

Seminar 7 – Accommodation Abroad

Discussion Questions

Have you ever had to find your own accommodation? During your studies? On vacation?
How did you find it? Did you encounter any difficulties?

Useful phrases related to Accommodation and Public Administration Offices

(e.g. registering for student residence or renting a room)

- Paying a (rental/security) deposit
- Paying “first and last” month’s rent
- Payment conditions,
- Obtaining the deposit at the end of the stay (Getting back the deposit)
- Arranging Internet service (in the case that it is not provided with accommodation)

Public Administration Offices (e.g. temporary residence)

- Requesting information at offices (Which office/window/counter should I go to?)
- Registering for temporary residence (during the study period)
- Unregistering of temporary residence (at the end of the study period)
- Duration of the stay

READING

Task 1 Read the text and then proceed with the speaking part below.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Though exciting, living on your own can be as expensive as it is daunting - fear not, our comprehensive student accommodation guide covers everything you need to know.

Types of student accommodation

- **Halls of Residence**

Something for everyone - Facilities in halls of residence range greatly, most universities provide both self-catered and catered halls of residence, also there will usually be a choice between having an en-suite or sharing a communal bathroom. Internet access is now standard in most university halls of residence, though not all.

- **House share**

Live amongst other students - In terms of location, students often feel happier and safer living amongst others students, meaning most university towns now have specific areas with particularly dense populations of students - a process known as studentification.

- **Room in a private house**

Can help you feel more at home - It may not be the most glamorous way to go in terms of student accommodation - but renting a bedroom in someone else’s house can be a great way of saving some money. Because you’re in another person’s house there’s a good chance that it will be well maintained - often your landlord/lady will include meals for an additional fee.

Maintain your privacy - As much as being in someone else’s house has its benefits, it’s important that you keep a space of your own. If you choose this route, make sure that it’s written in your contract that you have exclusive access to your room and that the landlord can’t enter without permission.

- **Private flat on your own**

Only if you like your own company - It's an option - but not a great one. Not having anyone to talk to combined with the increased expense of living on your own means you're probably better off looking at more traditional types of student accommodation.

Bills in student accommodation

Rent depends on where you are in the country - The only real downside of moving out on your own and into student accommodation - you have to start paying for stuff. Rent is the biggest expense - what you pay for student accommodation depends largely on where you're studying.

Remember to get a TV licence - Whether you're in halls or a house, if you have a TV you must pay for your TV licence. In halls you will need one each, but in a shared house you only need one between all of you.

Where to look for student accommodation

- **Student accommodation office**

Get impartial help from your uni - Your university should have a dedicated student accommodation office. They will have a list of local landlords and letting agents that are trusted by the university, and may even be able to help you in your search for student accommodation if you get stuck.

- **Letting agents**

It's all in the timing - A letting agent is essentially a middle man between you and your landlord. A landlord pays a letting agent to find suitable tenants for his/her property. At some point - usually around January/February - letting agents will start advertising their houses for the next academic year. Like most things in life it's a case of first come first serve, so it's best to be organised - the sooner you know who you will be living with and what you can afford, the better. Most letting agents will have a comprehensive list of their properties online.

- **Going direct to private landlords**

Cut out the middle man - To use a letting agent a landlord must pay administrative fees - as some are reluctant to do so, not all available houses can be found via an agent. Going direct to a landlord is a great way of saving money, IF you can find them. The best way of locating private lets is to look in the back of local papers and online (see below).

- **Finding your student accommodation online**

Everything in one place - There are also websites that help to collate all of the above resources into one easy to use location. Students can sign up to find houses, while landlords and letting agents can also sign up to list their available properties.

Find new housemates - Some of these sites not only let you search for properties, but also for housemates. Whether you have a room or need a room, you can connect with potential housemates to ask questions and potentially arrange viewings without having to go outside.

What makes for good student accommodation?

Obviously everyone's needs and expectations are different, but here are some things that anyone looking for student accommodation should consider.

- **Noise**

Many universities are situated in heavily populated cities where noise pollution is common. Even if you look around a house during a quiet time of day, try and think about anything that could potentially cause noise such as main roads, pubs or train tracks.

