

## **Off-campus housing guide**

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## 1. Useful tips

### > Beware of scams

Do not transfer money without having seen the property first or at least receiving a contract or confirmation that it is legitimate.

Always meet potential landlords or flatmates in person before signing anything. If a landlord says they are out of the country for an indefinite period of time and want to send you keys to the accommodation by mail, you should become very suspicious.

Always sign a contract. If a landlord tells you that a contract is not necessary, it might mean that they do not have the legal right to rent out the accommodation.

Be aware of too high security deposits. If a landlord asks for a ridiculous amount of a security deposit (more than 3 months rent), it might mean that they want to take the money and run.

### > Start early

It is recommended to start compiling your documentation for your viewings as early as possible. Ads are normally published 2-4 weeks before the lease starts.

### > Ask around

Your friends are your best resource for finding a room in the city. Remember to ask around and let everyone know what you are looking for. One of your acquaintances may know of a room opening up.

### > City registration (Anmeldung)

Everybody living in Germany for an extended period of time needs to complete the city registration. Make sure to ask the landlord if he will give you a *Wohnungsgeberbestätigung* (landlord confirmation) for your registration.

## 2. Temporary accommodation

### > Websites

Youth hostel booking site

[www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com)

Couch Surfing

[www.couchsurfing.org](http://www.couchsurfing.org)

Temporary furnished rooms/apartments

[www.freebedsberlin.de](http://www.freebedsberlin.de)

[www.airbnb.de](http://www.airbnb.de)

[www.citadines.com](http://www.citadines.com)

[www.wimdu.de](http://www.wimdu.de)

▷ Hostels

Heart of Gold Hostel

Johannisstr. 11 Tel: +49 (0) 30 2900 3300 10117 Berlin

[www.heartofgold-hostel.de](http://www.heartofgold-hostel.de)

City Stay Hostel

Rosenstraße 16 Tel: +49 (0)30 23 62 40 31 10178 Berlin

[www.citystay.de](http://www.citystay.de)

The Circus Hostel Berlin

Weinbergsweg 1a Tel: +49 (0)30 2000 3939 10119 Berlin

[www.circus-berlin.de](http://www.circus-berlin.de)

City Hostel Berlin

Glinkastr. 5-7 Tel: +49 (0) 30 23 88 66 850 10117 Berlin

[www.cityhostel-berlin.com](http://www.cityhostel-berlin.com)

Meininger Hotel

Schönhauser Allee 19 Tel: +49 (0) 030 98321074 10435 Berlin

[www.meininger-hotels.com](http://www.meininger-hotels.com)

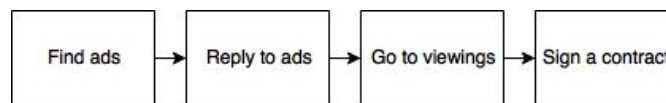
Pfefferbett Hostel

Am Pfefferberg, Hof 4, Haus 6 Chris nenstraße 18-19 10119 Berlin

Tel: +49 (0)30 93 93 58 58

[www.pfefferbett.de](http://www.pfefferbett.de)

### 3. Long-term Accommodation



#### a) Find ads

Please consult the dictionary in the appendix for explanations of some of the phrases and abbreviations often used in housing ads.

▷ Online

[www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de)

[www.studenten-wg.de](http://www.studenten-wg.de)

[www.kleinanzeigen.ebay.de](http://www.kleinanzeigen.ebay.de)

[www.house-of-nations.de](http://www.house-of-nations.de)

[www.immobilienscout24.de](http://www.immobilienscout24.de)

[www.immonet.de](http://www.immonet.de)  
[www.immowelt.de](http://www.immowelt.de)  
[www.berlinovo.de](http://www.berlinovo.de)  
[www.city-wohnen.de](http://www.city-wohnen.de)  
[www.fineandmine.com](http://www.fineandmine.com)  
[www.zeit-raum.de](http://www.zeit-raum.de)  
[www.coming-home.org](http://www.coming-home.org)  
[www.wunderflats.de](http://www.wunderflats.de)  
[www.uniplaces.com](http://www.uniplaces.com)

#### ▷ Housing groups on Facebook

Short-Term Accommodation Berlin: WG, Zwischenmiete, flat-share, Zimmerboerse  
Berlin Apartments – Rent – Share & Sell flats & apartments in Berlin!  
etc.

