



social housing agency  
decent housing  
social housing  
right to housing  
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private housing  
renting  
security deposit



# Housing



## What types of housing exist?

There are two sorts of flats and houses for rent: private housing and social (or public) housing.

In social housing, **rent**  is calculated according to renters' income. Social housing is run by government authorities. Flats are assigned based on social and economic criteria. Generally, waiting lists are long, and there is a procedure that must be followed.

Most rental units (flats or houses) are privately owned, and the landlord can set the rent with no restrictions.

In most cases, the first flat or house that you rent upon arriving in Belgium will be privately owned.

## What important documents concern housing?

A written agreement must be prepared and signed by the landlord and the tenant: this is the **lease**. This lease specifies the duration, the monthly rent, and any special conditions. It must also include legally-required attachments.



### Be careful of fraud:

- Read the lease carefully, and find out what you will have to pay or do. In case of doubt, do not sign anything, and seek out advice as needed.

- Pay attention to **utilities** . Check whether these are included in the monthly rent or not.
- Carefully read and understand the conditions for terminating the lease.



Note: the owner must have the **lease officially recorded**. In case of doubt, you can carry out this procedure yourself. Seek out advice as needed.



We recommend that you conduct a **walk-through**  with your landlord in order to identify any issues or defects in the flat or house.

## What are my rights as a tenant?

### To live in a home that is in good condition, safe and sound.

A home must be safe and comply with certain conditions of comfort. The law defines precise rules in terms of safety, health, minimum household equipment and fire prevention.



Landlords do not always comply with these rules. In such cases, they may be fined. For this, you must file a complaint.

**The landlord may not decide unilaterally to evict a tenant.** In case of dispute, only a justice of the peace may order an eviction.

In certain cases, the landlord may terminate the lease if the landlord or a member of his/her family wants to inhabit the flat or house. However, legally prescribed notice periods must be complied with.

**Right to privacy: the landlord may not enter a home without the tenant's permission.**

## What are my obligations as a tenant?

**Pay your monthly rent and utilities on time each month.** Your rent is specified in the lease, throughout its duration. The landlord has the right to increase the rent once a year in order to adjust for **inflation**  (indexing).



Do not hesitate to check that the new monthly rent complies with the law.

**Provide a security deposit**  , if the landlord requires it.

When you move into a flat or house, the landlord may ask you to provide a security deposit. It may not exceed two months of rent (three months if you pay in instalments). The security deposit is in principle paid to an **escrow account** .



If possible, do not pay the security deposit in cash.





**Keep the flat or house in good condition; in other words, perform regular upkeep work to ensure the home does not deteriorate, and keep it in its initial condition.**

The tenant must ensure the “routine” upkeep of the private parts of the home (maintain the boiler, unplug the sink, protect pipes against frost, etc.) and repair any damage caused by the tenant (broken windows, holes in the walls, sealing problems with sinks, etc.).

**Alert the landlord quickly when you observe problems with the flat or house (by registered letter).**

 **Important.** The landlord is responsible for repairs and renovations resulting from normal wear and tear (e.g. replacing the carpet after nine years) or poor condition (e.g. replacing an old boiler). The landlord must perform major repairs (unstable staircase, defective or hazardous electrical installation, etc.), except if these repairs are due to lack of proper upkeep by the tenant.

 If the landlord refuses to perform this work, make sure that you have communicated the situation to him or her in writing (by registered letter).

**Alert the landlord when you want to move out of the flat or house (“give notice”).**

The conditions and notice periods to move out of a home depend on the type of lease that you have signed with the landlord.

Find out what the exact conditions of your lease are. In general, a long-term lease (nine years) offers better protection for the tenant. Often, the written notice period is at least three months prior to moving out.

**Do not perform any renovation work or repairs without the landlord’s authorization.**

**Maintain the landing (and the sidewalk if you live on the ground floor), and comply with the rules about disposing of trash (sorting and disposal conditions).**

Note: the law prohibits the disposal of trash in non-authorized locations. Throwing trash or other waste in the street or in nature is prohibited, even if other trash is already present. Fines for littering can be high.

→ For more information about trash collection rules:

- In Brussels: [www.bruxelles-proprete.be](http://www.bruxelles-proprete.be)
- In Wallonia: most municipalities distribute trash collection calendars and information brochures. Contact your municipality.

→ For more information about renting: a guide to good landlord-tenant relations can be downloaded on the Internet: <http://conseilsuperieurlogement.be>

### What should be done in case of conflict between the landlord and tenant?

In case of a problem, always try to resolve it directly with the landlord. Confirm the content of the agreement or dispute by registered letter.

In case of significant dispute, it must be referred to a justice of the peace, who will issue a ruling on the matter. **You may seek the advice of a lawyer** (see “Information & Advice” chapter, “Legal Aid”).



### How do I find a flat or house to rent?

To find a private flat or house to rent, consult newspapers such as *Le Vlan*, free estate agent brochures and websites (e.g. [www.immoweb.be](http://www.immoweb.be) or [www.vlan.be](http://www.vlan.be)). Walk around: “A Louer” (to rent) signs are displayed on units available to rent.





You can register, free of charge, with one or more housing agencies, both private and social.

➔ To find the nearest Social Housing Society, contact your municipality. Associations or CPAS may provide support. You may also contact:

- In Brussels, Housing Society of the Brussels-Capital Region : [www.slr.b.be](http://www.slr.b.be)
- In Wallonia, Housing Society of the Walloon Region: [www.swl.be](http://www.swl.be)

## Where do I go for advice?

There are tenants' associations that can provide you with support and advice about your rights as a tenant. Many municipalities also have a housing information and advice office.

➔ For more information, you can contact your municipality.



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