1. WHEN SHOULD I START LOOKING FOR PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION?

It’s important to keep in mind that you don’t need to rush to find a property. In fact, taking your time will give you a much better chance of finding the right property and the right housemates!

If you are thinking of renting a property with a group of other students and are using a letting agency, people usually start looking in mid Michaelmas Term for a lease starting in October the following year. If you are going to rent from an independent landlord/landlady, they will normally expect to receive enquiries 2-3 months before the start of a new tenancy, in which case you should start looking at the beginning of the summer for a lease starting in October of that year.

2. WHERE SHOULD I LOOK?

Student Pad (http://www.oxfordstudentpad.co.uk/Home) is a great place to start – it’s a property finder that is free to use and managed by the University’s Accommodation Office. Both agencies and private landlords/landladies list properties on Student Pad, so be sure you read each ad carefully to understand who has posted it.

You can also enquire about student letting at various letting agents in the city. However, be aware that letting agents may charge you administration fees of up to around £150 per person once you decide to rent a property with them. These are unlikely to be refundable.

Be careful if you’re using classified sites like dailyinfo.co.uk and gumtree.com. Although these are brilliant for buying/selling furniture once you’ve found a property, it is difficult to assess the quality and safety of the properties listed on them.
3. HOW MANY PROPERTIES SHOULD I VIEW BEFORE CHOOSING ONE?

This is entirely up to you, but it’s good practice to see at least a few properties in order to get a good idea of the quality level between properties and a feel for the area. It’s a good idea when viewing them to take photographs with your phone to remind you of which property is which. Whatever you do, don’t rent somewhere or from someone that makes you feel uncomfortable.

4. WHAT IS A TENANCY AGREEMENT OR CONTRACT?

The tenancy agreement or contract is a legally binding document. It is important that you read your contract in detail (including the fine print) and ask any questions you have in advance of signing – once you’ve signed it you can’t escape liability just because you didn’t read part of it. Don’t feel pressured to sign if you’re not happy with something in the contract! If you are unsure about something in the contract, ask someone to check this: the Student Advice Service can help by offering you a tenancy checking appointment or signpost you to specialist advice.

5. WHAT DOES JOINT AND SEVERALLY LABILE MEAN?

This means that each housemate is responsible for paying the rent of any housemate who does not.
6: I'M BEING ASKED FOR A GUARANTOR WHAT IS THIS?
A guarantor is someone who does not live in the house but is legally responsible for paying your rent if you fail to do so.

7. ARE THERE ANY AGENCIES I SHOULD AVOID?
It's a good idea to look into several agencies and to take your time choosing the right one. This decision should be based not just on the properties they have but also on how they treat and communicate with you as well as the fees they charge.

8. WHERE SHOULD I LIVE?
This depends on what kind of person you are! If you want to be in the thick of it, then the City Centre might be the area for you, although you’ll have to deal with higher rents and more noise. Cowley Road and Iffley Road can also be noisy but generally have lower rents and still have pubs and shopping nearby. Quieter areas include Jericho and Summertown (both a bit pricey) and Abingdon Road and Botley Road (lower rents but fewer entertainment options). Make sure you visit each area you’re considering before agreeing to live there – you never know whether you’ll like it until you get a feel for it yourself.
9. HOW MUCH WILL LIVING OUT COST?
This depends on where you live, how many people you live with and what kind of property you rent, but there are some general cost bands you should keep in mind. Rent is likely to be between £600 and £800 for a room in a shared house and more than £1300 to live alone in a flat. Bills (including electricity, gas, water and internet) will cost you up to £80pcm per person.

You will also have to pay a deposit upfront, which usually amounts to between 1-2 months rent. Your agency or landlord/landlady should put your deposit into a Deposit Protection Scheme, which secures your deposit until the end of the tenancy. Never pay a deposit without signing a contract – these should be done at the same time.

10. WHERE DO I GO IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT LIVING OUT?
You can always contact the Student Advice Service (advice@ousu.ox.ac.uk) with any questions you have about living out. In addition to answering general questions about living out, we can read through your contract with you before you sign it. Don’t be afraid to take your time before you sign!
GET IN TOUCH...

Advice Team: Cate Hemingway, Hanne Clark, Nicky Reed

We are here for you when you need us!

Visit us at:
Oxford University Students’ Union
2 Worcester Street
Oxford, OX1 2BX

Drop-in Sessions (Term-Time)
Mondays 10am – 12 Noon
Wednesdays 12 Noon – 2pm
Fridays 2pm – 4pm

Email: advice@ousu.ox.ac.uk
Call Us: 01865 288 466

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