#### ▷ Local Newspapers

Berliner Morgenpost  
Berliner Zeitung (Wednesdays and Saturdays)  
Tagesspiegel (Saturdays)  
Zitty  
Tip

#### ▷ Search criteria

Location (Neighbourhoods with reasonable commute to BCB are Pankow, Prenzlauer Berg, Wedding, Mitte, Friedrichshain, Moabit, Reinickendorf)  
Number of flatmates  
Size  
Type of Contract (limited vs. unlimited)  
Sublet vs. no sublet  
Price (depends on the location, size and what is included): a room in shared flat may cost about 350-500€, rent for an apartment starts from about 400€ without expenses)

#### ▷ Advertise yourself

On most of the resources (websites, Facebook, newspapers) mentioned above you can publish your own ad. This will allow other people to contact you directly if they have anything opening up and think you might be a great candidate. Make sure to include the following information in your ad:

- What you are looking for: room/apartment, neighbourhood, ideal size, type of contract, maximum price with expenses, move-in date, move-out date (if limited), availability of important documents (see section ‘Important Documents to bring to the viewing’)
- Information about yourself: your name, your age, your gender, your current occupation, how and when you can be reached
- For flatshares: if you have experience living in flatshare, hobbies, personality, relevant allergies

## **b) Reply to ads**

The sooner you reply to ads, the higher your chances, so consider replying to the most recent ads first (preferably within an hour of posting). Take a screenshot of the ad as they tend to disappear quickly.

### **> How to reply**

- Write a short description of yourself (include your age, student status, relevant information).
- For shared flats include more details about yourself such as your hobbies, habits, etc.
- Customize your reply to the ad (mention names, address of apartment, etc.). Sometimes the ad will ask you to provide certain details.
- Include a way you can be reached (phone number and email address).
- Write the reply in German if possible but English will normally work too.

## **c) Go to viewings**

Make sure you know where you are going and who you are meeting. It's useful to get to the place a few minutes early.

### **> Flatshare viewing**

You will meet: the people currently living there

What happens: they will ask you questions about interests, preferences, etc. to find out if you would get along when living together. Sometimes there will be real auditions.

How to behave: be on time, be friendly and honest. Reread the ad to remember details and names. Follow up with a thank-you email.

### **> Apartment viewing**

You will meet: landlord or representative from the Hausverwaltung (housing association). More infrequently, you may meet the person currently living there

What happens: landlord will collect documents from interested candidates; he/she might ask questions about your past and your future plans. They want to make sure that you are a reliable tenant who will pay rent and stay in the apartment for a while.

How to behave: be on time to show that you are reliable. Be friendly, greet the landlord, show that you remember the ad, confirm the details and ask additional questions, you may introduce yourself briefly. Submit required documents.

▷ **Important documents to bring to the viewing**

Depending on the ad and whether you are renting a room or apartment, you will need to bring one or some of these documents. The dictionary at the end of the document has information on what these are and where to get them.

Application for the apartment

Personal ID

*Schufa-Auskunft*

*Einkommensnachweis*

*Bürgschaft*

*Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung*

*Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS)*

Additional documents that may help your application stand out:

-CV

-Letter of introduction (introducing yourself to the landlord)

-Proof of income/parents' income (if they will be helping you with rent)

**d) Sign the contract**

When renting, always sign a contract. Make sure to read the contract carefully before you sign it.

▷ **Sublet contract**

If you are subletting from someone else, always make sure that the current tenant has the official approval from the landlord to sublet.

▷ **Flatshare contract**

Includes: rent (what it includes and any additional costs), account information, due date for monthly rent, notice period (usually 1 month), deposit payment (usually 1 or 2 monthly rents), sometimes cleaning schedule

▷ **Apartment contract**

Includes: rent (what it includes and any additional costs), account information, due date for monthly rent, notice period (usually 3 month), deposit payment (usually 2 or 3 monthly rents), number of keys, graduated rent if applicable, minimum rental period.

