

A landlord's guide to attracting and keeping the best tenants

The ideal tenant pays their rent on time, keeps the property in good condition and wants to stay for the medium to long-term. That means constant cash flow for you, low maintenance bills and no voids. So how do you find them and make sure they want to rent your property?

First things first... although you're probably raring to go, before you start marketing your rental property you **MUST** make sure that it (and you, as a landlord) complies with all the legal obligations.

Read our Landlord's Legal Obligations – Part 1 and Part 2.

Check out the competition

This is now much easier, thanks to the internet. Go on to some rental sites and search in your own area to find out:

- How much competition is there?
- How are other landlords marketing their properties?
- What are other landlords charging for similar properties? (Don't forget to search for properties that have already let, to give you a better idea of the price and how quickly they went.)

Also speak to local letting agents and ask for their honest opinion. Even if you decide to let the property yourself, they're usually still willing to help.



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Get your property 'out there'

Make your property known. The more different methods of advertising you use, the more tenants you're likely to attract. Some ideas:

- Use free internet sites, such as Gumtree
- Take advantage of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace.
You must check whether you require a licence and if you're using a letting agent ensure you have their permission.
- Advertise in local newspapers and other local publications, such as parish magazines
- Place adverts in local shops - newsagents, post offices, etc.
- Make the most of word of mouth, through friends, family, neighbours and work colleagues
- Hire letting agents –and make sure they're actively marketing your property.
Before engaging them, ask:
 - Are they a member of a professional body, such as ARLA or NALS?
 - How do they find tenants?
 - Who will maintain the property?
 - What service packages do they provide?
 - What are their charges?

Top Advertising Tips

- Make your title clear, concise, accurate and appealing
- Use high resolution photos of the most attractive rooms and the exterior
- Provide a clear description - rent, rooms, responsibilities, condition of property, other features (parking, garage, garden, etc.)
- Give relevant contact details - email and telephone numbers
- Keep information up to date
- If you're using the internet, check that your advert is 'live' and refresh regularly



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Prepare for viewings

Make yourself as available as possible for viewings. Bear in mind that, for most people, evenings and weekends are likely to be best. On the viewing day, make sure you can clearly explain the terms of the tenancy, responsibilities and obligations. And make sure you can answer potential tenants' questions such as:

- When is bin collection day?
- What council tax band is the property in and how much is it?
- Who are the current utility suppliers?
- Where's the nearest...shop, school, sports centre, doctors' surgery, bus stop, etc.?

Present the property well

Make sure the property is clean and odour free- inside and out. If it's been vacant, arrive early and open the windows to allow some air to circulate, and pick up any post that's collected. Don't forget about the garden and also make sure there's somewhere for the prospective tenant to park their car – even if that means you parking round the corner!

Rent – be competitive

Ask for a realistic level of rent and review if necessary.

Appeal to your target market

Be clear on who your tenants are likely to be – young professionals, families, etc. – and make the property appealing to them. Décor, fixtures and fittings, furnishings and any included extras could make the difference between yours and another property. Consider what incentives you could offer. Think about putting in cable or satellite TV, or perhaps including council tax or particular utility bills in the rent.



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Know who your tenants are

Before you accept tenants, make sure you get as clear a picture as possible as to who's moving into your property.

- Ask for two forms of identification – at least one with a photo
- Check your tenants' past and current employment status
- Take up references from previous landlords
- Arrange for a 3rd party to carry out a credit check
- If possible, note down their car registration

For more information, see our article, [Thoroughly reference check your tenants](#).

Keeping your tenants happy

Once your tenants are in the property, carry out periodical checks and make sure you keep the tenants informed of when you'll be visiting. Poor maintenance is one of tenants' biggest complaints about landlords, so respond to queries or complaints as soon as possible and keep on top of any necessary repairs and replacements.

Being a successful landlord is all down to planning. If you follow the above steps and keep your tenants happy, you're more likely to have a stress-free time and reap the rewards of your property investment.



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