



Stadt Köln



# Guide to Living in Cologne

Information in simple English





[www.ki-koeln.de/downloads/wegweiser-wohnen-in-koeln/](http://www.ki-koeln.de/downloads/wegweiser-wohnen-in-koeln/)

# **Guide to Living in Cologne for Newcomers**

Information on housing in simple English

# Table of contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>6</b>
----------------	----------

## **1. Searching for housing** **8**

1. How do I find a flat	10
2. Viewing the flat	12
3. The fee charged for the furniture from the previous tenant (Ablöse)	14
4. The rental agreement	16
5. The rental agreement states:	18
6. Please check the rental agreement for:	22
7. The flat inspection report	24
8. The certificate of residence	25
9. Do you receive money from the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre?	26

## **2. Living in Cologne** **30**

1. House rules	33
2. Costs	34
3. Rights and obligations as a tenant	36
4. Rights and obligations of the landlord	38
5. Visitors and subtenants	39
6. Waste	40

<b>3. Moving out</b>	<b>42</b>
1. How do I give notice to move out of my flat?	44
2. What do I have to do after giving notice?	49
3. What do I have to do before moving out?	50
4. What do I have to be aware of during the handover?	53
5. What do I have to consider when moving?	59
6. What do I have to be aware of regarding	62
 <b>4. Your rights in the event of discrimination</b>	 <b>64</b>
1. What is discrimination and what does the law say?	66
2. What to do in the event of discrimination?	67
 <b>5. Help</b>	 <b>68</b>
Help on the Internet	70

# Preface

## Welcome to Cologne!



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**Henriette Reker**

Mayor of the City  
of Cologne

Dear reader,

I would like to welcome you to our city.

This brochure is part of our welcoming spirit and is intended to help you find your way around the Cologne housing market. In this guide you will find tips on living, advice on searching for housing in Cologne and about moving out of a flat – in many languages!

This brochure also contains information on discrimination with an overview of where you can go for information or advice if you need it.

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**To everyone who is new to Cologne,  
I wish you all the best!**



Henriette Reker  
Mayor of the City of Cologne

**1.**



**Searching for  
housing**

# 1. Searching for housing

## 1. How do I find a flat

- To find a flat, you can:
  - check the **newspapers**
  - look on the **internet**
  - or ask **other people** for help.
- Beware of scams! You can find more information on **searching for housing** on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2Mqh2sn>
- It is easier if you have a **public housing certificate** (Wohn-Berechtigungsschein). The abbreviation for this is: **WBS**.  
It is easier to get a cheap flat with



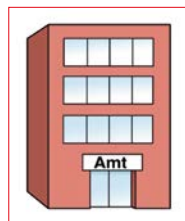
You can apply for a WBS at the Housing Office.

You can fill out the application for a **public housing certificate** from the office online or in paper form. Go to the form: <http://bitly.ws/AB9o>

If you have enough money to live on but **not enough money to pay all of your rent**, you can apply for a subsidy. The **subsidy** is called **housing assistance** (Wohngeld).

You can submit an application online here: <http://bitly.ws/Eg8E>.

- If you get money from the Social **Welfare Office** or **Job Centre**, you have to talk to someone at the office beforehand. They will decide whether the office will pay your rent for you.



You can also go directly to a **housing association**. You can find an overview of the **housing associations** in Cologne on the Internet at: <http://bitly.ws/AB8S>

## 2. Viewing the flat

After you find an advertisement for a flat, you should first view the flat. This is called a: **viewing**.

- Before the viewing, you need to know if the landlord will be able to understand you. Which means: Whether they speak a language you understand. Ask in advance what languages the landlord speaks.

Or take someone with you who can translate for you.



- The landlord will want to know more about you. For example: If you have a job and are earning money. Or if you get money from a government agency. The landlord will want to know if you have any debt.

You can get information about this from Schufa.

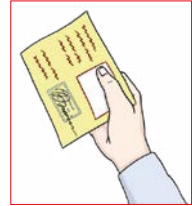


- Schufa collects a lot of information on people. You can get a Schufa report every year. You usually do not have to pay anything for this. Often, a free report is enough for the landlord. It is best to talk to your landlord.

Get help if you do not understand something.

You can apply for the free Schufa fact sheet here: <http://bitly.ws/AB99>

- You will have to show the landlord various **papers**. Take these papers with you to the viewing:



- Your **public housing certificate** from the government agency.

- Proof of **income**. For example:  
Your pay slip. This is a piece of paper that says how much you earn at your job.



- Proof of **social benefits** from the government agency.  
Which means: A piece of paper that shows how much money you get from the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre.

