

CTLS GUIDE TO STUDENT HOUSING

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We strongly advise students to ensure they have secured housing before arriving in London.

SAFETY TIPS

Unfortunately, students are at risk of being the victims of scams when searching for and trying to secure accommodation. This is most common when looking for housing online. Please take note of the points below on staying safe.

- If you are asked to send money as a deposit to an advertiser without having viewed the property, be suspicious.
- Services such as Western Union or Moneygram, should never be used to transfer money to people that you do not know.
- Never hand over cash under any circumstances.
- Exercise extra caution where you see a property advertised at an exceptionally low rent compared with other properties in the area.
- Get it in writing! If you are handing over any money, ensure to get a receipt. If a letting agent or landlord promises you something when viewing a property (that a desk will be provided, for example), get this in writing as soon as you can and request that it is added to the tenancy agreement.
- Get your tenancy agreement checked and make sure you understand it.

Does this person have the right to let the property?

You can perform a [Land Registry search](#) online for a small fee if you have the full address of a property. The name of the owner will be under the 'Proprietorship Register' (SECTION B).

You can verify the full address of a property using [Google Maps](#).

When dealing with an estate agent or a landlord:

- Is the landlord or letting agent a member of a professional body/accreditation scheme?
 - [Association of Residential Letting Agents](#)
 - [Safeagents](#)
 - [National Association of Estate Agents](#)
 - [National Landlords Association](#)
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and get everything in writing. If you don't ask, they may not have to tell you.
 - Are any bills included (i.e.: gas, electricity, water etc.)?
 - Have there been problems with pests/mould/neighbours?

Guarantors/Referees

Nearly all landlords and letting agents will ask for a UK-based guarantor. This is so that they have someone else to turn to should a tenant stop paying the rent.

Those who are unable to provide a UK-based guarantor for their rent (as is the case for most international students) are usually asked to pay up to 6 months' rent in advance. This is a standard industry practice, but there is no set rule as to how much rent you should pay up-front. [The ULHS Housing Guide](#) has some useful information on negotiating, references and guarantors.

AREA INFORMATION

Students at CTLS live in all areas of London. Choosing where to live depends on what is important to you:

- Distance to CTLS
- Affordability
- Transport links
- Nearby social activities/nightlife
- Nearby recreational/fitness facilities

Distance to CTLS

CTLS is located in WC2, which stands for West Central (2). The areas directly surrounding it are all vibrant places in which to live, offering a mix of commercial, residential and student occupancy sites. Living centrally will enable you to reach CTLS within 10-20 minutes using public transport. However, rental prices slightly further outside of central London are lower, and these areas are still very accessible. Travel times fall within 30 minutes to an hour, using public transport.

Affordability

Cost of accommodation can be a key factor for choosing where to live. The [London Rents Map](#) (produced by the Greater London Authority) provides detailed figures of the average rents charged in different London post-code areas.

This is also a useful tool for determining whether the rent you are being asked for is too high (room for negotiation) or too low (something may be wrong with the property or it could be a scam).

The [University of London Housing Service](#) (ULHS) provides information on finding accommodation in London, including a useful [Private Housing Guide](#).

Travel

Another key factor is travel costs. You can save money by getting [an 18+ Student Oyster Card](#), which gives 30% off the price of adult-rate Travelcards and Bus & Tram Pass season tickets. More information on the Student Oyster Card and how to apply can be found in the [CTLS Student Guidebook](#).

HOUSING OPTIONS

Unless you have made arrangements to rent a student room through CTLS (see the [Student Housing page](#) on the CTLS website), it's a good idea to start your housing search as early as possible. Many students choose to make a separate house-hunting trip to London in the month preceding their move, which can save stress later on.

Private Student Residences

There are many student residences in London operated by private companies, charities and housing associations. These are open to students from any College or University and are ideal for those who want the sociable environment of a student residence.

Rooms can be a mixture of studios, single en-suite (in cluster flats), twins and dormitory-style. The prices are generally all-inclusive and student residences can be booked from abroad.

