

Student Housing Advice Pack

Bedford



House hunting tips

Once you know what size property you want you are in a position to start contacting owners/agents and viewing properties. The University produces a housing list which is updated regularly and is **FREE** to University of Bedfordshire students. (You can also view the list on the Intranet via the library) <http://web.polhill.beds.ac.uk/housing/>

To be accepted onto the list the owner or agent for the property must have supplied current gas and electricity safety certificates, and have signed an undertaking that all furniture meets fire safety standards. In the future, there will be a Housing Accreditation scheme, and participating owners will have to meet a Code of Practice which should eventually ensure a higher standard of provision and service. Facilities & Estates produces the list but University staff have not visited any of the properties being advertised nor do they act as agents for you or for an owner. Please remember the University does not accept any liability in Contract, (including negligence) or otherwise for any loss or damage, whether direct, indirect or consequential, suffered by students as a result of your use of information provided by staff or provided on the Housing List. You should view the property very carefully and see and understand the contract before signing up or making any agreement with an owner/agent. If you use your common sense and note the advice here you should avoid significant problems.

When you rent a property, either in a group or on your own, you will enter into a legal agreement, regardless of whether you sign anything. Don't take the first place you see. The standard of accommodation varies considerably and a little research will help you understand what you can expect for your money. There is currently plenty of rented accommodation in the private sector so it should never be necessary to be rushed into accepting a property. Use your power to negotiate. Most owner/agents are willing to negotiate, whether over rent or improvements. The best time for this is will be before you sign a contract. Ensure you get a written agreement on what is agreed before you sign the contract. Check for warning signs. If you are looking at accommodation in mild weather, dampness, bad heating, poor insulation, condensation, etc, are less obvious. So, when you view a property try to imagine what it might be like on a cold winter's day and look out for anything that might cause problems later on in the year. Safety first. It is crucial that you check that the gas and electric appliances are safe. Check for suspect wiring and signs of faulty gas appliances and if the property is not from the University of Bedfordshire list insist that the owner/agent provides you with a copy of a current gas safety certificate which can only be issued by a GAS SAFE registered engineer. This is a legal requirement. Check everything you can e.g. heating, lighting, appliances, furniture, windows, toilets, running water. If you don't check now, and discover a fault later, it may be harder to get the problem solved... Get it in writing. If an owner/agent promises to have repairs or alterations carried out before you move in make sure s/he puts what is to be done and WHEN in writing. Most property is both furnished and self-catering. You will need to provide bedding, crockery and kitchen utensils, and if you have a TV – don't forget the licence.

The Nine Month Year

Although the academic year runs for about nine months you may well be asked to commit yourself to a 12 month tenancy agreement. This is not unreasonable, but you should certainly try and negotiate for a reduced rate for example for July and August if you are not living there.

Student house hunting checklist

When viewing properties you may find the House Hunting **checklist** useful.

Has the owner/agent shown you a copy of a current, valid gas safety certificate? **Y/N**
This is a **legal requirement**.

Check that all of the furniture and furnishings are labelled as fire resistant. **Y/N**
This is a **legal requirement**.

Has the house got enough furniture for everyone and is it in good condition? **Y/N**
E.g. Are there enough easy chairs/sofa space in the sitting room etc.?
Does any of the furniture belong to current tenants? Is there an inventory to check?

Is the kitchen adequate? **Y/N**
Is it big enough for all of you; is there enough storage, preparation, fridge space?

Is there a current electrical safety certificate? **Y/N**
This is a **legal requirement**.

Is there central heating? **Y/N**
Is it gas or electricity?
Ask the owner/agent to show you how it works. How much does it cost to run?

Does the plumbing work? **Y/N**
Try all of the taps, flush the toilet, run the bath, turn on the shower if there is one.

Are the windows in good condition? **Y/N**
Do they all open? Are any of the panes cracked or broken?
Are the frames in good condition? Who cleans the outside?

