

Your guide to **living off-campus**

All you need to know about living off-campus

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It can be hugely exciting moving into new accommodation and meeting up with friends who you may have not seen for a while.

However, this is the moment to take your time and make sure you do everything necessary to move in properly - not getting everything organised now may mean you have problems later on with your accommodation, household or neighbours!

We want you to have a great year and hope you will find this guide helpful.

The SU Advice Centre Team

Moving into off-campus accommodation

When you are moving in, all the contractual parts of organising your accommodation should have been completed. You should therefore have the following:

- Contract/tenancy agreement
- Deposit Protection Certificate and all the prescribed information (for more information, see: warwicksu.com/deposits)

In addition, you should also receive:

- A copy of the Government Guide *How to Rent*: the checklist for renting in England
- A Gas Safety Certificate (a new one should be provided each year if there is a gas installation at the property.)
- The Energy Performance Certificate (please note: for houses in multiple occupation, this does not have to be done.)
- A record of any electrical inspections. All appliances must be safe, and 5-yearly checks are recommended.

For more information, visit: warwicksu.com/advice/housing/movingin

Final paperwork: Right to Rent checks

If you have a time-limited right to remain in the UK, the 'Right to Rent Check' should be done not more than 28 days before the tenancy starts, and there may need to be follow-up checks. For more information, please see: warwicksu.com/righttorentchecks

Moving in checklist

- Make sure you follow the landlord or agent's moving-in procedure.
- If there is an inventory, be sure to check that it is accurate and reflects the true condition of the property - this document will be used to help decide what deductions are made from your deposit at the end of the contract.
- Record the condition of the property when you move in - it may help you negotiate getting your deposit back when you move out. Take photos of each room, particularly any obvious pre-existing damage. If you want to make any comments about the state of the property, annotate the inventory and sign and date it.
- If there is no inventory, you might want to consider producing your own and agreeing it with the landlord/agent, as this may make things easier when you move out.
- Check that everything works - you don't want to find out that the heating system is faulty during the first cold spell of your tenancy!
- Make sure you check you have a valid Gas Safety Certificate - remember, carbon monoxide kills.
- Test all the smoke detectors.
- Report any problems or damage to your landlord/agent. If this does not get the problem resolved in a reasonable time, contact the SU Advice Centre for assistance.
- Take meter-readings for all utilities and notify the utility companies that there are new tenants. Ideally, all tenants should have their name on the utility bills, but you may have to nominate a single person to hold the account with some utility providers. If this is the case, then everyone should provide written confirmation to the named person that they take responsibility for the appropriate proportion of utility bills, and provide a non-term time address.
- Full-time students don't pay Council Tax, but you should check that your local council knows you have student status and don't ignore letters from them!
- Take the time to meet your neighbours - see the section *Getting On With Your Neighbours*.
- Make sure you have a TV licence. If you have a joint contract, you only need one licence; if you have individual contracts, you each need your own licence.
- Agree house rules! Suggestions for these can be found in our *Organising the Household* section.

Organising the household

Whether your student household is a group that's made up of lifelong friends or complete strangers, being organised and agreeing some basic guidelines at the beginning of the tenancy should help you have a good year and avoid some of the stresses that can occur!

The types of things you should think about are:

- Individual responsibilities – e.g. how communal areas will be kept clean and tidy. Are you going to have a cleaning rota?
- Are you going to buy cleaning materials, toilet roll etc communally?
- How are the utility bills going to be paid?
- Behaviour when coming in late – being quiet and respectful of other members of the household.
- How is space in the kitchen and fridge going to be allocated?
- Bathrooms – what is acceptable?
- Are you going to have regular house meetings?

Remember, a happy household is more likely to be a successful one, and you are at university to achieve your best!

Things do go wrong between housemates when you are living in a shared property. People have different ideas about acceptable levels of cleanliness and how they want to live, which may only become apparent when you are actually living with them. Good communication and listening skills, as well as being able to compromise, are essential to creating a happy household.

Our top tips for dealing with household communication:

- Hold house meetings - this gives everyone a chance to express how they are feeling, and work to avoid or solve problems before they become issues likely to cause stress and division.
- Have a chat with your housemate before things get out of control – i.e. before you have become angry or hostile with each other.
- If your housemate has been drinking, wait and talk to them the next day and politely explain the problem you experienced.
- Remain calm and friendly - don't be afraid to actually say how much the problem/issue has upset you, and make your own views clear.
- Avoid having a rant about your housemates on social media – they are likely to see it and it then becomes hard to deny! Always **think before you post**.