Please note that many student residences tie students into contracts that last for a minimum number of weeks, usually exceeding the length of one semester at CTLS. There may be a premium for shorter contracts.

You can find a [list of registered private student residences](#) on the ULHS website. Their [list of short-term housing options](#) may also be useful.

Flat/House Shares

In a flat or house-share, each student will usually have their own room and the kitchen, bathroom and other communal spaces would be shared. Each room should have a bed, desk and somewhere to store your clothes/belongings.

Connecting with Potential Roommates and Former Students

Students can either form a group and go house-hunting together or look for vacancies advertised by landlords, agents, or other students in existing house shares. Each semester, a CTLS Facebook group and/or Whatsapp group is set up, by and for the students. Consider using this to coordinate with potential roommates and to contact past students who may have flat/house share rooms to pass on.

Once you have been provided with your Georgetown IT credentials in the months before arriving at CTLS, [activate your Hoya account](#) and join the CTLS group to connect with current and former CTLS students who may have recommendations for housing options. This is also a good way to coordinate with potential roommates.

Living with a Resident Landlord/Lodging

Many Londoners rent out spare rooms in their flats/houses. As a lodger you will have your own room, but share a bathroom, kitchen and communal facilities with the landlord. This can be a more flexible way of renting as contracts are often flexible. Lodging can also offer a cheaper way of living in central locations.

When entering into an informal arrangement like this, you should ensure that you always get the terms of your living arrangement in writing (cost, length of stay and notice period). You should also ensure that you and your landlord are compatible and could easily live together:

- What are the 'house-rules' concerning guests, noise, use of the kitchen etc.?
- What time does your landlord leave for work and return home?
- Is there a place for you to study?

WHERE TO LOOK

Your Search

The private rental market in London is fast-paced. It may be that the day you take to think about a property is all the time it takes for another group to rent it for themselves. This is a common occurrence, but you should always remember that other properties will become available. Keep searching!

With the exception of booking private student residences, you are likely to need to be in London to secure private accommodation.

ULHS Database

The [University of London Housing Service database](#) allowed you to search for properties by area price, number of bedrooms and London Underground travel zone. The database lists a variety of accommodation, such as the options listed above.

Websites

Here are some of the most popular websites students can use to look for accommodation:

- [Spareroom](#) and [Spareroom Student](#)
- [Rightmove](#) and [Rightmove Student](#)

- [GetLiving](#)
- [Gumtree](#)
- [Zoopla](#)
- [Easy Roommate](#)
- [Move Flat](#)
- [Kangaroom](#)
- [Loot](#)

Please note that this list is intended as a starting point for your search, and there is no quality control implied. We have made reasonable efforts to check each website's legitimacy and reliability, but you should always be on the look-out for scams and fraudulent activity. Take a look at the Safety Tips section of this guide for more helpful information.

[Letting Agents](#)

Searching for accommodation through a letting agent can give you access to a large number of rental properties. A good agent should listen to your requirements and contact you with suitable properties to view.

King's College have a useful article with [further information about letting agents and their fees](#).

The ULHS also have a [list of registered letting agents](#).

[MOVING IN](#)

When you move in you should:

- Complete an inventory check.
- Take a gas/electricity meter reading.
- Set up accounts for any bills that you are required to pay.
- Please note that if you own a television or stream TV programmes online, you must arrange to pay the TV licensing fee. More information can be found on the [TV Licensing Website](#).
- Confirm your deposit has been protected.

[Inventory](#)

It is highly recommended that you take a full inventory on the day that you move in and ask your landlord to sign it. It's also a good idea to take some photos.

The landlord or letting agent may provide a formal inventory check, which they complete through a professional inventory service. If a formal inventory is not completed, you should still take your own photos and send these on to the landlord or letting agent, and not down any disrepair or wear and tear.

[Deposits](#)

If you are paying a deposit and moving into a property where you have signed an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, your landlord should protect your deposit.