Is there any dampness in the property? **Y/N**
The house may smell of damp; look for stains on wallpaper, if possible check behind furniture. Look for signs of mould especially in the bathroom and kitchen areas. If a property seems damp in the summer or spring it will be much worse in the winter.

Do rooms need redecorating? **Y/N**
If so who will do it and who is going to pay? Ask the owner/agent to put in writing any promises he/she may make regarding repairs and redecoration.

Is the property secure? **Y/N**

Is there a five lever mortice lock and ideally two bolts (top and bottom) on the front and back doors? Do the ground floor rooms have locks on the windows? Student Housing may be targeted by thieves especially during the vacations – remove the ‘use back door only’ sign.

Is the rent and deposit fair? **Y/N**

Check what the rent includes e.g. water rates. A reasonable deposit will be about the equivalent of a month’s rent. Check the terms for the deposit’s return.
PAY NOTHING UNTIL YOU ARE ABOUT TO SIGN THE CONTRACT.

Fire safety

Could you exit by the front or back door in an emergency? **Y/N**
Make sure there is a smoke detector.

Have a look at the outside. An owner who looks after the property will probably do repairs etc efficiently.

How is the roof and paintwork?

Is there a wheelie bin? **Y/N**

If you can, run a tap and check the drain.

Make sure the owner is responsible for clearing drains and paperwork.

Is the garden or yard tidy? **Y/N**

Whose responsibility is the garden? Is the wall or fence in reasonable repair?
Does the back gate close and lock?

Are there signs of any pests or vermin in the house? **Y/N**

If you can, ask current tenants if they have had any such problems.

What is the owner/agent like?

Current tenants may be able to tell you if the owner/agent is a reasonable person to deal with, in particular with regards to repairs and maintenance.

If, having checked all this you are absolutely sure you like the house you’re ready to proceed. If not, look for somewhere else. If you agree to take on the house, the owner or agent will probably want you to sign an agreement and pay money NOW. Look over the contract. Do you understand it? Do you agree to all of the terms and conditions set out in the contract? Any reasonable owner/agent will allow you 24 hours to consider a contract, take advice, bring it to the Student Services Centre to have it looked at.

After you have signed, make sure you get a copy of the contract and **REMEMBER** – the owner/agent is legally obliged to provide you with his/her name and address.

Some common Questions and Answers

Living with other students

Q I don't get on with my housemates anymore and I want to move out – can I give the landlord/agent notice?

A You must first check your contract. If there is a clause allowing you to give notice to quit then providing correct notice is given you could move out. If you have signed a fixed term agreement with no such clause then you remain liable for the rent and need to find a replacement tenant.

NB: If there is a serious household dispute and you feel forced to move out, seek advice from the Student Union, Local Housing Advice Team at the Town Hall or the Citizens Advice Bureau (contact details at the back of the brochure) before taking any action.

Q We have signed a joint contract but one of our housemates has moved out. The landlord/agent is asking us for the money but we feel that the tenant should pay, is this fair?

A Fairness does not really come into it, the landlord/agent's primary concern is to collect the rent. If a joint contract has been signed the landlord/agent can decide whom they pursue for the rent. If the rent remains unpaid it can either be taken from the collective deposits or if court action is taken, the landlord/agent is likely to issue a summons that names all the tenants. The best option is to try and find a suitable replacement as soon as possible.

It is always worth checking that you have signed a joint contract. If the contract does not meet the conditions for joint liability then the landlord/agent cannot make a claim for the rent arrears.

Q I have moved out of a shared house but my former housemates are refusing to accept my replacement tenant. What can I do?

A If the contract is joint the remaining residents have the right to refuse a replacement tenant. However, they can only refuse on reasonable grounds such as the replacement tenant not being a student (liability for council tax). If they continue to refuse suitable replacements it is important to notify the landlord/agent. They may decide to take action against the remaining tenants if rent remains outstanding.

If you have an individual contract then you do not need to get the permission of others in the house. However, the landlord/agent does need to agree. It is rare that the landlord/agent refuses a replacement tenant and they would have to give good reasons for doing so.