- Make sure you talk to the landlord about everything that is important to you. Also tell the landlord if you have questions or do not understand something.

- **First impressions** are very important. Show your best side! Dress well. **Be on time.**



### 3. The fee charged for the furniture from the previous tenant (**Ablöse**)

Sometimes the previous tenant will ask you for money for things that are to stay in the flat. For example:

- For the kitchen.
- Or for furniture.



In German, this is called an: **Ablöse**.

If you pay these fees, you can keep the things.

#### **Important:**

Talk to the previous tenant about the fee beforehand.

The fee should be **reasonable**.

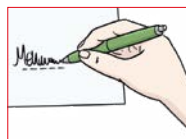
Which means: The price should not be too high. You should **only pay the fee** once you have **signed** the rental contract.



**Tip:** Make a **contract for the sale**. Write down on a piece of paper:

- The names of you and the previous tenant.
- Which things you are buying.
- When you are buying the things.
- How much money you will pay for it.
- And that you will only buy the things when you move into the flat

Then have both of you **sign** the paper at the end. So that you will be able to prove it later on: I paid for these things. I can keep these things.



**Important:**

If you receive money from the Social Welfare Office or the Job Centre, you can ask them before buying if you can get the fee paid in full or in part. If you **do not have any furniture**, you can submit an **application for initial furnishings**.



You can find more information on the application on page 28. You can find more information from the Job Centre on the Internet at: <http://bitly.ws/AB9x>

## 4. The rental agreement

Before you move into a flat or house, you must sign a **rental agreement**. This is a contract with the landlord.

Always get a **written rental agreement**. So that you can always check what you have agreed to with the landlord.

There are always **2 copies** of a rental agreement:

- 1 contract is for you.
- 1 contract is for the landlord.

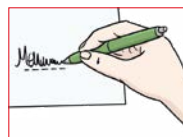
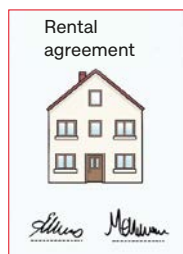
### Important:

You must **sign** the rental agreement.

To do this, you must make an appointment with the landlord. Or the landlord can send you the contract by **post**.

### Important:

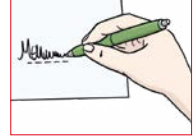
We recommend that couples have **both** partners sign. The landlord must also sign. The rental agreement is not valid until you and the landlord have both signed it.





### Note:

Before you sign the rental agreement, make sure you read it carefully. Do not sign the rental agreement until you understand everything. If you do not understand much German, someone should translate for you. If you do not understand something, get them to explain it to you.



This can help you:

- The tenants' association:  
<https://bit.ly/2QM3yFL>
- or the consumer advice centre:  
<http://bit.ly/2Nc2wRc>

Once you sign a tenancy agreement, you become a **tenant**. Which means: You can move into the flat and live there.

You then have special **rights and obligations**. Which means: There are things you are **allowed to do** in the flat. And there are things you are **not allowed to do**. These things are in the **rental agreement**.

## Important:

There are some things that the landlord does not take care of. You need to do the following things yourself:

- **Register for electricity**
- **Register for gas**
- **Register for Internet**
- **Pay the broadcast licence fees**
- **Take out household goods and third-party liability insurance**



Does the rental agreement state that you need third-party liability insurance? If you receive money from the Job Centre, the Job Centre can usually cover the costs.

## 5. The rental agreement will say:

- **Which flat you are renting.**

And **which rooms** are part of it. For example: The flat on the 1st floor on the right-hand side. Including:  
3 rooms, kitchen, hall, bathroom and cellar.



- **When you will be able to move into the flat.** This is called: **Start of the tenancy.**

– **How much the flat costs per month.**

The rent consists of:

**1. Base rent**

**Base rent is:**

Rent without additional costs.



**2. Additional costs**

These are additional costs for

- Water
- Waste
- Street cleaning
- Caretaker
- And other things you have to pay for, such as heating costs for central heating. „**Base rent**“ with „**cold utilities**“ is called „**gross cold rent**“. „**Base rent**“ with „cold utilities“ and all other costs (such as heating costs) that have to be paid to the landlord is called „**gross warm rent**“.

Some costs are settled once a year. For example: The cost of heating. The cost depends on your consumption. It is best to ask to see the last statement. It shows how much heating cost last year.

- When you rent a flat, you usually have to pay a **damage deposit**.

- A damage deposit is money from the tenant. The money is **collateral** for the landlord. The landlord or landlady will use the money to pay for any **damage** to the flat.

For example:

- If you break anything in the flat.
- If the landlord needs to repair the flat.

