

# Your Guide to House Hunting

Private-rented Accommodation



You're starting to think about accommodation options for your next academic year and have decided that privately rented accommodation is for you. **Because of the current pandemic, we appreciate house hunting may not be as easy this year, so make sure you're fully informed and ask SU Advice if you have any questions about housing. Also, please visit our webpage [www.nottingham.ac.uk/advice/housing-advice/househunting](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/advice/housing-advice/househunting) for our current advice.**

Take some time to explore your options, the different areas, find what's right for you and - most of all - enjoy your house hunting experience.

**You can find lots more information and tips from SU Advice at [su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice](http://su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice) or contact us at [suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk)**



# Top tips from current students



**If there's anything at all you're not sure about - contact SU Advice.**

**We are here to help you.**

**Have fun!** Finding a house is a big responsibility but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy it. Nottingham has loads of options, visit all you can and find your home.

It may seem like everyone has a house before Christmas when you've barely looked. That's fine, you're not alone! Nottingham has lots of housing options so you don't need to rush. Take your time and find what's right for you. Don't be afraid to ask questions. No matter how big or small your query, your landlord or letting agent should be able to help you.

If you decide on a shared house or private halls, go to viewings, explore different areas, compare properties and be picky - it'll be your home, after all.

Over the next few months your friendship groups might change. So, take your time and don't feel you need to settle on housemates before you've had a think about it.

Speak to students in the years above you, they've done this before... Find out the good, the bad and the ugly of locations and agents before you sign a contract.



# International students

Ideally, you should have viewed the property in person before you commit and pay any money. If you need a UK-based guarantor and this is not possible, you may be asked to pay an increased amount of rent in advance. Try negotiating to minimise the upfront cost.

If you are bringing your family later in the year, don't make a long-term commitment to a property that is not suitable for your family.

**It's not rude to ask questions and walk away if you need further advice and support before committing to a decision...**

## Step 1

# What are my options?

Whether you want a quiet spot with your closest uni friends, a private room in halls, or see yourself at the centre of city life, there's somewhere for you. You don't just have to leap into a house share.

## Staying in Uni halls

Just want to keep things simple? That's totally fine (and we don't blame you!). If you're happy in halls you might be able to re-book where you're already living.

**Here are a few things to think about:**

- Halls can be a bit more expensive than sharing a house, but the costs do include bills
- To get meals sorted you can choose catered accommodation
- Halls are on, or close to, campus (so you can roll out of bed and get to lectures on time)
- There's on-site security, so you'll always feel safe
- Watch out for returner deals, which could help you to save money

Watch out for University Accommodation Services information about booking or visit their **Stay in Halls page** by clicking here..

## Private halls

If you like your own space then private, self-catered halls in Nottingham could be just the thing. Before you make a decision, here's what you need to know:

- In private halls you can get self-contained studio rooms - great for a bit more personal space
- Bills are usually included which makes things easier
- What you get will vary from place to place, but some halls have on-site gyms, cinemas, security, and social or study spaces
- Halls are often located between the campus and the city, with lots in the city centre

How to book will depend on the halls you choose, but you'll be able to find most providers online.



## Sharing a house

Many students go for a house share, which means moving into the private rented sector. This isn't as scary as it may seem, though it can be a bit more complicated than halls.

**In a privately rented house:**

- You'll deal directly with landlords and/or agents
- Costs can vary depending on the size and location, and contract length
- You'll need to pay money up front. If you're not sure, contact SU Advice before you sign or pay anything
- When it comes to furnishings, what you see is what you get - but if the sofa's a bit grotty or you could do with a wardrobe or bedside table, you might be able to negotiate
- Usually you'll have to sort your own bills and things like your internet, but this varies from place to place and bills-inclusive is becoming more common.

Remember, sharing and looking after a house can be quite different to living in halls and you'll all be responsible for your space (so that's where picking the right housemates below comes in). Think about how all the little bits will work, from bills and sharing the bathroom to noise and privacy.



## Step 2

# When do I start looking?

You've probably heard it lots already but we can't stress it enough: take your time!

Make sure you consider all accommodation types before making a final decision.

It's tempting to start looking as the first houses start appearing on websites and especially if others around you are, but you really don't have to. In fact, **we recommend you don't start looking until after the end of Semester One.**

There's nothing wrong with starting to consider what it is you may want, but take the time to be clued up on your options so you can be fully prepared to search for your ideal property.