Q I have moved out of a shared house and found a replacement for my room, my housemates are happy with the replacement. What do I do next?

A You need to contact the landlord/agent and see whether they will draw up a new contract to include your replacement. If they refuse, the next best thing is to sign an Assignment notice. This will state that you are leaving, who is replacing you and from what date. The notice needs to be signed by you, your replacement tenant, the landlord/agent and the remaining tenants. Normally this would secure your release from the contract and you can request your deposit back. However, some Assignment notices do include a section that states that you remain liable for the rent should your replacement fail to pay. This is legal and would mean that you have not been released from the contract.

Q Our house is in a poor state of repair – can we move out?

It is very difficult to get out of a property on grounds of disrepair, unless the property lacks the basic facilities and services such as heating and running water; or you are in immediate danger. Disrepair is normally an issue of compensation rather than moving out. Seek advice from the Student Union, Local Housing Advice Team or the Citizens Advice Bureau before you take any steps to move out of the property.

Deposits

Q I have asked for our deposit back in writing but the landlord/agent has not replied, what can I do?

A Under the University Code of Practice those agents/owners with three or less properties have to return all deposits or explain why they are retaining monies within four weeks. If the landlord/agent has over three properties then the deadline for your return or reasons for retention is six weeks. If you have rented a property from the accreditation scheme, contact the owner saying you will make a complaint to the Local Housing Advice Team or the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Facilities & Estates Department at the University.

To make a complaint you will need to quote the exact breach and state what steps you have taken to recover your deposit.

Q The landlord/agent has only returned part of our deposit. Can they do this?

A This depends on why it has been withheld. If no reasons have been given, write and request a full breakdown of the deductions within 21 days.

Q We disagree with the owners/agent's deductions. What can we do?

A Write a letter to the landlord/agent giving detailed reasons for disagreeing with the deductions (providing proof where necessary and check with your housemates that your facts are correct). Give the owner 14 days to respond.

Q The landlord/agent has failed to give any reasons for withholding our deposit – what next?

A Write a further letter requesting the return of your deposit, giving the dates of any previous correspondence with the landlord/agent. Give them 14 days to reply. If the landlord/agent has signed the University of Bedfordshire's Code of Practice, advise them a complaint will be made to the Local Housing Advice Team or the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Facilities & Estates Department at the University.

Q Can I deduct my deposit from my last month's rent?

A No, because to do so would be a breach of your contract. It is important to keep rent and deposits quite separate. If you are in dispute or feel you are owed money by the landlord/agent then seek advice before taking further action.

Q I am leaving the house a few weeks early can I get my deposit back early?

A If the contract is joint the answer is no. The landlord/agent will obviously want to inspect the house and check all rent is paid etc before returning deposits. If there is no joint contract, it may be possible for you to come to an arrangement for the early return of the deposit.

Q We cannot afford to pay the final utility bills, can we leave our deposit for the landlord/agent to pay them?

A No, not if the bills are in the names of the tenants – the utility companies will chase the named persons and not the landlord/agent. If you share a house with the owner then an agreement could be reached for the bills to be taken from the deposit. Request a copy of the bills to ensure you are paying the correct amount.



Local letting agents

Another option for finding alternative accommodation in the private sector is Letting Agents.

In Bedford there are numerous agents to choose from, but you can expect the following from most letting agents:

- Administration fees – prices vary
- Deposit fees (this will be held in a Tenancy Deposit Scheme)
- One month's rent in advance
- Guarantor required (can be parent/guardian/family friend)
- Assured short-hold tenancies for 6 or 12 months (at discretion of agents/landlord)
- Monthly rental payments
- Quarterly inspections
- Management of the property on behalf of the landlord

Please note that not every agent is willing to accept student clients.

These are a few letting agents to get you started. You can Google "letting agents in Bedford" on the internet for a more expansive list:

Belvoir	Compass	Homelink Property Services
157 Castle Road Bedford MK40 3RT	Compass House 8-16 Bromham Road Bedford MK40 2QA	68 Midland Road Bedford MK40 1QB
01234 290685	01234 270333	01234 320040

Do not sign a contract if you are unsure of any aspect of it. You are legally entitled to request a copy of a contract, so you can have it checked over by a professional from the Citizens Advice Bureau or the Local Housing Advice Team before signing on the dotted line.