### **Important:**

You do not have to **pay the damage deposit until** you have **signed the rental agreement** and the deposit must not exceed 3 months' base rent.



If the flat is in good condition, you will get the damage deposit back after you move out.

For more information, see page 62. You can find more information on damage deposits on the Internet at:  
<http://bit.ly/2LII66n>

- **What rights and obligations you have.**  
Which means: What you are allowed to do in the flat. And what you need to do in the flat.
- For example:
  - How much you have to pay for the flat.
  - If you are allowed to have animals in the flat.
  - If you need to paint the flat.

- **What rights and obligations the landlord has.** For example: What work the landlord has to do before the flat is ready and you can move in.



This is called: **Fixing any defects.**

Which means: The landlord still has to repair something in the flat.

### **Important:**

The landlord must **write down any defects**. The landlord must **fix all defects before you move in**.

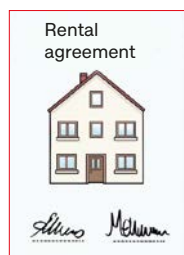


## 6. Please check the rental agreement for:

- **How long is the rental agreement valid?** Rental agreements are generally **open-ended**.

**Open-ended** means: The contract is valid until you or the landlord terminate the contract. Only in some cases can the rental agreement be **fixed-term**.

**Fixed-term** means: The contract is only valid for a certain period of time.



Pay attention:

Is a **waiver of the right to cancel the contract** to be agreed? For more information, see page 46 (Chapter Waiver of termination).

- **Will the rent go up?** Sometimes the landlord increases the rent after a certain period of time.



There are **3 types of rent increases**:

### 1. Scaled rent

Which means: You **pay less rent** at the **beginning**. Later you will have to **pay more rent**.

## 2. Modernisation

Sometimes the rent increases when the landlord renovates the flat.

For example:

- When they replace the heating system.
- Or put in new windows.

Then the rent can be increased!

## 3. Adjustment to local rent prices

That means: You will have to pay more rent because the other rents in town are higher. Rent will be raised to the local rental price.

### Important:

The rent increase must be made in writing. Get advice on the rent amount or rent increase or if something seems strange to you.

Tenants' association:

<http://bitly.ws/AB9N>



## 7. The flat inspection report

Make a **report of the inspection of the flat** before you move in. This is a piece of paper that says what the flat looked like before you moved in. Which means: What the **condition** of the flat was. For example: If the walls were freshly painted.



- The following must be included in the flat inspection report:
  - What is the name of the **tenant**?
  - What is the name of the **landlord**?
  - When does the tenant move into the flat?
  - What **condition** is the flat in?  
Which means: Is the flat OK? Or is there any **damage** that needs to be repaired?
  - How many **keys** did you get?
  - What is the **meter reading** for electricity and water? The meter reading shows you how much electricity and water you have used.



### Important:

You and the landlord must sign the record. Make sure you keep the record in a safe place.



More information on the **flat inspection report** can be found on the Internet at:  
<https://bit.ly/2xCHSUq>

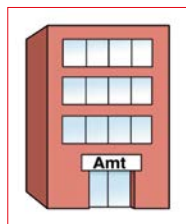


## 8. The certificate of residence

**Wohnungs-Geber** is a German word for: Landlord. Your landlord will give you a **certificate of residence** (Wohnungs-Geber Bescheinigung). This piece of paper says that you are renting the flat.



You need the certificate for government agencies. You must then **re-register (ummelden)** at a **Customer Centre of the City of Cologne within 2 weeks**.



**Re-registration** means: You tell the Customer Centre that you have moved and have a new address.

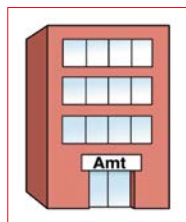
You must **submit the original** certificate of residence. And you must **bring your ID documents** with you!

The Customer Centre will then give you a confirmation certificate stating that you are living in the flat.

You can find the addresses and opening times of your **Customer Centre** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2wjzjwp>

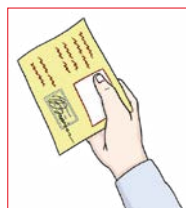
## 9. Do you receive money from the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre?

When you know you want to move, tell the Job Centre. You should not sign a **rental agreement** until you have the necessary papers from the **Social Welfare Office** or **Job Centre**. You have to do this if you get money from the Social Welfare Office or the Job Centre:



1. Ask your landlord for a **rental offer**. This is a piece of paper with all the information about your flat. The rental offer states: Which flat you want to rent. And how much you will have to pay for it.

2. Give the rental offer **to the Social Welfare Office** or **Job Centre**. The government agencies will check the rental offer. If everything is OK, then **the office** will **pay your rent**. You will receive a **certificate** for this.