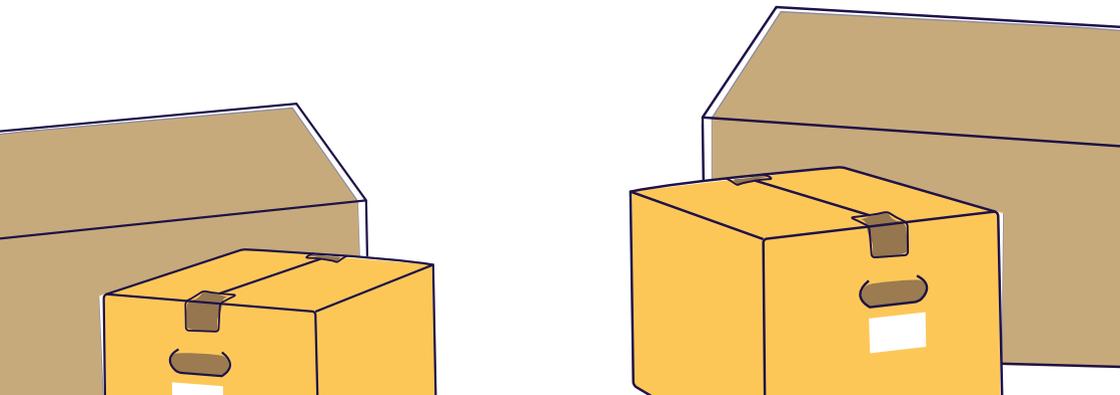
## Step 3

# Who do I live with?

This is a big one and probably one of the hardest decisions to make when considering your home for next year, so make sure it's the right one by making friends and getting to grips with University life in the first term.

Alongside the buzz of who gets the larger room with the en-suite, you may want to have discussions about how you will get along. **We all live differently and nothing proves this more than living together.** Are you an early-night kind of person in a group of night owls? Prefer peace and quiet when your housemates are forming a house band?

**Compromise is key**, so use your experience of living with new people in halls to guide you. It's important to consider your budgets too; can everyone in your group afford where you're hoping to live? Remember, you'll likely have bills on top too. Once you've signed a tenancy agreement it can be difficult to get out of it, so make sure you consider all possibilities before putting pen to paper.



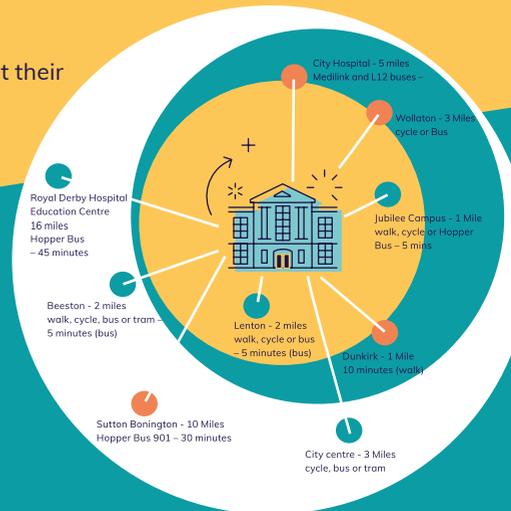
## Step 4

# Where do I live?

Location is really important so it's important to consider things like:

- Distance to Uni and other places you go regularly
- Transport links
- Are there shops, cafés, supermarkets and gyms close by?
- Does the area feel safe?

Word of mouth is also really important – speak to students in second and later years about their experiences of living in areas you're considering.



## Step 5

# How do I find a property?

There are lots of websites where you can search for accommodation – you can find a list of common places students look online, with links, on the [SU 'Finding Accommodation' page](https://su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice/housing-advice/findingaccommodation) at [su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice/housing-advice/findingaccommodation](https://su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice/housing-advice/findingaccommodation). A number of letting agencies have shops in popular student areas where you can go and see what's available.

We'd advise against door-knocking – if you do see somewhere being advertised, take the contact details and follow up that way.

## Licensing and Accreditation

Most properties in Nottingham fall under a licensing scheme, which sets out standards that your house has to meet. All letting agents need to be members of a "property redress scheme". These are government authorised schemes which give you a way to escalate complaints if you're unhappy with how they have been dealt with by your letting agent.

You should also look for a property that is Nottingham Standard accredited.

## Step 6

# The Legal bit

It doesn't have to be scary! Here are some things to look out for:

Who will be managing the property - the landlord or a letting agent? Who will you be paying your rent to? Who will you report disrepair to? If it's managed by an agent, you should still ask for the landlord's full name and address.