- **Furniture**

A landlord or letting agent will show you around a property in its best possible condition to try and get you to rent it, but that doesn't mean that is the condition it will be left in before you move in. Ask the landlord what furniture (if any) is included with the house - furnishing a house can be very expensive, so much so that it may mean it's not worth your while moving into an unfurnished property.

- **Plumbing**

Don't feel too embarrassed to have a go on the hot taps or to test the flush on the toilet, these are things you can't live without so make sure everything's up to scratch before you commit to anything.

- **Enough room?**

If there are a few of you, make sure that there are enough toilets/showers/hobs to satisfy all of your needs. There's nothing worse than having to queue for a shower when you've got 10 minutes until your 9am lecture starts.

- **Location**

- **Convenient?** - How close is it to uni? To town? To the shops?

- **Transport** - Are you near a bus stop or train station? Would it be easy to get home at any time of day?

Difference in price

A house that has all of the above nearby (usually an inner city house/flat) will obviously be a lot more expensive than a house that is more out of the way. Think about what is important to you - some more rural universities will have accommodation options that are in more off the beaten track locations but that will offer a LOT more for your money.

- **Student Accommodation: Deposits, damage, your rights**

As with anyone who rents a property you will have to pay a refundable deposit which, assuming the room/house is in the same condition at the end of the tenancy as at the beginning, you will get back.

- **Amount depends on accommodation type** - In halls of residence the security deposit tends to be relatively small compared to private houses. Landlords will usually ask for 6-8 weeks worth of rent as a deposit as they see young people as high risk tenants (more likely to cause damage to the property) so will often ask for a larger deposit.
- **Protect your deposit** - Your landlord must protect your deposit using a tenancy deposit protection (TDP) scheme - these guarantee that tenants will get their deposits back at the end of the tenancy providing they have met the terms of the tenancy agreement and have not damaged the property.
- **Getting it back** - If you don't get your deposit back at all, or if you don't feel you have received enough of it back, you should write to your landlord raising your concerns. If you fail to resolve the matter you should speak to your student housing office or your local Citizens Advice Bureau for legal advice.

SPEAKING

Task 2

1. What are the benefits and disadvantages of each of the above-mentioned types of accommodation?
2. Which of these will you probably look for personally? Why?
3. How are you going to look for your accommodation abroad?

WRITING

Task 3 Look at the two adverts. Imagine you are looking for a place to stay and choose the accommodation you find more suitable for you. Then send an email to the address given in the advert expressing your interest. You may also want to ask some additional questions.

Advert 1

On-campus accommodation

Address	Francis Marion University (Right on campus- closest accommodation available)
Contact	Accommodation Office Phone: (03) 37357575 Email: accommodation@net.com
Information	Flat-style college accommodation available for postgrad and undergrad students. Individual rooms are arranged as 8, 7, 6 or 4 bedroom fully furnished. College members have their own lockable bedrooms and share a kitchen, dining and lounge room and bathrooms facilities with their flatmates. Accommodation provides catered single rooms for University students. Each college member has his or her own lockable bedroom along a corridor. College members share bathroom facilities and common rooms. 3 meals a day are provided in the College's Dining Room. For further information and full payment summary please go to www.studaccommodation.it
Rate	Self-catered single rooms from 400 euro/per week (8 bedroom flat) Catered rooms 450 euro/per week (including 21 meals per week)

Advert 2

Large bright single room (15mq furnished) in a students flat (kitchen with small balcony and spacious bathroom with shower) in a quiet quarter "Cure" (10minutes by bus lines 1A and 1B to the city centre)

DSL internet connection wireless available.

Available from 20/10/2012

PS: Feel free to contact us for any kind of information about the room and the flat etc. Thanks!

Contacts: antoniomes2011@yahoo.it - +03 393 3136653

Country: Italy

City: Florence

Rent: 360.00 euro/month

From: 01 August 2013

To: 01 August 2014

LISTENING

Task 4 Listen to the dialogues below and fill in the blanks with the missing words

A: Hello, I was wondering if I could talk with the apartment manager.

B: I am the apartment manager. How can I help you?

A: I was (1) if the apartment on Main Street is still (2)

B: Yes, it's still(3). Are you interested in seeing it?

A: Yes, I would love to see the apartment.