The University does not recommend any particular letting agent and we do not accept any responsibility or liability for any issues experienced from using their services.

We always advise that students contact the Citizens Advice Bureau or the Local housing Advice Team for guidance on Tenancy Agreements and Landlord disputes as the University Accommodation Team are not qualified to provide legal advice and are also not able to mediate disputes as it is a private contract between a tenant and the agency that you will have signed.

Private Sector rented shared student housing

Code of Practice

The purpose of the Code is to enable Owners and Tenants to agree a set of undertakings about how they wish to conduct their business with one another.

The criteria in the code has been chosen to reflect a balance of common sense obligations and responsibilities between owners and tenants and set standards which are achievable by the owner and tenants without significant expenditure of time and money and without prejudice to their respective legal rights.

Care has been taken to avoid specifying a particular management methodology. This code sets out principles and desired results and leaves to owners and housing managers the task of ensuring the achievement of results.

Equal Opportunities

1.01 Owners/agents will ensure that in the provision and letting of housing or associated services, no person or group of persons applying will be treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, gender, disability, appearance, marital status, sexual orientation or social status. To comply with University of Bedfordshire's Equal Opportunities codes of practice.

Prior to Letting Property

Owners/agents will ensure that:

- 2.00 All property details are reported accurately without misrepresentation.
- 2.01 All prospective tenants are granted the opportunity to view in accordance with the consent of existing terms.
- 2.02 A copy of any agreement under which the property is offered, is given to the prospective tenant who may wish to seek independent advice on the terms and conditions.
- 2.03 No monies for deposits or rent are demanded prior to signing and exchange of any agreement.
- 2.04 Agreements are issued to tenants at the grant of the tenancy, written in a type size which is easily read.

Rent Liability

Owners/agents will ensure that:

- 2.05 Prospective tenants are issued with a clear statement of the rent payable with dates due along with the method of payment at the time of signing the agreement.

Water/Gas/Electricity/Telephone/Other charges

- 2.06 That there is a clear statement of who is responsible for the payment of water charges and this arrangement is clearly stated at the beginning of the agreement.
- 2.07 Written receipts are issued, where any monies are exchanged.

Letting Agreements

- 2.08 The letting agreement will be written in clear English in a type size which can be easily read, and containing easy to understand English without any conflict with any statutory or common law entitlement.
- 2.09 The name and current address and telephone number of the owner are clearly stated along with the managing agent's address and telephone if applicable.
- 2.10 On the commencement of the tenancy agreed obligations with the tenants on the part of the owner in regard to repairs and improvements to the property have been fully discharged.

During the Tenancy

- 3.00 That all statutory notices seeking possession are served on incumbent tenants in order to mitigate any delay and hardship caused to the owner and incoming tenants that may be caused where existing tenants refuse to give up possession at the end of their contractual tenancy.
- 3.01 Those tenants already in place at the property (subject to their good order at the property) get offered first refusal for any subsequent letting of the property.
- 3.02 Where access is required for routine inspection the occupants get notification not less than 24 hours in advance, save where there is an emergency.
- 3.03 That business is pursued in a professional, courteous and diligent manner at all times.

Repairs and Maintenance

- 3.04 Full compliance with the provisions of section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and sections 1 and 3 of the Defective Premises Act 1972. The provision of such acts also to be extended to any electrical and gas appliances supplied for the consumption of such services and to the decorative finishes inside the property.
- 3.05 That emergency repairs that may pose a risk to health and safety of the residents or serious damage to buildings or residents belongings be dealt with within 24 hours of the reported defect.
- 3.06 Those urgent repairs, which materially affect the comfort or convenience of the residents, be dealt with within five working days of the reported defect.
- 3.07 That non-urgent day to day repairs are dealt with within 28 days of the report of the defect.
- 3.08 Planned programs of repair or improvement are carried out in a manner with due regard to the convenience of the occupants.
- 3.09 Those contractors and trades persons will remove all redundant components and debris from the site upon completion of works.