What type of contract are you going to be signing? Joint or individual? Most student contracts are "joint", meaning that you're all responsible for the total rent for the property (not just your share). With an "individual" contract, only you would be named on the agreement and you would only be responsible for your share of the rent.

Living with your landlord? Your rights and the landlord's responsibilities will be different. Ask SU Advice for details.

Do you need a guarantor? (Many landlords/agents will require one.) Can everyone in your group provide one? In most cases your parents/guardians will be guarantors – have they seen a copy of the contract and are they happy to agree to it?

Legislation prohibits landlords and agents from charging administration/agency fees when signing a tenancy.

Your landlord must register your deposit in one of the three tenancy deposit schemes. They must do this within 30 days of getting it. Your landlord must use a TDP scheme even if your deposit is paid by someone else, such as your parents.

**Make sure you get your contract checked with [SU Advice](#) before signing! You can email it to [suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@nottingham.ac.uk) for an Adviser to go through it.**



## Step 7

# Viewing properties

Take the opportunity to have a good look round the property and ask any questions to the landlord, agent and current tenants.

Make sure you view a selection of properties, but if you're on your 15th viewing, you may need to revisit your requirements.

Be safe, don't visit on your own.

Visit the area during the day and in the evening. Does it feel safe?

Take the attached checklist with you so you can compare the different houses you've viewed.

Is there any obvious disrepair to the house? Note this down to raise with the landlord/agent before signing.

Speak to the current tenants - are they happy with the landlord? Are there any issues with the property? Does the landlord provide notice before they come round (They should provide tenants with at least 24 hours' notice.)?

Ask the current tenants how much the bills are. If bills are included in the rent ask the landlord if there's a cap on usage.

Property not built/going to be renovated/extended/redecorated? Can the work really be done in time? When are the current tenants leaving? When is the work going to take place? Discuss with the landlord/agent what happens if it's not finished? Make sure that everything agreed is in writing.



Step 8

# Making a Decision

## Negotiations

You can try to negotiate with the landlord or agent on the following:

- The amount of rent payable
- The summer retainer (if this is being asked for)
- The length of the contract
- Bills included
- Refurbishments/improvements
- Furniture/appliances

## Tips when negotiating

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Make sure anything you agree is put in writing.

It is nearly always cheaper to pay bills directly yourselves.

Be confident (not pushy) and ask, they can only say no.

Remember, agents/landlords are just as keen to let their properties as you are to find somewhere.

You should negotiate a gap between tenancies to allow for cleaning/refurbishments.

Know the market – find out average rents for the area.

Be able to justify your reason for asking for a discount/reduction.

When viewing as a group, you may want to nominate a lead negotiator.

Make a good impression – landlords want responsible tenants.

# Checklist

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Here's a checklist of what to look out for, with three rows to compare viewings.

## Ask the landlord

- To confirm that the property has a licence (if required)
- Is the property part of the 'Nottingham Standard' accreditation scheme?
- To see the gas safety certificate
- Which deposit protection scheme do they use?

## Ask the current tenants

Are repairs completed in a reasonable time?

Does the heating work?

Have they enjoyed living there?

Why are they leaving?

Are there any issues with the house?

How is the local area?

## After your visit

Have you visited the area during the day and night?

Contact the current tenants if you missed them earlier

Do you require a guarantor?

Is there a 'holding deposit'?

Do you want to live there?

## Viewing notes

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SU Advice can provide all the advice and support you need in finding the perfect home.

# Checklist

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Potential housemates - check. An idea of where you want to live - check.

Now you've got these covered you can start viewing possible new homes. We've put together a checklist of what to look out for with three rows to compare viewings.

## Before you go

Who manages the property? Landlord/letting agency?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Rent per person? £ \_\_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

## When you're there

Is the location suitable?    \_\_\_\_\_  
How long does it take to get there?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Are there shops and services nearby?    \_\_\_\_\_

## The house

Does it come furnished?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Is there any damage or disrepair?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Signs of mould or damp?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Windows double-glazed?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Rooms a good size?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Is there enough shared space?    \_\_\_\_\_

## Safety and security

Working smoke detectors?    \_\_\_\_\_  
A working burglar alarm?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Safe external doors?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Lockable windows?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Car/bike storage?    \_\_\_\_\_

## Money

Are bills included in the rent?    \_\_\_\_\_  
Is it a joint or individual contract?    \_\_\_\_\_