Rights and responsibilities:

How the law protects tenants

Your rights

- To have the right to 'quiet enjoyment', your landlord or his representatives cannot enter the property without your permission – so, no random inspections!
- You cannot be evicted unless proper legal procedures have been followed – the landlord cannot exclude you without having been to court.
- You can take legal action against your landlord if they break the terms of the contract or don't respect your legal rights.
- To have a safe and inhabitable property, it must meet certain standards and you must be given a Gas Safety Certificate.
- Repairs which are the responsibility of the landlord must be carried out promptly.
- The name and address of the landlord must be given to you, even if you rent via an agency. To acquire the name and address you must apply to the agent in writing. They must then provide you with the information within 21 days of your request.
- Your deposit must be protected in an accredited protection scheme, and full details of the scheme (plus a deposit protection certificate) must be given to you within 30 days of the deposit being paid. Failure to do this means you have a legal claim against your landlord of up to 3 times the value of your deposit.

Your responsibilities

- You must pay your rent on time. If you are having problems paying your rent, talk to your landlord or get advice from the SU Advice Centre.
- Maintain the property to the standard it was in when you moved in. It is better to stay up to date with the cleaning and chores, rather than having to try and recover the condition at the end of the contract. If you have a garden, you will be responsible for maintaining it unless your contract says otherwise.
- Don't cause damage to the property - if something does get damaged, let your landlord know. Remember, you are also responsible for any damage caused by your visitors.
- Use the property in a reasonable way - look after it, keep it well-aired and heated to an appropriate level to avoid condensation and mould problems.
- Be a good neighbour – be considerate, and try to be friendly. Check out the *Getting Along With Your Neighbours* section for other ideas and suggestions.
- If you don't have an all-inclusive contract, pay your utility bills.
- Don't leave the property empty for long periods of time without telling the landlord or agent.

Please note: If your landlord is not complying with their responsibilities, do not withhold rent as this can cause further legal problems. In this instance, please consult with the SU Advice Centre team.

Rubbish and recycling

How students dispose of their rubbish is one of the major areas of complaints against students from the communities they live in.

Don't leave rubbish outside the front of the house, as this can look messy and untidy to your neighbours. It can also mark your property out as a student property to criminals, increasing the risk of being broken-into.

Check out the collection days for your bins, and get into the habit of putting the bins out on the right days -

Warwick District Council:
warwickdc.gov.uk/info/20465/rubbish_waste_and_recycling

Coventry City Council: coventry.gov.uk/recycling

When you are leaving at the end of term, work out how the bins can get put out on the right day. Bins should not be left in the street unless it is a collection day!

When you are moving out, spend a little time getting rid of your unwanted property and rubbish ahead of time, and try to recycle as much as possible. The SU publishes details of local charities that will take items, and some will even collect donations from you.

Democracy

When you move into a new home, you need to be on the Electoral Register. Registering is very simple to do and can be completed online: gov.uk/register-to-vote

Crime and safety

Living off-campus in a new or unfamiliar area can be a little daunting, but by taking a few precautions you can help reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime.

Personal safety

When you are out and about it is important to stay safe, to be aware of your surroundings and not to take unnecessary risks.

Top Tips for Personal Security

Out and about

- Whether out walking during the day or night, plan your route and walk with confidence.
- Avoid walking home alone after a night out - try to stay in a group and avoid dimly-lit areas.
- If you ever feel that you are being followed, initially try crossing over the road. If they cross with you, try to walk towards a busy public area and then ask for help.
- If you are on the phone while walking, you are less aware of your surroundings, making you vulnerable to thieves and muggers.
- Carry your valuables so they are not obvious - e.g. don't put your wallet in your back pocket or close your handbag properly.
- Try not to use cashpoints at night - or, if you have to, take a friend with you. If you see anyone suspicious, don't withdraw any money.
- Don't accept lifts from strangers.
- Try to let someone know where you are going, plus your expected time of return.

For more information: warwicksu.com/advice/health/personalsafety/

Public transport

- On the bus, sit close to the driver or in view of CCTV, and avoid sitting upstairs if you are on your own.
- Check bus service timetables to avoid waiting at bus-stops for long periods.
- On trains, choose a carriage that has other people in it.
- Taxis – only use a taxi that displays a valid taxi licence. Without a licence the vehicle and driver are breaking the law, and you are risking your safety. Always know how you are going to be charged - agreed fee or meter.

Taxis generally cannot refuse to take you. If you have a problem with a taxi journey or driver, make a note of either the vehicle licence plate or the taxi number and report the problem to the Local Authority issuing the taxi licence.

Household safety

When you move into new accommodation, do check that all the locks on the doors and windows work properly and the accommodation is secure. The landlord has an obligation to ensure that all locks are in good working order.