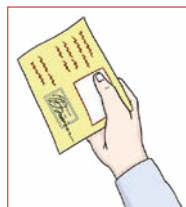
The certificate is called: A **cost coverage certificate**. The certificate says that the government agency pays your rent. More information from the Job Centre at: <http://bit.ly.ws/ABa2>

3. Sometimes the agency can also pay your damage deposit. Which means:

- If you receive help from the **Social Welfare Office** or **Job Centre**, you can apply for the damage deposit to be covered at the **Housing Department** of the City of Cologne.
- If you are an **asylum seeker** and need help, you can go to the Housing Department in the Social Welfare Office.
- You will sign a **contract** with the City of Cologne. Then the City will give the landlord the **money** for the damage deposit.
- You will have to **pay back** the money in small portions.

You can find more information about the **Housing Department** on the Internet: <http://bit.ly/2OUjGTG>

You will need a **cost coverage certificate** for this. If the City of Cologne takes over your deposit, you will receive a **damage deposit certificate** from the office. The certificate states that the office will pay your **damage deposit**.



4. Go to your landlord with **both certificates**. Only then should you sign the **rental agreement**.

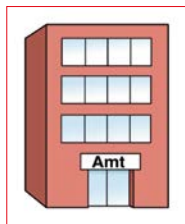


**Important:**

Do not sign the rental agreement until you have **all** the certificates from the agencies:

- The **cost coverage certificate**
- and the **damage deposit certificate**.

Which means: Only when you know for sure that the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre will pay your rent and deposit.



5. Once you have signed the rental agreement: Make a **copy of your rental agreement**.

6. Give the **copy to the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre**.

Then you can submit an **application for initial furnishings**. Which means: You apply to the agency for **money for furniture**. And for other things that you need when you move in but do not yet have.

7. You can also apply for aid if the flat needs to be **renovated before you move in**. Get advice from the **Social Welfare Office** or **Job Centre** before you move in.



8. You must show **proof of heating costs** for your flat to the **Social Welfare Office** or **Job Centre**.

9. You must report **any changes in housing costs** to the **Social Welfare Office** or **Job Centre**. For example: If you have to pay more money for heating.

#### NOTE:

**Only ever share copies! Keep the real documents for yourself!**



### Searching for housing

Searching  
for housing



Prepare the  
documents  
and bring  
them with  
you



Flat viewing



Rental  
agreement



2.

# **Living in Cologne**

## 2. Living in Cologne

It is important to get along with your landlord and with your neighbours. In order to do this, you need to know your **rights and obligations** as a tenant. Which means: You need to know.



- What you are **allowed to do** in your flat.  
For example: If animals are allowed in the flat.
- and what you **need to do** as a tenant.  
For example: If you need to clean the stairwell.

This will be in your **rental agreement**.

### Important:

Always **be considerate** of others. Do not do anything that may disturb your neighbours. For example: **Do not listen to loud music** at night.



Do you have any questions? You can get help here:

- **Tenants' association:**  
<https://bit.ly/2QM3yFL> if you have any legal problems.
- **Consumer Advice Centre:**  
<http://bit.ly/2Nc2wRc>



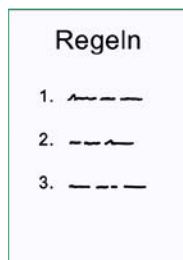
There is an **overview of many resources at the end of the information booklet.**

## 1. House rules

The rental agreement will state what **rights and obligations** you have.

You can find more information about this on page 36 (chapter Rights and obligations as a tenant).

- The rental agreement often includes **house rules**. The house rules define your **rights and obligations** in the house. For example:
  - **Quiet times** in the house
  - Rules for **common rooms**. Who may use the rooms. Who needs to clean the rooms. For example: Cellar, stairwell and other rooms.



Everyone must abide by the **house rules**. The house rules help to ensure that all neighbours live peacefully and well together.



The house rules help you, for example: If you are being bothered. For example: Because your neighbour is very loud at night.

Ask the neighbour to change their behaviour. Remind the neighbour of the **house rules**. Talk to the landlord in an emergency.



You can find more information about the **house rules** on the Internet at:  
<http://bit.ly/2N8wTrB>

## 2. Costs

These have to be paid every month:

- **Rent** for your flat
- The **costs for heating** and **hot water**
- The **additional costs** or also: Utility costs.

These are extra costs.

For example: For cold water or waste collection.

You also have to pay for **household electricity**. This electricity must be registered and paid for directly with the energy provider. You will **not receive any money** from the Social Welfare Office or the Job Centre for this. Sometimes flats have electric heating. This electricity does not count as **household electricity** and can be covered by the Job Centre.