B: I will be at the apartment today at 6:00. Can you (4) it?

A: Yes, I can be there at 6.

B: Great. I'll (5) you at 6. Do you know where it is?

A: Yes, I have a friend who lives in that (6)

B: I'll be bringing an (7) form.

A: OK, should I bring anything with me?

B: No. I might need to see your(8) card, but that's about it.

<http://www.eslfast.com/robot/topics/apartment/1apartment01.htm>

A: Hello, Albert speaking.

B: This is Jack. Are you still interested in (1) a room?

A: Oh, yes.

B: Would you mind answering a couple of questions?

A: No problem.

B: Since we might be (2) , I want to make sure there's no friction.

A: You are right. We need to be (3).

B: Do you go out to clubs or bars a lot?

A: I have been to only one nightclub in my whole life.

B: Good. Now, do you expect others to (4) after you?

A: Occasionally I might slip up, but usually I'm clean and neat.

B: What kind of hours do you keep?

A: The..... (5) bird gets the worm.

B: I hope you're not a smoker.

A: I can (6) cigarette from a mile away. It makes me gag.

B: Your answers are great. Now, do you have a question or two for me?

A: Just one question. What's the parking situation?

B: This place allows only one parking..... (7) per apartment, so you'll have to park on the street.

A: I don't like it, but I guess I can live with it.

B: Okay, I think we'll be good roommates. Just call me when you're ready to (8) .

A: I can move in by tomorrow afternoon.

B: That's fine. I was planning on being home tomorrow anyway.

<http://www.eslfast.com/robot/topics/apartment/1apartment04.htm>

Task 5 Practise these dialogues with your partner.

WRITING

If you stay in a private house/flat, you will need to inform the owner of your intention to move out.

Task 6 Look at the sample letter of notice, look up the words you don't understand and then fill in the missing information.

THIRTY-DAY NOTICE OF RESIDENT(S) INTENT TO VACATE

To: _____ (Owner/Agent)

You are hereby given notice that _____

Resident(s)) intend(s) to terminate the tenancy and to move from the premises located at:

_____, Apartment # (if applicable) _____

(Street Address)

_____, (CA) _____, (City) (Zip)

as of _____ (date).

It is understood as follows:

a. that a Thirty Day Notice of Intent to Vacate is required by Section 1946 of California Civil Code for month-to-month tenancies and by the Lease Agreement for fixed-term tenancies;

b. for Residents on a fixed-term lease, a Thirty Day Notice of Intent to Vacate does not relinquish Resident from any obligation of the lease, including payment to the end of the lease term;

c. Resident's possession of the apartment remains in effect until all belongings are removed and all keys returned; and

d. except as provided by law, rent is due and payable up to and including the final date of possession, or thirty (30) days after service of this notice to Manager, whichever is later.

e. Resident cannot use the security deposit as last month's rent. Rent is payable through the termination of the tenancy.

The resident's reason(s) for terminating the Lease Agreement is as follows: (optional)

Forwarding Address:

New Phone Number: _____

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO INITIAL INSPECTION:

I understand that I have the right to request an initial inspection of my unit and to be present during that inspection, which shall occur no earlier than two weeks before the termination of the tenancy and during normal business hours. I also understand that at this initial inspection, the Manager will provide an itemized statement specifying repairs or cleaning that are proposed to be the basis for the deductions from the security deposit. I understand, however, that this may not be the final accounting of deductions from my security deposit. I understand that no later than three weeks (21 days) after Manager has regained possession of the premises, Manager shall provide me with an itemized statement, indicating the basis for, and the amount of, any security deposit received and the disposition of the security and shall return any remaining portion of such security deposit to me.

(check only one option below)

I decline the initial inspection.

I request the initial inspection of my apartment, and I wish to be present.

I request the initial inspection of my apartment, but I will not be present.

Contact me at this phone number to arrange for the inspection: _____

(If requesting initial inspection, check only one option below)

I waive my right to 48 hour notice by the Manager prior to the entry of the apartment to perform the initial inspection, as allowed by Civil Code section 1950.5(f) (1)

I want Manager to provide 48 hour notice prior to entry of the apartment to perform the initial inspection.

Resident Signature(s): _____ *Date:* _____