General Matters

- 4.00 That all study bedrooms will contain a bed, adequate clothes storage space, desk or desk surface, chair, curtains and that all furnishings and furniture will comply with the Furniture and Fittings (Fire Safety Amendment) Regulations 1988, 1989, 1993, 1997.
- 4.01 Each kitchen contains facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food which is suitable for the number of occupants using the kitchen.

- 4.02 That adequate numbers of baths/showers are provided with constant hot and cold water supplies, which are suitable for the number of occupants.
- 4.03 The occupants are issued with an agreed list of the inventory at the beginning of the occupancy. (This should also note the condition of the decorative order of the property as well as the items present.)

Health and Safety

Gas Appliances and Supply

- 5.00 All means of use and supply of mains gas shall comply with Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1994
- 5.01 All gas appliances will be serviced annually by a competent GAS SAFE registered technician and verification of servicing will be available to tenants.
- 5.02 All repairs to the gas supply pipe work and appliances will be carried out to the registered Council of Registered Gas Installations.

Electrical Installations and Appliances

- 5.03 An approved electrician in accordance with the current edition of IEE Wiring Regulations currently certifies all electrical installations as safe. That a safety certificate shall be obtained from a competent person (NICEIC Registered) every five years.
- 5.04 All electrical appliances are functioning in accordance with manufacturers' operational limits and are capable of being operated in a safe manner.
- 5.05 Instructions for the safe use of all electrical appliances (including cookers, space and water heaters etc.) will be given.

Fire Prevention, Detection and Alarm Systems

- 5.06 All furniture and furnishing comply with The Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
- 5.07 All properties will be fitted with a form of fire detection and audible alarms in the event of a fire. The system will comprise as a minimum, an appropriate number of single point smoke detectors, which meet with BS5446. That these are mains connected.
- 5.08 Each kitchen will be fitted with a fire blanket to BS6575 and minimum of 2kg dry powder or carbon dioxide fire extinguishers to BS5306 (part 3) and BS5423.

Security Features

- 5.09 That the doors and windows have physical security features in accordance with Bedfordshire Police, Crime Prevention Unit's approved designs. Thus possessing one of the levels of certifications.

Hygiene and Waste Disposal

- 5.10 All facilities for storage, preparation and cooking will be capable of cleansing and being maintained in a clean and hygienic way by the occupants.
- 5.11 Properties will be provided with an efficient and serviceable vacuum cleaner at the commencement of the tenancy.

5.12 All floor coverings in kitchens, bathrooms and WC are capable of cleaning with suitable domestic disinfectant products.

5.13 All furniture and furnishings are fire retardant as required by law.

At the end of the Tenancy

6.00 Deposits are administered efficiently and reasonably and are not withheld for any purpose other than for which they are levied. These should be returned within 8 weeks of the end of the tenancy.

6.01 That the owners respond reasonably and promptly to tenants in regard to complaints or difficulties.

6.02 Respond to correspondence from tenants in writing within 3 weeks of receipt.



Living in the community

This advice is intended to help students settle in to local communities and avoid some common problems

Some areas in Bedford are considered 'student areas', but they haven't always been that way and they may not really have that high a proportion of students. Most students live in these areas for a couple of years but there are local residents who may have lived in the area for quite some time and who have seen many students come and go. Local residents may be connected with the University, for example, ex-students and lecturers, or they may be people who have always lived in the area. There are young single people, elderly people and families with or without children. In fact, they may be people like you, your friends and your family. They may even be students!

Occasionally problems do occur between students and their neighbours. Often these can be avoided by simply thinking about how other people may feel about what you do, (and when you do it!).

There are a number of things you can do to live in the community successfully. It is also in your own interests to try and be a good neighbour not just to avoid unpleasantness but also because a good neighbour can help you out, and maybe keep an eye on your house, especially during vacation times.

