

How to Rent a House or Apartment – Video

In this lesson, you can learn how to rent a house or an apartment in English using useful phrases and vocabulary.

You'll see the process of renting a house or apartment from start to finish: from phoning an estate agent to make enquiries to moving out at the end of your contract. You'll learn vocabulary to deal with every aspect of renting an apartment in English.

1. Phoning An Estate Agent

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Man-on-the-phone-scaled.webp>)

Daniel: Hello, Broom Cupboard Real Estate, how can I help?

Kasia: Hello, I'm looking to rent an apartment. A friend of mine told me about your agency, and I was hoping you could help me.

D: Of course! Do you have a specific property in mind?

K: No, not yet.

D: No problem. First question: do you know which area you'd like to live in?

K: Well, I work in Cowley, so somewhere in the east would make sense.

D: Sure, and... Are you looking to rent just for yourself?

K: I'm planning to share with a friend.

D: So, a two-bed?

K: Right.

D: And, do you have an idea of your budget? You don't have to be exact, but if you could give me a range, that would be useful.

K: As cheap as possible, really.

D: I see... Well, two-bedroom flats are generally around eight to twelve hundred a month at the lower end.

K: Hmmm... OK.

D: One more important question: are you looking for a furnished place?

K: Yes, furnished.

D: That's fine. Is there anything else you need? For example, do you have pets? Do you need a place with off-street parking? Do you want a garden?

K: No, no pets. I don't have a car. A garden would be a plus but it's not necessary.

D: Got it. I'll take a look at what's available and get back to you in half an hour or so. Can I just take a phone number...

Look at four questions you heard when you rent a house or apartment in English.

1. Do you know which _____ you'd like to live in?
2. Are you looking to rent just for _____?
3. Do you have an idea of your _____?
4. Are you looking for a _____ place?

Can you remember how to complete these questions? If you want, you can go back and watch the dialogue again.

Ready? Let's see the full questions.

1. Do you know which **area** you'd like to live in?
2. Are you looking to rent just for **yourself**?
3. Do you have an idea of your **budget**?
4. Are you looking for a **furnished** (<https://www.audioenglish.org/dictionary/furnished.htm>) place?

Next, do you remember the answers from the dialogue? Also, if you were answering these questions, what would your answers be?

In the dialogue, you heard these answers.

1. I work in Cowley, so somewhere in the east would make sense.
2. I'm planning to share with a friend.
3. As cheap as possible, really.
4. Yes, furnished.

Of course, you could give different answers. For example:

1. I'm looking for something in the northern suburbs.
2. Yes, I'd like to rent a place just for myself.
3. My maximum is six hundred per month.
4. No, I have furniture, so I'd like something unfurnished.

If you can talk about these ideas – area, size, budget and whether you need a furnished place or not – then you should be able to tell an estate agent what you need in general terms.

Try it! If you were looking to rent an apartment – or a house – what would you look for? Try to make a few sentences describing what you need. Say your sentences out loud. Pause the video and do it now!

How was that? Remember that you can always review a section if you need to.

Next, let's see some useful language for looking around a property when you rent a house or apartment in English.

2. Looking Around

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/House-interior-scaled.webp>)

Daniel: Right, so this is the living room...

Kasia: Is all the furniture included?

D: Most of it should be. It's possible that some items belong to the current tenant, but I can send you a copy of the inventory, so you can check for yourself.

K: That would be good.

D: The bathroom is through here.

K: It's pretty mouldy...

D: Yes, it doesn't look great, does it? Don't worry. We'll contact the landlord and make sure that it's dealt with before you move in.

K: I had a question: can we redecorate the place ourselves, or paint a room, if we want?

D: Possibly, but you need the landlord's permission if you're going to do anything which significantly changes the appearance of the property. Generally, landlords will be happy to let you do things which improve the place.

K: I see... Well, it looks OK, but there's obviously some work that needs doing. The kitchen is filthy!

D: Yes, I understand. It won't be like that if and when you move in. If the current tenant doesn't clean everything thoroughly, we hire cleaners so that everything is spotless for the new tenant.

K: OK. Anyway, I'd like to take a couple of days to think about it.

D: No problem, although if you're interested, I'd advise you to move quickly. Places in this area get snapped up fast.

Let's look at some key vocabulary from this dialogue.

1. I can send you a copy of the inventory.
2. The bathroom is pretty mouldy.
3. Can we redecorate the place ourselves?
4. We hire cleaners so that everything is spotless for the next tenant.
5. Places in this area get snapped up fast.

Could you explain what these words mean? Or, can you guess the general meaning from the context? Think about it.

Before you move into a rented property, you'll do an inventory with the estate agent. An inventory is a list of everything which is in the apartment, and its condition. If anything is damaged or dirty, you'll write it down on the inventory. Then, when you move out, the estate agent will check the property using the inventory. If anything is missing or damaged, you'll usually have to pay for it.

Mould can be a problem in cold, damp countries – like the UK! Mould is something like a plant, which can grow in dark, damp places, so it's commonly found in bathrooms. It can make your bathroom look bad, and smell bad.

If you redecorate your home, you change and improve how it looks. Maybe you paint the walls a different colour, or change the carpets, or add some ornaments. Watch our lesson on Talking About Your Home (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/talking-about-home>) to learn more phrases to describe a home.

‘Spotless’ means extremely clean. You heard an adjective with the opposite meaning in the dialogue – ‘filthy’, which means ‘extremely dirty’.

