

New Tenancy Setup

About fifty minutes, and most of it has to happen before the tenant moves in rather than afterwards.

Property

Tenant

Start date

Almost everything on this list has a deadline attached to the day the tenancy starts or the day you take the deposit. Miss one and you may not be able to serve a section 21 notice at all, which is a problem you discover years later when you need to.

1. Before the tenant moves in about 15 minutes

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Right to Rent check on every adult occupier

Before the tenancy starts, on originals or through the online service. Copies dated and kept.

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Reference and credit check the tenant

Employment, previous landlord, affordability. A guarantor if the income does not cover it.

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Inventory and schedule of condition, with photographs

This is what a deposit dispute turns on. Dated photographs of every room, signed by the tenant.

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Agree who pays which bills, in the tenancy agreement

Council tax, utilities, broadband, garden. Silence here is how a void becomes expensive.

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Check your insurance covers a let property

Ordinary home insurance does not. Nor does it cover a tenancy type you did not tell them about.

THE DEPOSIT CAP MOST LANDLORDS STILL GET WRONG

Five weeks of rent where the annual rent is under £50,000, six weeks where it is £50,000 or more. Take more than that and the excess is not a deposit, it is a prohibited payment, and it has to be returned before a section 21 is valid.

2. The deposit about 10 minutes

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Protect it in an approved scheme within 30 days

From the day you receive it, not the day the tenancy starts. The clock does not pause for anything.

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Serve the prescribed information within 30 days

The scheme details, your details, and how to get it back. Protecting without serving this is still a failure.

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Keep the evidence that you served it

An email with a timestamp. Years later, that is the whole of your defence.

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Check the deposit is within the cap

Five weeks, or six where the annual rent is £50,000 or more.

3. Documents you must serve about 10 minutes

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Energy Performance Certificate

Valid ten years. Serve it at the start, and keep proof.

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Gas Safety Record

Within 28 days of the check, and before a new tenant moves in.

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The current How to Rent guide

The version current on the day you serve it. An old version is the same as none at all.



Electrical Installation Condition Report

Every five years, and to the tenant within 28 days of the inspection.

4. Safety and compliance about 10 minutes



Smoke alarm on every storey, tested on day one

Tested by you or the agent on the first day of the tenancy, and recorded.



Carbon monoxide alarm in every room with a fixed combustion appliance

Fixed appliances, excluding gas cookers.



Check whether the property needs a licence

Houses in multiple occupation, and any local selective licensing scheme. Councils differ street by street.



Fire safety on furniture you provide

Labels intact on anything upholstered. Furniture without them should not be there.

5. Into your own records about 5 minutes



Add the property to the bookkeeping template

Rent, running costs and interest on separate lines from day one.



Diarise the certificate renewal dates

Gas annually, electrical every five years, EPC every ten.



Set the rent reminder for the day it is due

Chasing on the day is normal. Chasing three weeks later teaches the tenant what the date really means.

Zazen Tax

Accountants for landlords. zazentax.com/contact

General information, not advice for your circumstances. Rates are 2026/27 for the UK and change from time to time. Regulatory items are England unless stated.