More information about

**Additional costs** can be found on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2w9sQVz>

The **additional costs** must be paid separately from the rent. Most of the time you have to pay a **fixed amount every month**. The costs are then **settled once a year** by the landlord.

Then you will either **get money back**: If you have **consumed less**. Or you will have to **pay more money back**: If you **have consumed more**.



### **Important:**

You have to show the **statement** if you get money from the **Social Welfare Office** or the **Job Centre**.

### **Watch out:**

If you use too much heating, you may have to **pay more money**. The agency will only pay the costs if they are **reasonable**.

You can find more information on **heating** on the Internet at:  
<https://bit.ly/2o5BCPZ>

If it is **cold** outside and the **heating stops working** or you have other **defects** in the flat, you can contact the **Housing Authority** of the City of Cologne.

However, if you **do not pay your own electricity, gas and water costs** for the flat, the Housing Authority cannot help.

You can find more information here:  
<http://bitly.ws/Eg8R>




### 3. Rights and obligations as a tenant

Once you sign the rental agreement, you are allowed to use the flat. But you do not own the flat. That is why you need to take good care of the flat.

You need to maintain and protect the home. This means:

- You must **avoid damage**. If you break something, **third-party liability insurance** can help you. You can find more information on third-party liability insurance on the Internet at:  
<http://bit.ly/2Nc2wRc>

#### Regeln

1. 
2. 
3. 

- You must **report any damage to the landlord** immediately. So that the damage is fixed quickly. For example: If there is water damage or broken windows.



- You only have to renovate the flat if it is stated in the rental agreement.
- You must **avoid mould**. This is what you should do to prevent mould in the house:
  - Open the windows several times a day for a few minutes. Even in winter.
  - Air out the rooms where you **dry your laundry**.



You can find more information on mould and ventilation on the Internet at:  
<http://bit.ly/2P00cx5>

## 4. Rights and obligations of the landlord

The landlord also has obligations.

For example:

They must hand over the flat to you in good condition so that you can live in it without any problems.

Which means:

- The flat must **not be damaged**.
- The flat must be **dry**.
- The **heating** must work.



They must repair any damage to the flat.

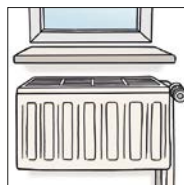
For example:

- If you have water damage.
- Or if the windows are broken.

They must allow your **family** to live with you. For example: Your children.

### Regeln

1. 
2. 
3. 



## 5. Visitors and subtenants

You are allowed to have **visitors** in your home. You **do not need permission** from the landlord to do this. But you have to talk to the landlord if other people **move in** with you.



For example:

- Your husband
- Your wife
- Or other people from your family.

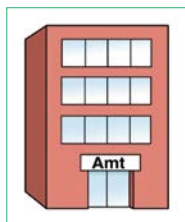


The landlord must allow this if the flat is **large enough**.

The landlord can only say **NO** if the flat is **too small**.

You can get help from the Customer Centre of the City of Cologne. For example: If your landlord **does not let your family move in**. Or if they **do not give you a certificate** for this.

Then please go to a **Customer Centre** in Cologne.



You need to get permission from the landlord **no later than 8 weeks** before people who are **not part of your family** move in with you. For example:  
Friends or other people.



### **Important:**

If you get **money from an agency**, you have to tell the authorities that other people are moving in with you. For example: The **Social Welfare Office** or the **Job Centre**.

## **6. Waste**

You have to take your rubbish out of the flat. And you need to **separate your waste properly**.

There are **usually 3 rubbish bins** in your house for

### **– 1. Plastic**

For example: Packaging.

### **– 2. Paper**

For example: Newspapers.





### – 3. Other waste

For example: Food scraps.

The rubbish collection service collects the rubbish regularly. In Cologne, this is done by the AWB.

You can find more information on the Internet at: <http://bitly.ws/ABae>

#### Living



Quiet  
times

Avoid  
damage



Save  
energy



Separate  
waste



Report  
more  
people

Ventilation



3.

**Moving out**

### 3. Moving out

When you want to move out of your flat, you have to consider many things. We have written down the most important things for you here:



#### 1. How do I give notice to move out of my flat?

- Before you give notice to leave your flat, please talk to your **case worker** at the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre if you receive money from the authorities.
- You must give **written** notice. You **cannot send a fax or email**. You must **deliver the notice in person**. Or send it by **post** to the landlord.



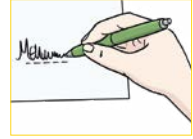
#### Tip:

Send your notice by **registered mail**. Please ask a member of staff at the post office.



### Important:

You must **sign** the notice. Only then is the notice valid.



