



LOOKING FOR PLACES TO RENT IN CAMBRIDGE?

A rough guide

Stage one: Know the law and know what you are doing.

Read the Blackwell's *Guide to Renting*, 99p from Blackwell's Bookshops, published in collaboration with WHICH? BOOKS. Or download the pdf leaflet on *Renting and Letting* at www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk/en/egalhelp/leaflet04_1.jsp

Stage two: Where do you want to live? Get a detailed street map of Cambridge with an index of street names. A newsagents or Tesco corner shop will have them.

This is an essential tool for finding property and working out where you want to live. Prices vary enormously depending on the district. Discuss this with friends and think about it carefully. Get on a bike or a bus and tour the area. Where are the nearest shops? Remember the 'milk-bottle test', how far will you have to walk on a winter's night to buy a bottle of milk?

Stage three: Look on the Cambridge Evening News Website Lettings page. www.cambridge-news.co.uk/property Download their list of letting agents' websites. None of these agents are necessarily recommended by Homerton College or the University of Cambridge. Some are very small, some are large. The writer of this guide has never had any dealings with any of them. You are on your own!

Stage four: Who do you want to live with?

If you are all students together in the same house you will be exempt from Council Tax. If just one tenant is not a student, then you will all have to pay **Council Tax**. The Tutorial Office at Homerton can issue you with a Council Tax Exemption Certificate.

Stage five: Register with letting agents

Register with the letting agents in the area where you are looking for accommodation. You can usually register singly or as a group. If the Agents ask for a reference from your previous landlord, ask your Tutor to give you a reference and explain what you need.

You can also register on line with the University Accommodation Service at: www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk Or call in at their offices in Kellet Lodge, Tennis Court Road, Cambridge CB2 1QJ

Tripes Court in Homerton Street sometimes has small flats to let: Go onto Google and key in Student Accommodation Tripes Court Cambridge and a number of contacts will come up. They are not cheap, but are generally well serviced and very close to College. They are sometimes block-booked by the local language schools, but do not be put off by this. They are often tenanted by our PGCE students who find them very convenient. Tripes Court is the easiest option of all. Don't be put off by the apparent cost, don't just think 'price' think 'value'.

Stage six – the viewing:

You must look at the property critically and ask questions. Your life is in your hands at this stage. Look out for bare electrical wires, overflowing drains and damp, gas fires that do not have a C ORGI certificate or Carbon-monoxide sensor, locks on outside doors and windows that do not work properly. All of this must be fixed before you sign a contract. Do not rely on word-of-mouth promises. If there are more than five of you in the house it should have wired-in smoke-detectors, fire doors and meet the Local Authority standards of a house in multiple occupation.

Is the property furnished or unfurnished? Unfurnished should be a lot cheaper and you can get furniture second hand, but it is a load of hassle, and then what do you do with it all when you leave. If it is partly furnished, you can ask for more furniture if it is not there as most landlords will have spare furniture in store.

You may have a vision of yourself living in bohemian splendour in a run-down Victorian tenement, but come the end of the Michaelmas term when you return to the warmth and comfort of your parent's double-glazed pad you will have had enough. A modern characterless house or flat, well insulated and easy to keep clean, can make a lot of sense; it will be cheap to run and you can impose your personality on anything if you try hard enough.



Stage seven: - the haggle:

What are you paying for? Before you sign anything you must be aware of what you are getting for your money. It may sound cheap, but if it does not include water rates, gas or electricity, it may turn out to be a lot more expensive than you bargained for, particularly if it is an old house without insulation or double-glazing. Most landlords will bargain and deal, but agents may not be allowed to do so except within certain parameters.

Stage eight: Paying the deposit:

Before you pay a deposit, read the tenancy agreement carefully and ask for a copy of it. The deposit will be at least one month's rent in advance, possibly more for an assured six-month short-hold tenancy (the most popular type of agreement). By law the deposit must be held by an outside agency not by the landlord, so do not give the landlord cash. Insist on a receipt for any deposit paid. You will need to check that you have sufficient money to pay the required deposit. If you are unsure, tell the agent that you need to be sure and ask them to wait. They will understand. Do not be pressured.

ONCE YOU SIGN THE TENANCY AGREEMENT YOU ARE COMMITTED TO MAKE PAYMENTS FOR THE FULL TERM OF THE TENANCY, BE IT SIX MONTHS OR ONE YEAR. YOU CAN LEAVE THE PROPERTY AT ANY TIME, BUT YOU MUST CONTINUE WITH THE PAYMENTS EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT LIVING THERE.



DISCLAIMER: Homerton College does not accept liability for any tenancy agreements that its students may enter into outside of the College premises. Homerton College is not obliged to assist students who get into difficulties with their tenancy agreements outside of College nor is Homerton College obliged to enter into negotiations with landlords on behalf of its students. Homerton College does not accept any responsibility for the opinions advice or views expressed in this or related documents or for the accuracy or reliability of the names and addresses or websites referred to in this document.

LIVING OUT AS A STUDENT IN CAMBRIDGE

NOISE

Now you are installed in your new abode, you are expected to behave like any other responsible householder. That means putting out the bins on the right day and not blocking the pavement with bikes. You are now answerable directly to your neighbours, some of whom may have pre-conceived ideas about the student population in their midst. If you party seven days a week your neighbours will report you to the University Proctors, and/or the local Council, and who wouldn't? The Proctors may send you down or ask the College to punish you instead. At this point you will long for the friendly face of our College Dean, but woe is you, for the University Courts will hear your case. Why should the College show you any mercy—if you bring them into disrepute? Yes, it is unfair, but then you are just a transitory creature, a butterfly that has landed in the street. The College needs to protect its long-term reputation in the city. Enjoy your stay, be considerate and try not to irritate the locals too much.

CARS

Regardless of where in Cambridge you live, as an undergraduate you are still subject to the University regulations on cars and motor bikes. You must have a Proctor's licence to have a car in Cambridge for which you must be able to demonstrate that you have off-street parking at night. Neighbours are usually all too well informed about such regulations and will not hesitate to email the Proctors if they see you park a car on 'their' street. You will be asked to remove the car immediately and the fine can be substantial.

CRIME

There is an incredibly low level of crime generally in Cambridge, apart from bike 'theft'. Most crime is opportunistic - a window left open a door ajar, particularly in summertime. Middle-class students have all sorts of nice new bits of electronic gadgetry that will fetch a few quid in a pub or car-boot sale. Keep it out of sight - keep it locked. Apart from all that - have fun and enjoy the freedom of being a student living out.

THE OLD PLACE

Don't become 'Homerton-shy' - you still have a Director of Studies and a Tutor who will be pleased to see you. And there are all those books in the library waiting to be read, not to mention exams at the end of year three or is it four? You will be required to pay a College Membership charge, this covers all the College facilities that you are still entitled to use, such as the IT and sports facilities, squash and tennis courts, gardens and grounds, catering and bar etc. This is a token contribution without which students in residence, would find themselves subsidising the students living out. So, even though you are living out you are thereby encouraged to use all the College facilities and get value for money.