these points during the virtual tour is essential to avoid costly and inconvenient assumptions.

* **The Kitchen Question (*Einbauküche*):** This is arguably the most important and uniquely German aspect to verify. You must explicitly ask the landlord, *"Ist eine Einbauküche, also EBK, in der Kaltmiete enthalten?"* (Is a fitted kitchen included in the cold rent?). In Germany, it is very common for unfurnished apartments to be rented out as completely empty shells. This often means no kitchen cabinets, no countertop, no sink, and no appliances—just a room with water and electrical connections on the wall.12 If the listing does not explicitly state "mit EBK" (with fitted kitchen), you should assume there is no kitchen. The previous tenant owns the kitchen and will take it with them when they move. If a kitchen is present during the viewing, it might be for sale by the outgoing tenant (  
  *Ablöse*). Clarifying this point is non-negotiable, as purchasing and installing a new kitchen can cost thousands of euros and take several weeks.
* **Heating System (*Heizung*):** Ask to see the heating system. Is it central heating (*Zentralheizung*), where costs are shared across the building and included in the *Nebenkosten*? Or is it a self-contained gas heater for the flat (*Gas-Etagenheizung*), for which you would need to sign a separate contract with a gas provider? Ask to see the thermostat and radiators in each room. Understanding the heating source is vital for budgeting your utility costs.46
* **Laundry Facilities (*Waschküche*):** Do not assume the apartment has a washing machine or even a place to connect one. Ask the landlord to show you if there is a designated washing machine connection (*Waschmaschinenanschluss*), which is typically located in the bathroom or kitchen. If not, ask if there is a communal laundry room (*Waschküche*) in the basement (*Keller*) with shared, coin-operated machines.53
* **Smoke Detectors (*Rauchmelder*):** German federal law mandates the installation of smoke detectors in all rental properties. The specific requirements vary slightly by state, but as a rule, they must be present in all bedrooms, children's rooms, and hallways that serve as escape routes.56 Ask the landlord to point them out on the ceiling during the tour to confirm compliance with safety regulations.58

### Assessing the Building and Neighbourhood

Your living experience extends beyond the four walls of your apartment. Use the virtual tour to assess the building's common areas and supplement this with online research.

* **Common Areas:** Ask to be shown the building's main entrance, the staircase (*Treppenhaus*), and the area with the mailboxes (*Briefkästen*). The cleanliness and state of repair of these shared spaces are a direct indicator of the quality of the property management (*Hausverwaltung*) and the consideration of your future neighbours. A dirty, poorly-lit staircase or overflowing trash bins can signal a neglectful landlord who may be unresponsive to repair requests.47
* **Storage and Amenities:** Inquire about a dedicated storage unit in the basement or attic (*Keller- oder Dachbodenabteil*), which is a common feature in German apartment buildings and very useful for storing luggage and other items. Also, ask about secure bicycle storage (*Fahrradkeller*), as cycling is a popular mode of transport.
* **Neighbourhood Research:** Before or after the tour, use Google Maps and Street View to conduct a virtual walk-around of the neighbourhood. Identify the nearest public transportation stops (U-Bahn, S-Bahn, bus, tram), supermarkets (like Aldi, Lidl, Rewe, Edeka), and pharmacies (*Apotheke*). Assess the general atmosphere of the street. Does it look well-maintained and safe?.59

## Part III: Mastering Landlord Communication: The Essential Questions to Ask

### Introduction

During your virtual tour and in subsequent email communications, the questions you ask serve a dual purpose. First, they ensure you gather all the critical information needed to make an informed decision. Second, they demonstrate to the landlord that you are a diligent, responsible, and well-prepared applicant who understands the intricacies of the German rental system. This can significantly enhance your application's standing.

### Financial Clarity

These questions are designed to leave no ambiguity about the total cost of renting the property.

* "What is the exact *Kaltmiete* per month?"
* "What is the monthly pre-payment for *Nebenkosten* (*Nebenkostenvorauszahlung*)? Could you please provide a breakdown of the specific services included in this amount (e.g., heating, water, trash disposal, building cleaning, etc.)?".3
* "Which utilities are *not* included in the *Nebenkosten* and require me to register for a separate contract? I assume this includes electricity (*Strom*) and internet?".9
* "What is the total amount of the security deposit (*Kaution*)? I would like to exercise my legal right to pay it in three equal monthly installments, with the first payment due at the start of the tenancy. Is that acceptable?".10
* "Can you confirm that the *Kaution* will be deposited into a separate escrow account (*Mietkautionskonto*), as required by German law (§ 551 BGB)? And will you provide me with written proof of this deposit after it has been made?".10

The final question regarding the separate deposit account is a crucial test of a landlord's legitimacy and professionalism. German law strictly mandates that a tenant's deposit be kept separate from the landlord's personal assets to protect it in case of the landlord's bankruptcy.10 A legitimate landlord will immediately understand and agree to this legal requirement. Any hesitation, confusion, or refusal to answer this question is a significant red flag, suggesting either ignorance of the law or malicious intent. Asking this question clearly signals that you are an informed tenant who knows their rights, which can deter unscrupulous individuals.