▷ **Key exchange and previous damages**

Make sure that the apartment/room is in an optimal condition before moving in. Ideally, the landlord will go through the place with you when he/she is handing over the keys. If you notice any damages, make sure to show the landlord, take a picture of the damages and send photos to the landlord by email. This way the landlord cannot blame you on the damages at a later point.

## 4. Tips on tenancy

### > Insurance

Consider getting a liability insurance (Haftpflichtversicherung). This will protect you from having to pay huge amounts of money for potential damages to the apartment/house/room, which are not your fault.

### > Mieterverein

If you think you may have legal issues or questions regarding your tenancy, it may make sense to become a member of the Berlin Tenants' Association ([Berliner Mieterverein](#)). For 9€/month the Association provides access to free legal advice regarding your tenancy.

### > Damages and maintenance

Unless specified otherwise in your rental agreement, the landlord is responsible for maintaining the apartment/room in the same condition as the beginning of a contract. This does not include damages caused by the tenant, but the maintenance of pipes, electricity, plumbing, doors and windows. In case there are any damages, always call your landlord first, who will be responsible for scheduling and paying for the repair works.

### > End of contract

Make sure you cancel your contract ahead of time. Unless specified otherwise, for an unlimited rental agreement, the cancellation deadline is 3 months prior to the end of the contract. The landlord generally has a similar cancellation period of 3 months for an unlimited contract, if the contract does not specify a different arrangement.

## 5. Dictionary

### > Terminology

<i>Altbau</i>	An old building, often with floorboards and high ceilings.
<i>Anmeldung</i>	City registration. This is a legal requirement for anyone living in Germany for an extended period of time. In order to complete this, you need a <i>Wohnungsgeberbestätigung</i> from your landlord.
<i>Ausweis</i>	Personal identification This could be your passport or a national identification card.
<i>Befristet / unbefristet</i>	Limited / unlimited lease
<i>Betriebskosten</i>	House maintenance/operating costs. This normally includes running costs for the land, water supply, heating, rubbish disposal, cleaning of the building, etc. Usually the tenant pays a contribution towards these costs in the monthly rent. Some landlords issue a

	yearly bill which reflects the actual costs for each year. You should check what is agreed in your contract regarding these costs.
<i>Bürgschaft</i>	Guarantee If you do not earn enough money yourself, someone else can act as a guarantor on your behalf by promising to pay your rent if you cannot manage it yourself. In this case they sign an official document promising to do this (your landlord or rental agency can provide you with a form or you can find many templates online)
<i>Einkommensnachweis</i>	Proof of income Many rental agencies and landlords will require proof that you receive a regular income. This could be your last three paychecks, confirmation of scholarship payments, etc.
<i>Gesamtmiete</i>	The full amount of rent you pay each month – but still double check whether there are any Nebenkosten!
<i>Hinterhaus</i>	A building which is set back from the road and can be accessed via a courtyard (or a series thereof). The front building is known as the <i>Vorderhaus</i> .
<i>Hauptmieter</i>	The main tenant of the at, whose name is on the main contract with the landlord.
<i>Hausverwaltung</i>	Property management
<i>Kaltmiete</i>	Rent excluding heating costs and other bills
<i>Kaution</i>	Deposit It is normal in Germany to pay a deposit on a room or apartment. The amount is normally the equivalent of between one to three months' rent.
<i>Mieter</i>	Tenant
<i>Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung</i>	confirmation from your former landlord that you are not in arrears. If you are moving off-campus, the Accounting department can provide this.
<i>Mietvertrag</i>	Lease / rental agreement
<i>Mindestmietdauer</i>	Agreement included in the contract that the apartment must be rented for a minimum period of time (up to 4 years minimum rental period allowed)
<i>Mitbewohner</i>	Flatmate/housemate
<i>möbliert/nicht möbliert</i>	furnished/unfurnished
<i>Nachmieter</i>	Next tenant
<i>Nebenkosten</i>	Running costs / utilities such as water, electricity, phone or internet.
<i>Neubau</i>	A modern building.
<i>Provision / provisionsfrei</i>	Commission / no commission



