

Advice for the completion of a rental agreement on the private market

This Information is provided to the best of our knowledge and, when in doubt, does not replace legal counselling!

Get an overview

Before you start to search for a room on the private market, please familiarize yourself with the city of Mannheim. Find out about the different city parts, suburbs and other cities close to Mannheim. Please also get to know the public transportation system to get a feeling for distances within the city.

Compare

Do not rent the first offer you find! Compare different offers to get a feeling for the process on the private market. The location, the year of construction of the building, the size of the apartment/room are important factors which affect the rent.

Kaltmiete vs. Warmmiete

When renting an apartment in Germany, it's important to understand the distinction between two key terms: **Kaltmiete** and **Warmmiete**. While an apartment may initially appear affordable, this often reflects only the Kaltmiete—the base rent.

Kaltmiete (Cold Rent)

The Kaltmiete refers solely to the cost of using the apartment or room. It does not include any additional expenses such as heating, water, or waste disposal. These costs are billed separately and must be considered when calculating the total monthly rental expenses.

Warmmiete (Warm Rent)

The Warmmiete includes both the Kaltmiete and certain additional costs, typically covering services such as heating, water, and waste collection. This gives a more accurate picture of the actual monthly costs.

Please note: Electricity, internet, and cable TV fees are not always included in the Warmmiete and may need to be arranged and paid for separately.

Additional Costs

In many rental agreements, additional costs (such as heating, water, or waste collection) are charged as a lump sum. While this simplifies monthly budgeting, it's important to compare similar offers to ensure that the lump sum has been calculated realistically.

If the landlord sets this amount too low, you may face an unexpected back payment at the end of the year to cover the actual consumption. Always review and compare offers carefully to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Rental Period

Please check the rental period. Some landlords only make contracts for one or two years (fixed term contract). If you agree to a fixed term contract (e.g. runs for one year), you will have problems to cancel it after half of the time.

Cancellation Period

Please pay attention to the cancellation period in the contract. Normally, the cancellation period amounts to three months (excluding fixed term contracts). The cancellation must be handed in to the landlord by letter on the third working day of the month at the latest. Saturdays count as working days in this case.

Oral Agreements

In general, we advise against oral agreements. All important arrangements should be put down in writing.

Read your contract carefully

Before signing any rental agreement, make sure to read the contract thoroughly. It is essential to understand your **financial and legal obligations** in full.

If the contract is in German, ask your future landlord for an **official English version**. Do not rely solely on online translation tools, as they may lead to misunderstandings.

Ensure that the contract includes the **full name and address of the landlord**. If you have any doubts or require assistance, please contact the **International Office** for support.

Sublease Contracts

Always insist on a contract even if you “only” sublet a room.

Deposit

A deposit of 2 – 3 rents (Kaltmiete) are normal in Germany.

Signature

Always insist to receive a signed contract by the landlord before you sign it. The contract is only legally binding if both parties have signed it

Payment of Rent and Deposit

Only transfer money to your future landlord if you have received a signed and therefore legally binding contract as well as after you have had a personal (online) meeting and you are confident it is not a scam.

Move-in Protocol (day of your move-in)

A **move-in protocol** (in German: *Übergabeprotokoll*) is a written record of the apartment’s condition on the day you move in. It typically includes notes on any existing damage, the condition of furniture (if applicable), and the readings of utility meters.

This document should be completed together with the landlord and signed by both parties. It serves as **proof of the apartment's initial state**, helping to avoid disputes over damages or repairs when you move out.

Creating a move-in protocol on your first day is strongly recommended to **protect yourself from unjustified claims** later on.

Move-out protocol (day of your move-out)

Just like the move-in protocol, a **move-out protocol** (in German: Auszugsprotokoll) documents the condition of the apartment at the time you leave. Completed together with the landlord, it helps clarify any damage or cleaning issues and is important for the **return of your security deposit**. It ensures a fair and transparent handover at the end of your tenancy.

Return of your deposit

After you move out, the landlord has the right to inspect the apartment and review any outstanding utility bills or damages. If everything is in order, your **security deposit will be returned**—usually within **three to six months**.

To help ensure a smooth refund, make sure the apartment is clean, all keys are returned, and any agreed-upon repairs are completed. Keep a copy of the **move-out protocol** as documentation in case of disputes.

Please make an appointment with your landlord regarding when you can expect the deposit on your account

Please note: Please be aware that the information provided here serves only as guidance for your housing search on the private market and for understanding rental contracts. The International Office does not assume any liability for rental agreements made on the private market.

Any disputes or issues arising from such contracts must be resolved directly between the landlord and the tenant.