### Understanding the Mietvertrag (Rental Contract)

These questions clarify the terms of your tenancy and the rules you will be expected to follow.

* "Is the rental contract for an indefinite term (*unbefristet*) or a fixed term (*befristet*)?" (Indefinite is the standard and most secure type of lease for tenants in Germany).20
* "What is the statutory notice period (*Kündigungsfrist*) for the tenant to terminate the contract?" (The legal standard for a tenant is three months to the end of a calendar month, regardless of how long they have lived there).3
* "Could you please provide a copy of the *Hausordnung* (house rules)? I would like to be aware of important rules, such as the designated quiet hours (*Ruhezeiten*).".20
* "What is the policy on subletting (*Untermiete*)? Is it generally permitted with your written consent if, for example, I need to be away for a semester for an internship?".63

### Logistical Necessities

These questions address the practical steps of moving in and establishing your legal residency.

* "Who is the primary contact person for maintenance and repairs (*Reparaturen*)? What is the best way to report an issue?".65
* "Upon my arrival and the official handover of the keys, will you provide me with the signed *Wohnungsgeberbestätigung* form? I will need this immediately to complete my mandatory city registration (*Anmeldung*).".9

The question about the *Wohnungsgeberbestätigung* is of paramount importance. This single document is the gateway to your entire bureaucratic life in Germany. Without it, you cannot complete your *Anmeldung*. Without the *Anmeldung*, you cannot receive your tax identification number (*Steuer-ID*), which is necessary for any part-time job. You may also face difficulties opening a full-service German bank account, getting a German mobile phone contract, or, most critically, applying for the extension of your student residence permit.17 Confirming that the landlord understands their legal obligation to provide this form promptly is not just a logistical detail; it is a prerequisite for successfully establishing your legal and administrative life in Germany.

## Part IV: Your Shield Against Scams: A Guide to Renting Safely

### Introduction

International students are prime targets for rental scams across the globe, and Germany is no exception. Scammers exploit the urgency, distance, and unfamiliarity with local laws that international students often face.37 A healthy dose of skepticism and a systematic approach to verification are your best defenses. The fundamental rule is to

**never transfer any money before you have signed a legitimate rental contract and, ideally, have the keys in hand**.70

### Anatomy of a German Rental Scam

While tactics can vary, most rental scams in Germany fall into several common categories:

* **Phantom Listings:** Scammers post advertisements for apartments that do not exist or are not actually for rent. They often use attractive photos stolen from legitimate real estate listings or hotel websites.37
* **The "Landlord Abroad" Ploy:** This is the most prevalent scam. The fraudster poses as the landlord, claims to be living in another country (often the UK or Spain), and is therefore unable to show you the apartment in person. They will build a narrative of trust and then ask you to transfer the deposit (*Kaution*) and first month's rent via an untraceable method. They promise to courier the keys to you upon receipt of payment. The keys never arrive, and the "landlord" disappears with your money.37
* **Advance Fee Fraud:** A scammer may ask for a fee simply to view the property, to process your application, or to "reserve" the apartment for you. Legitimate landlords do not charge for viewings, and any holding deposit (*Reservierungsgebühr*) is highly unusual and often legally questionable.37
* **Identity Theft:** Some fake listings are created solely to harvest the personal documents in your *Bewerbungsmappe*. Scammers then use your passport copy, visa, and financial details to commit identity theft or to create more convincing scams targeting other victims.69

### The Red Flag Compendium

Be extremely cautious and cease communication if you encounter any of the following warning signs:

* **High-Pressure Tactics:** The landlord creates a sense of extreme urgency, telling you that many other people are interested and you must make a decision and transfer money immediately to secure the flat.70
* **Untraceable Payment Methods:** The landlord insists on payment via wire transfer (like Western Union or MoneyGram), cryptocurrency, or services like PayPal's "Friends and Family" option. These methods offer no buyer protection and are effectively the same as sending cash. All legitimate rental transactions in Germany are conducted via standard bank transfer (*Überweisung*) to a German bank account, and only *after* a contract has been signed.37
* **Price is Too Good to Be True:** The advertised rent is significantly lower than the average for comparable apartments in that neighborhood. Research the typical rent levels (*Mietspiegel*) for the city you are moving to in order to recognize an unrealistic offer.71
* **Poor or Evasive Communication:** The landlord refuses to have a live video call, provides vague or nonsensical answers to specific questions, or communicates in poorly written German or English with unusual grammar. They may insist on communicating only through messaging platforms like WhatsApp.71
* **Inability to View the Property:** The landlord has a constant stream of excuses for why a live video tour is not possible. This is the single biggest indicator of a scam.37