If **several tenants** want to move out, it is not enough if only 1 person signs. **All the tenants** who are in the rental agreement and wish to give notice must sign the notice.

### What has to be written in the notice?

We have made a **sample** notice of departure. The sample contains text for a notice of departure.

You can find the sample notice on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2MsoOSp>



You can use the sample for your notice. You can **print out** the sample. Then you need to **fill in** the notice. Then you need to **sign** the notice.

Then give the notice to your landlord. Or you can send the notice by post.



## When can I give notice?

There are **deadlines for giving notice**.

This is called: **Notice deadline**. The legal deadline for giving notice is **3 months**.

This means, for example: If you want to **move out by 30 March**, you must hand in your **notice at the beginning of January**. So that the landlord has **3 months** to look for a new tenant.

### Important:

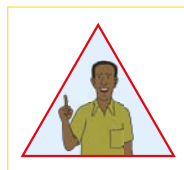
The landlord must receive your notice by the **3rd working day in the 1st month**.

Then you can move out the **month after next**. This is stated in the **German Civil Code (Bürgerliches Gesetz-Buch)** in paragraph **§ 573c**.



### Exception:

The statutory **notice period does not apply** if the rental agreement states otherwise.



Make sure you check your rental agreement beforehand: Sometimes a **waiver of notice is agreed in the rental agreement**. This means: You are **not allowed to give notice** at all.

The law states:

A waiver of notice is permitted. But the waiver of notice may **not last longer than 4 years**. After 4 years you are allowed to give notice to leave your flat.



Sometimes a rental agreement can also have a **fixed term**. Which means: The rental agreement is only valid for a certain period of time. After that, you have to sign a **new rental agreement**. Or you have to **move out** of your flat.

If you have any **questions** or problems, please seek help. For example: From a lawyer or an **advice centre**.



Sometimes you can **bypass the notice period**: If you **find a new tenant**. Then you can sometimes **give notice earlier**. And **move out** of the flat sooner.

### **Important:**

The landlord must **agree** to the new tenant. If the landlord does **not** agree, then you **cannot** give notice earlier.

You have **no right** to give early notice.

### Do I need a reason to give notice?

No. You do not have to give a reason why you want to move out. If you follow all the rules, you can **give notice without a reason**.



You only need a reason to give notice if you want to move out of the flat earlier. Or you will breach the notice deadline. But only a few reasons are sufficient for this. Please ask for advice.

For example:

If you want to move out of the flat earlier.  
If you fail to comply with the notice deadline.



## 2. What do I have to do after giving notice?

- Please contact your landlord **before the notice deadline expires**.

You need to talk to your landlord about **transferring the flat**.



For example:

- When do you want to **move out**?
  - When do you return the **keys**?
- 
- You have to allow **viewings**: Which means: Before other people rent the flat, they usually want to view it. Even if you are still living in the flat. You have to allow this. You have to make time for a viewing. You need to show people your flat.



### **The courts say:**

You must allow a viewing at least **once per week**.

### **Important:**

People cannot just stop by. They need to make an **appointment** with you beforehand.

### 3. What do I have to do before moving out?

#### – Changes to the flat:

You must leave the flat as you found it.



This means:

Anything that you have installed in the flat must be removed before you move out.

For example:

Fixtures and equipment such as a built-in kitchen or a new floor.



#### **Exception:**

If the landlord agrees, these things can stay in the flat.

#### **Important:**

Please request **written permission** for this. You can also **sell** the things to the next tenant. Which means: You can leave these things in the flat. The next tenant will give you money for the items.

This is called: **Ablöse**.

You can find more information on fees for furnishings (Ablöse) on page 14 (chapter „Fees for furniture“).

### Important:

You should also **agree to this in writing**. Write down exactly what you are selling to the next tenant. Confirm the sale with your **signatures**!

**Repairs and renovations:** As a general rule: You do not have to **renovate** when you move out. You only have to renovate the flat: If it is in your **rental agreement** and is valid. Or if you leave the flat and something is **broken**.



### Before you move out, make sure to check:

- What your rental agreement says about: **Renovation**.
- And if the flat has been renovated since you lived there.  
You can find more information on **renovation** on the Internet at:  
<http://bit.ly/2PzUh39>
- If you have **painted the walls with colours**, you must **paint them white again before you move out**. Unless the landlord agrees to it.

– **Vacating the flat:**

The flat must be completely vacated at the time of handover. This means:

All rooms must be empty. This includes:

- the cellar
- the storage area
- and other storage rooms.

Please take care of your **bulky waste** well in advance! You must make an **appointment** to do this. Then the waste collection service will collect your bulky waste.