When the estate agent said ‘places in this area get snapped up fast’, he meant that there is high demand for apartments in this neighbourhood. ‘Snap something up’ (<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/snap+up>) literally means to eat something very fast, like a crocodile; here it has the meaning of getting something before anyone else can.

What next when you rent a house or apartment in English? Well, if you look around a property and you like it, you’ll need to pay a deposit and sign a tenancy agreement. Let’s see how that works.

3. Signing a Contract

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/sign-paper-scaled.webp>)

Daniel: Hello, Broom Cupboard, Daniel speaking.

Kasia: Hello, yes, this is ... I’m calling about the flat on Wesley Close?

D: Ah, yes! Hello. What can I do for you?

K: We’ve decided to go ahead. We’ll take a 12-month lease.

D: That’s great!

K: So, what are the next steps?

D: The first thing is to pay a holding deposit. It’s two hundred pounds, and that lets us take the property off the market while we process your application.

K: Do we get that back?

D: If your application is successful, then it’s offset against your rental deposit, so generally yes. If your application is not successful, then you won’t, but that’s rare.

K: What else do we need?

D: You need to supply at least two references, either from landlords or from employers.

K: There are two of us; does that mean we need two references each?

D: Yes, you do. The sooner you can get them to us, the better, but we must have them by the end of next week.

K: OK, that shouldn’t be a problem. Anything else we need to do?

D: Not right now. Once your application is processed, you’ll need to pay the tenancy deposit and the first month’s rent, and sign the agreement.

K: How much is the tenancy deposit?

D: It’s one month’s rent, so nine hundred.

K: So we need to pay eighteen hundred?

D: That’s right.

K: Right... And, assuming everything goes smoothly, when could we move in?

D: It really depends on you. Once we get your references, we can have the agreement drawn up within one working day. Then, as soon as you sign it and make the payment, we can give you the keys.

K: OK, well, thanks for your help. I'll try to get the references to you as quickly as possible.

In your country, what do you need to do before you can move into a rented house or apartment?

Of course, these things can be different depending on where you live. In the UK, you generally have to pay a deposit, pay the first month's rent, provide references, and sign a contract.

In most cases, you get your deposit back when you move out, so long as you haven't damaged anything.

Once you've provided everything you need to, you can sign the agreement, pick up the keys, and move into your new place!

Now, look at some questions:

1. In your country, how many months' rent do you need to pay before moving into a new place?
2. Do you always have to pay a deposit? Is it easy to get it back?
3. Do you need to provide references? What kind?
4. Is there anything else you need to do before you can move in?

Try to answer these questions by speaking out loud, in full sentences. Pause the video and do it now!

Could you do it? If so, great! If not, we suggest you review the dialogue, and try again. Try as many times as you need.

Finally, let's imagine that you've come to the end of your contract, and it's time to move out.

4. Moving Out

(<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/dog-in-moving-box-scaled.webp>)

Kasia: Hello?

Daniel: Hi, it's Daniel, from the real estate agency. I just wanted to confirm a few details about your moving out date?

K: Oh right, sure.

D: So, are you definitely planning to vacate the property on the last day of your tenancy?

K: Probably one or two days earlier.

D: OK, no problem, but can you let us know when you know for sure?

K: Yeah, can do.

D: Either when you move out or shortly afterwards, we need to do the final inventory.

K: Do we have to be there for that?

D: No, but it's advisable.

K: OK, what about our deposit? When do we get that back?

D: Well, we need to do the inventory first, and then you'll get your deposit back within about one week. Have you read the information on our website about cleaning?

K: No, I haven't.

D: Well, you're responsible for cleaning the place before you leave. If anything isn't clean when we come to check, we hire a cleaning company to come, and the cost is taken out of your deposit.

K: I see.

D: One tip: pay extra attention to the oven. It can be really difficult to get an oven clean. You might want to get a cleaner just to do that. It might be cheaper if you do it on your end, rather than paying for our cleaning company.

K: OK, got it.

D: So, could we arrange a time for the final inventory now?

K: I need to check my work schedule. Let me call you back.

Look at some sentences from the dialogue.

1. Are you definitely planning to _____ the property on the last day of your tenancy?
2. When you move out, we need to do the _____ inventory.
3. You're _____ for cleaning the place before you leave.
4. If anything isn't clean, we hire a cleaning company, and the cost is _____ out of your deposit.

Can you remember how to complete these sentences? And, can you explain what they mean?

Let's check the answers.

1. Are you definitely planning to **vacate** the property on the last day of your tenancy?
2. When you move out, we need to do the **final** inventory.
3. You're **responsible** for cleaning the place before you leave.
4. If anything isn't clean, we hire a cleaning company, and the cost is **taken** out of your deposit.

'Vacate' is a more formal word for 'move out'. You can say 'vacate the property' or 'move out of the property' – the meaning is the same.

You learned about the final inventory earlier. Do you remember what it means? During the final inventory, the estate agent will check that nothing has gone missing or been damaged since you moved in.

In the UK, you need to clean a rented property before you move out. Is this the same in your country?

Finally, 'the cost is taken out of your deposit' is another way of saying 'you'll have to pay for this'. You won't get the full amount of your deposit back.

Now, you should understand how to deal with estate agents and rent a house or apartment in English. Want to continue learning useful vocabulary on this topic? Check out a listening lesson from Oxford Online English: Renting an Apartment (<https://www.oxfordonlineenglish.com/renting-an-apartment>).

Thanks for watching!