### Verification and Due Diligence

Take these proactive steps to verify a listing's legitimacy before sending any documents or money:

* **Reverse Image Search:** Use Google Images (images.google.com) to perform a reverse search on the photos from the listing. This can quickly reveal if the images have been stolen from another real estate site, a hotel booking page, or an old listing.37
* **Verify the Address:** Look up the property address on Google Maps and use Street View to confirm that the building shown matches the photos in the listing. Be wary if the address provided is vague or incomplete.70
* **Request In-Person Verification:** If you have any friends, family, or contacts in the city, ask them if they can walk by the property to confirm it exists. Some university international offices or student unions may also offer limited assistance or be able to connect you with a local student who can help. There are also paid services that can perform this check on your behalf.60

## Part V: From Contract to Keys: Finalizing the Process

### Reviewing the Mietvertrag (Rental Contract)

Once a landlord has approved your application, they will send you the rental contract (*Mietvertrag*). This is a legally binding document, and you must understand its contents before signing.

* **Thorough Review:** Do not sign anything you do not understand. Use online tools like DeepL or Google Translate to get a preliminary translation of the document. However, for a legally binding contract, it is highly advisable to seek assistance.
* **Seek Expert Advice:** Most university student unions (*AStA - Allgemeiner Studierendenausschuss*) offer free or low-cost legal counseling, including contract checking services for students. Alternatively, you can join a local tenants' association (*Mieterverein*). For a small annual fee, they provide legal advice and will review your contract for any illegal or unusual clauses. This is a highly recommended investment.
* **Key Clauses to Verify:** Ensure the contract accurately lists: the full names of all tenants and the landlord; the precise property address; the exact *Kaltmiete* and a detailed breakdown of the *Nebenkosten*; the *Kaution* amount and confirmation of the three-installment payment plan; and the lease duration (indefinite or fixed-term).9

### The Handover Protocol (Übergabeprotokoll)

The handover protocol is one of the most important documents you will sign during your tenancy, second only to the rental contract itself.

* **Purpose:** The *Übergabeprotokoll* is a detailed report documenting the exact condition of the apartment at the moment you receive the keys. It should list every room and feature, noting any pre-existing defects such as scratches on the floor, stains on the wall, cracks in tiles, or non-functional appliances.11
* **Your Responsibility:** As you will not be present for a pre-move-in inspection with the landlord, you must conduct this process yourself immediately upon arrival. Before unpacking your luggage, go through every room systematically.
  + **Document Everything:** Write down every single flaw, no matter how minor.
  + **Take Photographic and Video Evidence:** Take clear, well-lit photos and videos of every room and every defect you have noted. Ensure your photos are date-stamped if possible.
* **Finalizing the Protocol:** Send your detailed list and the accompanying photos/videos to your landlord via email immediately. Request that they acknowledge receipt and confirm that this documentation will be added as an official addendum to the handover protocol. This document is your primary evidence when you move out and will be crucial for disputing any unjust claims against your *Kaution*.11

### Your First Days in Germany: The Bureaucratic Sprint

Once you have the keys and have documented the apartment's condition, you must complete several essential administrative tasks within a very short timeframe.

1. **City Registration (*Anmeldung*):** You are legally required to register your new address at the local citizens' office (*Bürgeramt* or *Einwohnermeldeamt*) within 14 days of moving in. You will need to book an appointment online (do this as far in advance as possible, as appointments can be scarce) and bring your passport, visa, and the signed *Wohnungsgeberbestätigung* from your landlord. This process is free of charge and is the foundational step for everything else.9
2. **Set Up Utilities:** Immediately sign up for an electricity (*Strom*) contract with a provider. You can use comparison websites like Check24 or Verivox to find the best rates. You will also need to sign up for an internet contract, but be aware that installation can sometimes take several weeks.9
3. **Register for the Broadcasting Fee (*Rundfunkbeitrag*):** After you complete your *Anmeldung*, you will receive a letter regarding the mandatory broadcasting fee (formerly known as the GEZ fee). This is a license fee for public broadcasting that every household in Germany must pay, regardless of whether you own a TV or radio. You must register and pay this fee; failure to do so will result in fines.9

## Appendix: The One-Page International Student's Accommodation Checklist for Germany

*(This section is designed to be printed and used as a practical tool during the housing search)*

### **The International Student's Accommodation Checklist: Germany**

Use this checklist to evaluate off-campus housing options safely and effectively from abroad.