Good security means that you can feel safe in your accommodation, and reduces the risk of you being broken into and having your things stolen.

For more information about your local Police and tips on safety, take a look at:

West Midlands Police: [saferstudents.west-midlands.police.uk](https://www.saferstudents.west-midlands.police.uk)

Warwickshire Police: [warwickshire.police.uk/article/3870/Personal-safety](https://www.warwickshire.police.uk/article/3870/Personal-safety)

Top Tips for Household Security

- Back up all your content – i.e. coursework, music and photos - and store the backup away from your computer. Possessions can usually be replaced, but a stolen laptop with all your coursework on it can be a disaster!
- Don't leave anything on view from the outside of the accommodation which might invite someone to break in - close the curtains or blinds.
- If you have a back fence and gate, make sure it is in good repair and that the gate has a working lock on it – be sure to always lock it securely.
- Whenever you are leaving the property, make sure that you check the windows and doors are properly closed and locked.
- If you have a burglar alarm, make sure it is set when the last person goes out.
- Use timer switches on radios and lights to make it look like someone is in.
- When you go home for the holidays or are leaving the property unoccupied, take all your valuables with you. If you have to leave things behind, try to hide them so they are not obvious to someone breaking in.
- If the accommodation is going to be empty for a while, ask your landlord/ agent to come round and check on the house regularly. Also, if you get on with your neighbours, tell them that you are going away and ask them to keep an eye on the house by pushing any post through the letterbox to hide a build-up.
- Use a UV pen to mark your possessions with a permanent postcode or your University name and student ID number.
- Insure your belongings, and then if they do get stolen you can afford to replace them. If your accommodation is managed by Warwick Accommodation, you may have some insurance included.

Health and wellbeing

Living off-campus can present different challenges: organising your time, arriving on campus in time for your lectures, organising the running of the house, accessing healthcare and support, living in a different area to your friends - so take time to get used to your new surroundings and routine.

If you find it challenging or start to get overwhelmed, speak to someone and access support. For details of places to get support, please see the contacts list on the back page.

Getting along with your neighbours

Getting along with our neighbours may seem obvious, but if they feel they can talk to you when they have a problem, they may be more likely to do so rather than report you to the Council or Police.

If you are moving into accommodation in a residential area, spare a thought for your non-student neighbours. For you, a new year and new accommodation should be a time of excitement and optimism; however, your non-student neighbour may fear the start of each academic year... "new students, new problems"!

Remember that your neighbours know nothing about you, and if your predecessors have caused problems by making lots of noise, leaving rubbish outside the house and generally disregarding their neighbours, you may be viewed with hostility. It is up to you to make a good impression and reassure them that this year they have student neighbours who are going to be thoughtful and considerate.

We would recommend that when you first move in, you introduce yourself to your neighbours - you can do this by going round and knocking on the door or by putting a card through their door, letting them know who you are and that you want to get along etc.

Top Tips for getting along with neighbours

- If you or others in the house have cars, try to park considerately.
- Don't store rubbish - put your bins out at the correct times and take them in afterwards.
- Take pride in the front of the house so it does not 'stand out' as a student house.
- Think about the noise you make – in particular, don't make lots of noise late at night.
- Does your neighbour work shifts? Have they got young children? Try to be considerate to those living around you.

Community

Giving back to the community you live in is a way to show that the students of Warwick University care about their local area. There are many opportunities to volunteer - a good starting point is Warwick Volunteers, who are based in the Students' Union HQ building: warwick.ac.uk/about/community/volunteers

The Students' Union Advice Centre is here to help

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or want your contract checked. For opening times, please check the Warwick SU website.

warwicksu.com/advice

We hope you have a happy and successful year!

Useful contacts:

Campus Contacts

SU Advice Centre:
warwicksu.com/advice

Nightline:
02476 417668
warwick.nightline.ac.uk

Wellbeing Support Services:
024 76 575570
warwick.ac.uk/services/supportservices

University International Office:
024 7652 3706
warwick.ac.uk/services/international

Local Authorities

Warwick District Council: 01926 410 410
warwickdc.gov.uk

Coventry City Council:
0500 834 333
coventry.gov.uk

Police

101
To contact the Police 24 hours a day

999

If your life is in danger or a crime is in progress

Health

NHS Services Explained
nhs.uk/nhsengland/aboutnhservices

University Health Centre:
024 765 24888
uwhc.org.uk/Home

111

NHS 111 telephone service if you need urgent medical help or advice, but it is not a life-threatening situation.

999

Medical emergencies which are life-threatening