Say 'Hello'

When you arrive, go and introduce yourselves to your immediate neighbours. Find out what they are like and work out what could be a problem for them. For example, if they have young children who may be disturbed by noise, ask them to pop round and let you know if they have any problems.

Noise

Noise is usually the most common problem, especially between terraced properties. Think about where you position TVs and speakers – try to avoid party walls. Try to keep noise levels down, especially after 11pm (remember people may have to be up early to go to work or to get children up for school). Tell your neighbours about any parties and ask friends to be quiet when leaving. When going home late at night try and be considerate – don't talk loudly outdoors, or bang car doors, or play car stereos loudly. Remember you may be committing a criminal offence if you cause noise problems either in your home or in the street.

Rubbish

If you have a garden or yard try to keep it tidy and clear of rubbish (even if the gardening is the owner's responsibility).

Always put rubbish in the wheelie bin. (Bin bags won't be collected and may get ripped open by cats or foxes and it will be your responsibility to clear up the mess.) Ask your neighbours when the bins are emptied and about local recycling schemes. If you haven't got a bin contact the owner/agent. And don't throw litter into other people's gardens or yards!

Car Parking

The majority of parking in 'student areas' is on-street, with local residents, student residents and visitors (e.g. commuting workers and students) 'fighting it out' for very limited spaces. In some areas the Council is considering introducing residents' only permits (with a limit per household) which may ease some of the problems for local residents. Realistically, if you have a car you may not be able to be very considerate – even if you leave the space outside your neighbour's house, someone else may take it. But again it may help to discuss 'parking problems' with your neighbours and to offer to move a car if possible.

A Part of the Community?

Many students enjoy the opportunity to be part of a wider community. You could get involved in community groups and generally take an interest in the area. For example, if an empty property is being vandalised report it to the police. Or if the outside of your house looks untidy, perhaps with paint peeling off the windows, put pressure on the owner to put this right.



Fire safety – advice to tenants

- **Make sure you know which route** you should use in case of fire it's usually the main staircase and the quickest route to an outside door which you should be able to unlock from inside without a key.
- **Check that any external escape staircase or platform looks safe to use.**
- **Discuss an escape plan and evacuation procedures** with your landlord and with the other occupants of the house. Take part in any fire drill practice.
- **Look out for any fire extinguishers, fire blankets or any break-glass call points.** Make sure you know how to use them and what they should be used for. If there is a fire alarm system make sure your landlord explains how to use any controls or re-setting devices.
- **If smoke alarms are going off unnecessarily**, check what's setting them off and tell your landlord, don't disconnect them or any sounders.
- **Don't play with the fire alarm system** or set off extinguishers just for fun. You could be held liable if the fire equipment provided is out of action, and someone gets hurt in a fire as a result.
- **Don't disconnect the self-closers to fire doors** or wedge them open – they can only protect you when they're closed!
- **Close doors** to the kitchen and living rooms at bedtime. Turn off all gas and electric fires at night.
- **Don't store belongings or discarded furniture on the staircase or landings**, these are part of your escape route. Only use the cellar for storage of combustible items if it's got a smoke detector that's linked to other detectors in the rest of the house.

Cooking

- **Be careful with chip pans** – don't fill them more than 1/3 full of oil or fat and don't leave them on the heat unattended, even if you're sure you won't be away for long.
- If a chip pan catches light – turn off the heat if you can do so safely, then smother the flames with a fire blanket, damp cloth or lid. Leave the pan to cool for half an hour at least.

Candles, Cigarettes and Matches – frequent cause of fires!

- **Put candles in holders** which won't let them fall over, and will safely contain all the wax if they burn down or collapse. Keep candles clear of curtains, clothes, bedding or papers. Don't go to sleep with candles still alight.
- **Dispose of cigarettes and matches carefully** –not in plastic cups or waste paper baskets!