#### **Section 1: The Virtual Tour Inspection**

*A live video call is mandatory. Refusal is a major red flag.*

**Apartment Interior:**

* [ ] **Walls & Ceilings:** Check corners, behind furniture, and around windows for dark spots, peeling paint, or water stains (signs of mould - *Schimmel*).
* [ ] **Windows:** Confirm they are double-glazed (*doppelverglast*). Ask to see one opened and closed to check the seal.
* [ ] **Kitchen:** **CRITICAL:** Ask "Is a fitted kitchen (*Einbauküche* / *EBK*) included in the rent?" If not, the room is empty.
* [ ] **Bathroom:** Check for mould. Ask to see the shower and taps run to test water pressure (*Wasserdruck*).
* [ ] **Plumbing:** Ask to see taps run in both the kitchen and bathroom.
* [ ] **Heating:** Ask what type of heating system (*Heizung*) is used and to see the thermostat.
* [ ] **Laundry:** Ask to see the washing machine connection (*Waschmaschinenanschluss*) or the shared laundry room (*Waschküche*).
* [ ] **Safety:** Confirm working smoke detectors (*Rauchmelder*) are installed in bedrooms and hallways.

**Building & Neighbourhood:**

* [ ] **Common Areas:** Ask to see the building entrance, staircase (*Treppenhaus*), and mailboxes. Note their cleanliness.
* [ ] **Amenities:** Inquire about a basement/attic storage unit (*Kellerabteil*) and bicycle storage.
* [ ] **Online Research:** Use Google Maps/Street View to check the neighbourhood for safety, public transport, and grocery stores.

#### **Section 2: Key Questions for the Landlord**

*Ask these questions via email or during the video call to ensure clarity and demonstrate you are an informed applicant.*

**Finances & Costs:**

* [ ] What is the exact **cold rent (*Kaltmiete*)**?
* [ ] What is the monthly pre-payment for **additional costs (*Nebenkosten*)**, and what does it include?
* [ ] Which utilities (e.g., electricity, internet) are **NOT included** and must I register for myself?
* [ ] What is the total **security deposit (*Kaution*)**? (Max. 3x *Kaltmiete*).
* [ ] Can I pay the *Kaution* in **three monthly installments**, as is my legal right?
* [ ] Will the *Kaution* be held in a legally required **separate escrow account (*Mietkautionskonto*)**?

**Lease & Rules:**

* [ ] Is the lease indefinite (*unbefristet*) or fixed-term (*befristet*)?
* [ ] What is the **notice period (*Kündigungsfrist*)** to terminate the lease? (Should be 3 months for you).
* [ ] Can I get a copy of the **house rules (*Hausordnung*)**?
* [ ] What is the policy on **subletting (*Untermiete*)**?

**Logistics & Bureaucracy:**

* [ ] Who is the contact for **repairs (*Reparaturen*)**?
* [ ] **CRITICAL:** Will you provide the signed **Landlord's Confirmation (*Wohnungsgeberbestätigung*)** immediately upon my arrival for my city registration (*Anmeldung*)?

#### **Section 3: Scam Prevention - Red Flags to Watch For**

*Cease communication immediately if you encounter any of these.*

* [ ] **Pressure to Act Fast:** Landlord creates urgency, claiming many other applicants.
* [ ] **Upfront Payment Request:** Any demand for money before signing a contract (e.g., for a viewing, to reserve the flat).
* [ ] **Untraceable Payment Method:** Insistence on wire transfer (Western Union, MoneyGram), cryptocurrency, or PayPal "Friends & Family". Legitimate payments are by bank transfer (*Überweisung*) to a German account *after* signing the lease.
* [ ] **Price Too Good to Be True:** Rent is significantly below the local average.
* [ ] **Refusal of Live Video Tour:** Landlord makes excuses for why they cannot show you the apartment in real-time.
* [ ] **"Landlord is Abroad":** A classic scam narrative used to justify the inability to meet and the need for a wire transfer.
* [ ] **Evasive/Unprofessional Communication:** Vague answers to specific questions; poor grammar; communication only via text/WhatsApp.

**Final Check:**

* [ ] **Never send money before signing a contract.**
* [ ] **Never send money without a live video tour and verifying the landlord's details.**
* [ ] **Watermark copies of your personal documents before sending.**
* [ ] **Have the rental contract checked by your university's student union (*AStA*) or a tenants' association (*Mieterverein*) before signing.**

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