You can find more information on bulky waste on the Internet at:  
<https://bit.ly/2BHaikF>

The flat must be **swept clean** when you hand it over. Which means: You must clean all of the rooms before you move out. So that the flat is clean when you hand it over.



#### 4. What do I have to be aware of during the handover?

- **Make an appointment:**

Please make an appointment well in advance with the landlord for the **handover of the flat.**



You must hand over the flat on the **last day of the notice deadline at the latest.**

However, you can also hand over the flat earlier.

For example: If you want to move earlier.



- **Witness or accompanying person:**

Take a **witness** with you to the hand-over. In other words,

a companion who can help you. Show the witness all the rooms. So that the witness can help you in an emergency.

For example, if the landlord later says:

You left something broken in the flat.

You will have to pay money back. Then

the witness can say: I saw the flat before moving out. I can testify that the flat was fine. I can prove that the landlord is lying.

### Important:

The witness must **not be on the contract**. So someone who is not in the rental agreement. For example: A flatmate



### – The flat inspection report:

The condition of the flat is inspected during the handover. This means: You show the landlord the empty flat. The landlord says if everything is OK. Or if you need to do anything else. For example: Cleaning or tidying up.



Always make a **record of the inspection**. This is a document that says: I handed over the flat empty and clean. The landlord has accepted the flat as I left it when I moved out.

### Important:

1. You must write down the **date of the handover**.
2. You and your landlord must **sign** the record.



**With this you can also prove later on:**

I followed all the rules when I moved out. I handed over the flat in good condition.

**Tip:**

Take photos of the rooms before you move out. The best time is when all the rooms are empty.



**– Damages:**

If the tenant breaks something in the flat, the landlord can demand that it be **repaired** or **replaced**.

**Liability insurance** is important for this. Third party liability insurance will pay for any damage.

You can find more information on third-party liability insurance on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2Nc2wRc>

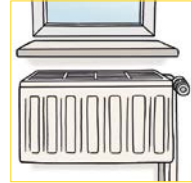
### **Important:**

**Wear and tear** is not considered to be **damage**. Wear and tear means: When you see that something has been used. Wear and tear is for example: Scratches on the floor. This is not damage. The tenant does not have to repair or pay for this.



### **– Meter readings**

If you live in a flat, you need electricity, water and heating. When you move out, you have to take readings for electricity, water and heating.



There are devices for this in every house that count your consumption. Which means: These devices in the house show how much electricity, water and heating you have used. This is called: **Meter reading**.



**This is what you need to do  
before you move out:**

Check the meter readings from each device. Write down the meter readings in the inspection report. So that the landlord knows: How much you have used and how much you have to pay. And from what point on the new tenant has to pay.



**Note:**

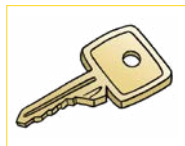
Sometimes you cannot check the meter readings yourself. In that case, you need to make an appointment with your **energy provider**.

For example: With the company that you get your electricity from. Then the company will check the meter readings.



– **Key to the flat:**

When you return the keys on moving out, make sure you get a **written confirmation** of this.



Which means: Write that the landlord has received all the keys in the inspection report.

**Important:**

Only sign the report if you are sure that EVERYTHING in the report is correct.

If you have any questions or problems, please get help.

For example: If you do not understand something. Or if there is something wrong in the report.

Then you do not have to sign the report.

But you must give the landlord all the keys to the flat before you move out and the rental agreement expires.

More information on the flat inspection report can be found on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2xCHSUq>

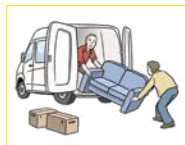
## 5. What do I have to consider when moving?

- Make sure you get **help with moving** beforehand.

For example: Let people who can help you move know well in advance.



- If you do not want to do the move yourself, call a **moving company** in advance.

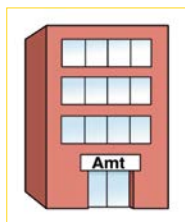


### Tip:

If you want to hire a moving company, it is best to move at these times: Between the **6th and 13th** and the **18th and 24th of the month**. This is when moving companies are cheapest.

### Important:

If you receive benefits from the Social Welfare Office or Job Centre, be sure to seek advice beforehand.



- You will need to **re-register** (ummelden) at the Customer Centre: Which means: You must register with this office if you move and have a new address. Go to the office in your new place of residence to do this.

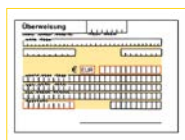
### Important:

You must re-register your children at school or in kindergarten. Which means: You must say that you are moving and have a new address.