Heaters

- **Don't bring bottled gas (LPG) or paraffin type heaters into the house**, nor use any heaters that could be knocked over or moved too close to furniture or curtains. Electric oil-filled radiators, fan heaters or convectors are usually safer than bar fires if you need extra heating, and they don't create condensation.
- **Don't dry clothes on top of fires** or leave drying racks where they could fall into a fire.

Lighting and Electrics

- **Take care with spotlights, desk lamps and bedside lamps.** Keep them away from anything which could catch fire, and don't drape scarves over lamps.
- **Turn lamps and other electrical appliances off at bed-time,** and when not in use.
- **Don't overload electrical sockets or light fittings.** Use fused plugboards rather than multiadaptors if more outlets are needed. Don't rail or trap electrical wires.

IF A FIRE STARTS...!

Don't try and fight a fire yourself unless it's at a very early stage – especially if it's starting to spread or the room is filling with smoke.

- **Get out of the room** and close the door. Leave serious fire-fighting to the professionals!
- **Always put your own and other people's safety first.** Try and get everyone out to a place of safety.
- **Shout FIRE!** And use any break-glass call points or alarm switches to set off the fire alarm system. **Dial 999** to call the fire brigade.
- **Don't stop to collect belongings.**
- **Never open a door without feeling it first for heat** if you think a fire has started. If it's hot don't open it. If the fire is in that room you could let out toxic smoke and fumes, which could overcome you and anyone else trying to escape.
- **Never re-enter a house until the Fire Brigade have given the "all clear".**

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF CUT OFF BY FIRE...!

- **Close the door nearest to the fire,** if you can safely do so, to delay the spread of smoke and flame.
- **If you are trapped in a room,** block any gaps around the door to stop the smoke and fumes from coming in.
- **If you are in a smoke-logged room,** cover your nose and mouth with your clothing and breathe through it. If it's very dense keep as close to the floor as possible, it'll be easier to breathe, and crawl towards to window.
- **Open the window or break it if necessary.** Remember – double glazing can only be broken if hit at a corner or an edge.
- **Try to attract attention** of someone who can call the Fire Brigade for help. Wait for rescue, they should be there in minutes.
- **If you are in immediate danger** and need to jump, drop cushions or bedding first to break your fall. Get feet out first and lower yourself the full length of your arms before dropping.

Uses of fire extinguishers and fire blankets

- **Your kitchen should contain a fire blanket and dry powder fire extinguisher may be provided.**
- **Make sure you know when and how to use them. Only use them if the fire is small, and don't put yourself or others at risk.**
- **Don't let off a fire extinguisher unless it's a fire situation – you never know when you might need it.**

LET THE FIRE BRIGADE KNOW IF YOU HAVE HAD TO PUT OUT A FIRE AT HOME.

Fire Blankets

Used for: smothering small fires – usually chip-pan fires, but can be used on burning grease or paints or small fires involving paper, fabrics or furniture.

How to Use

- Pull the blanket out of its container, hold it by the top corners and keep your hands wrapped up. Walk towards the fire keeping your face well back from the flames.
- Place the blanket carefully over the fire, keeping your hands and face shielded.
- Leave the fire blanket over the fire or chip pan for at least 30 minutes, otherwise it could re-ignite.

Dry Powder Fire Extinguishers

Blue, or blue label on red background. Multi-purpose.

Used for: wood, paper, furniture or fabric fires, as well as fires involving petrol or flammable liquids, fats, oils, paints or paraffin.

- Can be used on electrics but may not reach a fire source inside an appliance.
- The powder forms a smothering film over the fire and cools it down, but beware of the fire re-igniting.
- Be warned – the powder is very messy! It can form a cloud which makes it hard to see the fire.

How to Use

- Remove the safety wire or pin device. Press firmly on the handle and squeeze together, or follow the instructions given on your extinguisher if they are different.
- Point the discharge nozzle at the base of the flames, and use a rapid sweeping motion to drive the flames towards the far edge until they go out.
- If the extinguisher has a shut-off control, allow the air to clear.
- If the flames re-appear, repeat the procedure.