Within 30 days of paying your deposit, the landlord or letting agent is required to give you information containing details of how your deposit is protected including:

- Contact details of the tenancy deposit scheme.
- Contact details of the landlord or agent.
- How to apply for release of the deposit.
- Information explaining the purpose of the deposit.

- What to do if there is a dispute about the deposit.

If you don't get this information, ensure to ask your landlord or agent how your deposit is protected.

MOVING OUT

If you are coming to the end of your tenancy agreement and you wish to leave you should write to your landlord or letting agent at least one calendar month before the end of the tenancy to advise that you do not wish to renew the contract or remain in the property.

If you wish to move out before the end of your tenancy agreement you will have to negotiate with your landlord and housemates and refer to the terms of the agreement. It is advisable to seek advice before moving out to ensure that you won't remain liable for rent.

Clearing Out and Cleaning Up

- Check your inventory and check everything is still there. Replacements are on a like for like basis.
- Dispose of unwanted or broken items and try to recycle as much as possible. Your local council website should have details about any recycling schemes and CTLS is happy to look after any small items that you wish to pass on to incoming students!
- Cleaning the property thoroughly, including the windows, oven and behind furniture. Your tenancy agreement may specify the use of professional cleaners.

Your Last Day

- Take a final electricity/gas meter readings and inform your suppliers.
- Cancel any telephone and broadband accounts.
- Take photographs of the property and rooms when you leave.
- Lock all the windows and doors and return the keys to the landlord or agent.
- Contact the tenancy deposit scheme and let them know you have left.

Getting Your Deposit Back

Your deposit should be returned within 10 days, subject to any deductions for damage or non-payment of rent. Any deductions should be explained in writing by your landlord or letting agent and should be reasonable. If there is a dispute, the tenancy deposit scheme should have a free dispute resolution service. Both you and your landlord must agree to use this and their decision will be final.

COUNCIL TAX

Council Tax is set by local authorities to pay for the services they provide, such as rubbish collection, the police and the fire brigade. It is charged annually, although most people choose to pay it in monthly or quarterly instalments. The rates of council tax are different in each borough.

Council Tax Exemption

To receive an exemption from paying council tax, every member of your household must be a student. If students make up the greater proportion of a household, it may be possible to claim a reduction in council tax, but it will not be waived altogether.

Local authorities can refuse to grant exemption to students unless they demonstrate that they are enrolled at an institution in the UK on a course that takes place full time, over a period of at least one academic year. This can present difficulties for CTLS students only in London for a semester, so you are strongly advised to consider the cost of council tax before you move, and plan your budget accordingly.

The [UK Council for International Student Affairs website](#) has detailed information on who qualifies for a student exemption, and the key things you'll need to do if you receive a council tax bill during your stay in London.

We are happy to provide you with a letter for council tax exemption. Please send an email to [CTLS](#) with the following information:

- Term-time UK address
- Address of your local council

PROBLEMS AND DISPUTES

The vast majority of students privately rent in London without any problems, but when problems and disputes do arise it is best to deal with them in an effective and rational way.

Students sometimes report problems like the following:

- Problems with housemates.
- Problems with the return of a deposit.
- Repair issues.
- Rats, mice and other infestations.
- Noisy neighbours.
- Intrusive landlords.
- Someone wants to leave the tenancy early.

If you are experiencing problems it is best to remember these three key rules from the [ULHS Housing Guide](#):

Put things in writing as soon as possible.

This is especially important with repair issues as the landlord is obliged to take actions within a reasonable time of being informed of the problem.

Get advice as soon as possible.

It is easy to make incorrect assumptions about the law. You need to check with an advisor that what you are asking is something that the landlord or letting agent is obliged to do. King's College [Student Advisors](#) or the [University of London Housing Services](#) can advise you on your options and how to take action.

Always try to keep emotion out of disputes.

Writing angry letters or e-mails is almost always going to be unhelpful in finding a solution! You can ask an advisor to check an email or letter before you send it.