- You must **cancel any standing orders you have with the bank**. For example: If you have a standing order to pay your bills:

- **For your rent**
- **For electricity**
- **For your phone**



- You will have to give your new address: For example:
  - To the **bank**
  - To the **tax office**
  - To the **Job Centre**
  - To your **insurance company**
  - To your **doctor**



- You should submit a forwarding request to the post office. Which means: You tell the post office that you have a new address. If someone sends a letter to your old address, the post office can send the letter to your new address.



The form for **forwarding requests** can be found on the Internet at:  
<http://bit.ly/2BCOFSM>

- You must register with the **utilities companies**.  
For example:  
**Register for electricity** at your new place of residence.

## 6. What do I have to be aware of regarding the deposit?

When you rent a flat, you have to pay a **damage deposit**. A damage deposit is **money from the tenant**. The money is collateral for the landlord. The landlord or landlady will use the money to pay for any **damage** to the flat.



For example:

If you have broken something in the flat.  
And the landlord needs to repair the flat.  
Then the landlord will pay for the work with the money. Then you will get **less money back**.

### Important:

If the flat is in good condition, then you get the whole **damage deposit back**.

### Please note

The landlord does not have to return the deposit **for 6 months**.

Before that, you have **no right** for the landlord to pay you back the deposit.



## Moving out



### Plan move-out

- Search for a new flat
- Ask the Job Centre



### Give notice to old flat

- Remember the deadlines



### Viewings for new tenants

- Allow and schedule visits



### Clean and clear the flat



### Inspection report / handover of keys

- Take pictures of damage



### Moving

4.

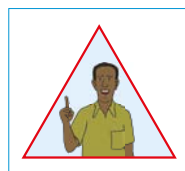


# **Your rights in the event of discrimination**

## 4. Your rights in the event of discrimination

### 1. What is discrimination and what does the law say?

You have rights if you face discrimination when looking for or being allocated housing. This is stated in the German General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeinen Gleichbehandlungsgesetz; AGG). The law prohibits discrimination on certain grounds. For example, you must not be discriminated against when being allocated housing just because you have a different origin or a disability. That would be discrimination.



However, not every rejection of housing is discrimination. Especially in big cities, several hundred people will often apply for a flat.

In this case, the landlord cannot always invite everyone who wants the flat to a viewing. A rejection often has nothing to do with you personally.

Example of discrimination: A landlord offers a flat for rent. They only invite Germans for a viewing appointment. A Syrian family does not get an appointment

for a viewing because the landlord wants „no foreigners“ in their flat. In this example, the Syrian family is being discriminated against because of their origin. Such discrimination is prohibited by law. The colour of someone's skin or their origin must not play a role in the selection of tenants.

## **2. What to do in the event of discrimination?**

If you have been discriminated against, you should seek advice and support. Talk to your family, friends or acquaintances about your experiences. This can help you to understand the situation better. Consider what support you need together with your family or acquaintances. Nobody should have to put up with discrimination! Anyone and everyone is entitled to defend themselves against discrimination.

You can get advice here:

- Anti-discrimination office:  
<http://bitly.ws/ABay>
- OEGG: <http://bitly.ws/ABaS>
- Caritas: <http://bitly.ws/ABaV>
- Rubicon: <http://bitly.ws/ABb4>

**5.**

# Help

# Help on the Internet

- You can find more information on **searching for housing** on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2Mqh2sn>
- You can find the official application for a **public housing certificate** on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2pt94R4>
- You can find more information on the **flat inspection report** on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2xCHSUq>
- You can find the addresses and opening times of your **Customer Centre** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2wjzjwp>
- Information from the **Job Centre**: <https://bitly.ws/WqCK>
- You can find information from the **Housing Department** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2OUjGTG>
- You can find more information on **damage deposits** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2LlI66n>
- Information on **house rules** can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2N8wTrB>
- You can find more information on **additional costs** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2w9sQVz>
- You can find more information on **heating** on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2o5BCPZ>
- You can find more information on **third-party liability insurance** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2Nc2wRc>
- You can find more information on **mould and ventilation** on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2P00cx5>
- You can find more information on **waste separation** on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2BHaikF>
- You can find a sample **notice of leave** for a flat on the Internet at: <https://bit.ly/2MsoOSp>

- You can find more information about **renovating** here:  
<http://bit.ly/2PzUh39>
- You can find more information on **bulky waste** on the Internet: <https://bit.ly/2N31mXv>
- The form for **forwarding requests** can be found on the Internet at: <http://bit.ly/2BCOFSM>

# A cooperative project of the



Ministerium für Kinder, Jugend, Familie,  
Gleichstellung, Flucht und Integration  
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen





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# Stadt Köln

**The Mayor**

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