

LOOKING GUIDE

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Hello.

We prepared this guide to help you during this confusing time. Although we want you to take your legal and financial obligations to your landlord seriously, we must emphasise that your personal wellbeing and national health must always be your priority.

If for health reasons you cannot follow the guidance we've offered, please get in touch with our [Advice Centre](#) for alternative guidance specific to your situation.

Unfortunately, under current government guidelines, if your landlord doesn't want to cancel your contract then they are under no legal obligation to do so, regardless of the Covid-19 pandemic. Please see our [FAQs](#) page for further guidance.

If you are in financial difficulty, please [email](#) the University's Financial Wellbeing team to ask if you're eligible for any extra funds. You can also find advice and tips on their '[Managing Your Money](#)' page.

If you have already left your rented property and know you won't be returning within seven days (which you shouldn't be under current government guidance), then you have a legal obligation to let your landlord and/or agent know.

As long as you keep in touch with the landlord, they have an obligation to safely store your belongings. Get in touch with the [Advice Centre](#) for further guidance if you can't reach an agreement with them.

Bills and Money.

One of the people named on the accounts needs to contact the utilities companies to let them know when you're leaving (or that you've left) and provide them with any final meter readings as well as a forwarding address. If you can't get a meter reading, you may get an estimated bill for now instead, which will be adjusted once you get the reading.

Your landlord can deduct any unpaid bills from your deposit, so you need proof that you've paid everything and closed the accounts.

It's really important to settle all outstanding bills as failure to do so can have a serious impact on credit score ratings - this would affect both you and your guarantor(s). Utilities companies can, and do, pursue outstanding debts, sometimes using bailiff companies. If you have problems paying a bill, contact your provider who can usually help by creating a manageable payment plan with you.

Check out the University's handy [Financial Wellbeing guidance](#) and [Financial Difficulty](#) funding sources.

You can also get support at the [Advice Centre](#) if you are worried about what your financial situation will be like at the end of term.

>> CHECKLIST

- ☐ Contact all utilities companies to tell them you're moving out.
- ☐ Provide meter readings on the day you move out.
- ☐ Make sure everyone settles their fair share of the bills.

Future Finances (Home and EU).

[Turn2Us](#) can advise you about financial help available after you graduate.

You can use online [benefit calculators](#) now to see what government funds you're eligible for after the last day of your course.

[Shelter](#) can help you with any housing problems in your next home after graduating.

Cleaning.

Cleaning is the most common reason for deductions from security deposits. The charges were known to be very high, which led to a change in legislation last year. **If your tenancy started after 1 June 2019, the [Tenant Fees Ban 2019](#) means you can opt to clean the property yourself, even if your contract states you have to pay for professional cleaning or your landlord's cleaning service.** As a general rule, you should leave the property as clean as you found it.

If you've kept on top of the cleaning, this shouldn't be too difficult. If you haven't, then we recommend that you get some bleach, drain unblocker (for kitchen and bathroom), etc. on your next shop.

If you're not known for your cleaning prowess, you may still wish to hire in the professionals. Check out our [top tips](#) to make sure you know your rights and that you get a fair deal.

>> CHECKLIST

- ☐ Deep clean all areas, especially kitchens and bathrooms.
- ☐ Clean all appliances, especially oven and fridge (defrost and switch off once emptied).
- ☐ Clear all rubbish out of the house and into bins.

Garden.

If the garden was tidy when you arrived (check inventory), then you are responsible for tidying the garden at the end of the tenancy. Make sure you have cut the grass and trimmed anything overgrown to avoid gardening charges being deducted from your deposit.

If you were given no tools, then you will have to explain to the landlord that you cannot obtain them under the current situation and apologise for the inconvenience.

Rubbish and Recycling.

Make sure you plan ahead. All your rubbish will not fit in the bins in your final week, so slowly start throwing away things you don't want about a month before your move-out day.

Over-filling bins and fly-tipping lead to fines from the council and deductions from deposits. It's easy to underestimate the amount of rubbish and unwanted items you have accumulated during your tenancy, so we've come up with some handy tips to help you ditch them!

>> CHECKLIST

- ☐ Fill and return the charity bags posted through your letterbox.
- ☐ Donate to food banks which can be found in Waitrose (Egham) or [online](#).
- ☐ Bulky waste – arrange for [Runnymede Borough Council](#) to collect items, appliances and furniture. Charges apply. Advance booking required.

Moving.

If possible, plan at least two weeks in advance how you're going to move all your belongings to your next home. Explore vehicle hire and temporary storage options and their costs if you might need them. Read reviews or ask for recommendations before using a service.

Even if you found it easy to move all your stuff in one go before, a year has passed and you've probably accumulated more stuff. Try to start moving out things you don't regularly use a few weeks beforehand to save you stress on the last day.