<i>Renoviert / unrenoviert</i>	Renovated / not renovated
<i>Saniert</i>	Renovated
<i>Schufa-Auskunft</i>	Credit report Schufa is a German organisation that provides official credit checks. Many rental agencies and landlords will ask you to provide one. You can apply for one easily online: <a href="http://www.meineschufa.de">www.meineschufa.de</a> (price: approx. 30€).
<i>Selbstauskunft</i>	Voluntary disclosure of personal data
<i>Staffelmiete</i>	Annual rent increase (graduated rent) stipulated in the contract (the amount specified by the landlord, usually around 3% of rent)
<i>Untermieter</i>	A person renting a room or at who has a contract with the main tenant of the apartment rather than with the landlord.
<i>Vermieter</i>	Landlord
<i>Warmmiete</i>	Rent including heating costs and other bills.
<i>WG, short for "Wohngemeinschaft"</i>	Shared flat or house
<i>Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS)</i>	Confirmation provided by Bürgeramt/Rathaus that your income does not exceed certain limits, it allows you to rent apartments supported by public funds making the rent less expensive.
<i>Wohnungsgeberbestätigung</i>	Confirmation provided by the landlord that you are renting a room/apartment This document is needed in order to complete the city registration ( <i>Anmeldung</i> ), which is a legal requirement for extended stays in Germany.
<i>Zweck-WG</i>	A shared at or house where the people only live together for cost convenience but are not particularly interested in interacting on a personal level.
<i>Zwischenmieter</i>	A person who rents the accommodation while the main resident of the apartment is temporarily away.

### ▷ Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>Altbau</i>	Old building
<i>Blk.</i>	<i>Balkon</i>	Balcony
<i>DG</i>	<i>Dachgeschoss</i>	Top floor
<i>DI</i>	<i>Diele</i>	Floorboards
<i>EBK</i>	<i>Einbauküche</i>	Built-in kitchen

<i>EG</i>	<i>Erdgeschoss</i>	Ground floor
<i>F</i>	<i>Fahstuhl</i>	Lift
<i>Ga</i>	<i>Garten</i>	Garden
<i>Gar</i>	<i>Garage</i>	Garage
<i>gfl.</i>	<i>gefliest</i>	tiled
<i>HH</i>	<i>Hinterhaus</i>	Rear building
<i>HP</i>	<i>Hochparterre</i>	Raised ground floor
<i>H.z.</i>	<i>Heizung</i>	Heating
<i>K/Kt.</i>	<i>Kaution</i>	Deposit
<i>Kab.</i>	<i>Kabelanschluss</i>	Cable connection
<i>Kfz.</i>	<i>Autostellplatz</i>	Parking space
<i>Kl.</i>	<i>Keller</i>	Basement/Cellar
<i>MM</i>	<i>Monatsmiete</i>	Monthly rent
<i>NB</i>	<i>Neubau</i>	New/modern building
<i>NK</i>	<i>Nebenkosten</i>	Running costs
<i>NM</i>	<i>Nachmieter</i>	Next tenant
<i>OG</i>	<i>Obergeschoss</i>	Upper floor (above ground level)
<i>O.Pr.</i>	<i>Ohne Provision</i>	Without commission
<i>Pk</i>	<i>Parkett</i>	Parquet flooring
<i>ren.</i>	<i>renoviert</i>	renovated
<i>renbed.</i>	<i>renovierungsbedürftig</i>	In need of renovation
<i>SFL</i>	<i>Seitenflügel</i>	Side wing
<i>Tep.</i>	<i>Teppich</i>	Carpet
<i>TG</i>	<i>Tiefgaragenplatz</i>	Underground parking
<i>t-möb</i>	<i>teilmöbliert</i>	Partially furnished

UG	<i>Untergeschoss</i>	Basement
Verw.	<i>Verwaltung</i>	Administration/management
VH	<i>Vorderhaus</i>	Front building
v-möb	<i>vollmöbliert</i>	Fully furnished
W.	<i>Wohnfläche</i>	Living space/surface area
WB	<i>Wannenbad</i>	Bath tub
Whg.	<i>Wohnung</i>	Apartment
Wt.	<i>werktags</i>	On weekdays
Z	<i>Zimmer</i>	Room
ZH	<i>Zentralheizung</i>	Central heating