AFFF (Aqueous film-forming foam) Fire Extinguishers

Cream, or cream label on red background.
Multi-purpose.

Used for: wood, paper furniture or fabric fires, as well as fires involving petrol or flammable liquids, fats, oils, paints or paraffin.

- Not all foams are suitable for live electrical fires – check the label first
- The foam forms an extinguishing water film on the surface of the burning item or liquid. Has a cooling action on solid combustible materials.
- The jet of foam will reach 3-5 metres.

How to Use:

- Place the extinguisher on the floor whilst in use, and don't stand too close to the fire.
- Remove the wire or pin safety device.

For ordinary combustible materials

- Pull the wire from around the handle.
- Point the jet of foam at the base of the flames and keep sweeping across the area of the fire.
- Keep spraying and seeking hot spots after the main fire to prevent it from starting up again.

For fires involving fats, oils, petrol, paints

- Don't aim the jet directly onto the liquid.
- If the fire's in a container, aim at the edge or a nearby surface above the burning liquid.
- Allow the foam to build up so that it flows across the liquid.

Water Fire Extinguishers

Colour-coded red.
Multi-purpose.

- **Used for:** wood, paper, furniture, fabrics etc.
- **Not to be used on:** oil or electrical fires.
- The water douses and cools the burning materials.

Don't try and carry the extinguisher far as it will be heavy.

How to Use:

- Place the extinguisher on the floor whilst in use, and don't stand too close to the fire.
- Remove the wire or pin safety device
- Press firmly on the handle and squeeze together, or follow instructions on label.
- Point the jet of water at the base of the flames and keep moving across.
- Keep spraying across the area of the fire, seeking out hot spots.
- The water will spray for a few minutes. It will reach up to 5 metres at first, less as it empties.

Student Housing

Private Rented Sector – External Housing Bedford

Housing Advice Team Bedford Borough Council

Town Hall
Bedford
MK40 1SJ
(01234) 267422

Citizens Advice Bureau

7a St Pauls Square
Bedford
MK40 1SQ
0844 245 1290

Facilities and Estates Accommodation Office University of Bedfordshire

Polhill Avenue
Bedford
MK41 9EA
(01234) 793118
(01234) 793020

studentservices.bedford@beds.ac.uk

Council Tax

Council Tax Department
Bedford Borough Council
Town Hall
Bedford
MK40 1SJ
(01234) 267422

Bedfordshire Housing Aid Centre

68 Tavistock Street
Bedford
MK40 2RG
(01234) 328488

Bedfordshire Police

Police Headquarters
Greyfriars
Bedford
(01234) 261212

University Students' Union

Polhill Campus
Polhill Avenue
Bedford
MK41 9EA
(01234) 793061

Eastern Gas

Chilterns Area
581885
Dallow Road
Luton
LU1 1SX
0800 111 999 (Transco)
(01234) 268943 (gas escape)

Eastern Electricity

Caxton Road
Bedford
MK41 0EW
(01234) 262121

Anglian Water Authority

Cambridge Road
Bedford
MK42 0EW
0800 918 155 (operational enquiries)
(01345) 919155 (account enquiries)

Department of Environmental Health and Housing

Bedford Borough Council
Town Hall
Bedford
MK40 1SJ
(01234) 267422

Sources of Housing Advice and Assistance – Bedford

University of Bedfordshire Facilities and Estates Accommodation Office, H Block

Current housing list at <http://web.polhill.beds.ac.uk/housing/>

Tel (01234) 793118

Fax (01234) 793020

Email studentservices.bedford@beds.ac.uk

Bedfordshire County Council

The Council has a number of departments which can provide useful advice and assistance

For problems related to noise, pest/vermin control, rubbish collection, and disrepair contact the Department of Environmental Health and Housing on: **(01234) 267422**

For problems related to landlord/tenant disputes, homelessness, and council accommodation contact the Local Council, Town Hall, Bedford on: **(01234) 267422**

Or contact: Bedfordshire Housing Aid Centre, 68 Tavistock Street, Bedford on: **(01234) 328488**