If the current situation means your moving costs have come at an unexpected time, and you're struggling to cope, contact [Financial Wellbeing](#) to see if there are funds to help you.

>> CHECKLIST

- ☐ Put moving dates into your calendar (and share with your moving helpers).
- ☐ Calculate moving budget and dates.
- ☐ Research and book transportation and storage options.

Remember you could be charged by your landlord or estate agent for the removal or disposal of any items left in or outside the property.

Storage Companies.

Below are some local storage providers. You will need to contact them directly to find out if they are still open.

>> KELLY'S STORAGE

inbox@kellystorage.co.uk

0800 107 7250

>> STORAGE BOYS

sales@storageboys.co.uk

07863 115858

>> LOK'NSTORE

info@lokncstore.co.uk

0800 587 3322

>> STORAGE GEEKS

info@storagegeeks.co.uk

01932 568660

Check-out Inspection.

At the start of your tenancy, an [inventory](#) of everything in the house should have been completed. Now that you're moving out, you will need to find your inventory (or ask for a copy from your landlord/estate agent) to check that nothing has gone missing or been broken. Contact the [Advice Centre](#) for help if you never received a check-in inventory.

If your contract started after 1 June 2019, you cannot be charged for the inventory process, even if the charge is listed in your contract.

Remember that 'fair wear and tear' is acceptable, so small marks and scuffs are ok. If anything is missing or broken, look into the cost of getting it replaced or repaired and make sure the landlord is ok with it.

Ask when the check-out inspection will be done and ask the landlord/agent to share the check-out inventory with you. Due to the current situation, you might not be there, so make sure you take lots of time-stamped photographs before you leave, in case you're challenged.

>> CHECKLIST

- ☐ Find check-in inventory.
- ☐ Compare inventory to the state of the property and its contents.
- ☐ Replace and repair what you can.
- ☐ Return furniture to its original location.
- ☐ Take lots of time-stamped photos before you leave.

Complete the check-out inventory before leaving - this is your last chance to gather evidence of how you left the house.

Who needs your new address.

- ☐ Royal Holloway.
- ☐ [Runnymede Council Tax](#) team even if you're going abroad.
- ☐ Your GP and any medical services they have referred you to.
- ☐ Your employer.
- ☐ Your banks (and PayPal).
- ☐ Your utilities providers.
- ☐ Your online shopping accounts.
- ☐ Your insurance providers.
- ☐ TV Licensing.
- ☐ DVLA.
- ☐ Friends and family.

You may want to leave a forwarding address at the property or with your landlord/agent, so your post can be redirected. However, they are not under any obligation to do this, so it's best to update the relevant companies and contacts yourself.

[Royal Mail Redirection](#) is a service you can pay for to have all your mail forwarded to your new address for a set time.

Getting your deposit back.

Your deposit should have been placed in a tenancy deposit scheme by the landlord/agent, meaning no deductions can be made without your consent.

To start the process, the day you leave, you must email/text the landlord/agent asking for the return of your deposit. This will give them 10 days to respond to you with any proposed deductions. Assuming there is nothing wrong with the property or its contents, and it's been cleaned where possible, then you should get your deposit back.

We don't advise you agree to any deductions before checking with us as we have found that most proposed deductions are over-inflated or illegal.

If you find out your deposit wasn't protected, you disagree with any proposed deductions, or your landlord/agent doesn't respond within 10 days, email the [Advice Centre](#) for guidance on your next steps.

If you were living with a resident landlord, a deposit scheme can't assist you and you will need to negotiate with the landlord, providing proof and explaining why you think the deductions shouldn't be made. The [Advice Centre](#) and [University of London Housing Services](#) can guide you.

>> CHECKLIST

- ☐ [Check](#) if your deposit is protected.
- ☐ When you leave, ask your landlord/agent ([in writing](#)) to return your deposit.
- ☐ Negotiate disputed deductions proposed.
- ☐ Settle unresolved deposit disputes through your deposit scheme.
- ☐ You can contact the [Advice Centre](#) and [University of London Housing Services](#) for help and free legal advice.

Share your experience.

Thousands of pounds are unfairly deducted from students' security deposits every year. You can help reduce this.

- ☐ Email advice@su.rhul.ac.uk with your experiences (good and bad). If you come across a really good professional cleaner, or you felt you had a great landlord, why not recommend them to us so we can guide other students to them?
- ☐ Use [Google](#) and [Marks Out Of Tenancy](#) to review your landlord/agent to better inform next year's students.

Good luck.

Moving out can be stressful, but we are here for you!

If you encounter any problems during the moving out process, please feel free to contact the Advice Centre and we will be more than happy to help you.

>> [SU.RHUL.AC.UK/ADVICE](https://su.rhul.ac.uk/advice)

>> ADVICE@SU.RHUL.AC.UK



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