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Article

Title: I'm planning to rent a property, what should I know?

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Whatever your reason for renting, you need to make sure you understand your legal obligations and there are some sensible 'dos' and 'don'ts' to think about as well, before you sign a Lease or Assured Shorthold Tenancy:

Things you should do

- Do view the property more than once – daylight will show up any defects and in the evening you can check for busyness, noise levels and street parking
- Do check the outside as well as the inside for cracks in the walls, any shared garden and any responsibility for upkeep of the garden
- Do check inside for dampness, heating, smoke alarms, whether the lights and taps work, whether it's in good condition and if you would be allowed to change the décor
- Do check the inventory and if there isn't one, make one yourself and give a copy to the landlord. You could also photograph any defects and give pics to the landlord as well
- Do work out what you can reasonably afford and remember to build in a buffer for any extras like utility bills, council tax and telephone bills
- Do familiarise yourself with the notice period so that you are not taken unawares

Things you shouldn't do

- Don't wait till you've agreed the lease terms before you instruct your solicitor – with his/her knowledge you'll be able to negotiate the best possible terms
- Don't skimp on understanding the terms of the lease – the terminology may be complex but your solicitor will help you understand the implications and your responsibilities

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- Don't forget that when you've signed the lease, you'll be bound by the contents and provisions of it. Take legal advice immediately if your landlord seeks to enforce rights against you which you regard as unfair.

Finally, choose a local specialist landlord and tenant solicitor who will be available to meet with you, help you understand your responsibilities and safeguard your position.

Hayley Eachus is a solicitor at Phillips, specialising in family law and landlord and tenant. Call Hayley on 01256 854633 or email Hayley: heachus@phillips-law.co.uk

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