

VIEWING PROPERTY

Viewing properties to rent can be a little bit like a job interview.

Don't feel daunted. Landlords will get an idea of whether or not they want to rent to a potential tenant in the first few minutes of meeting you, so it's important to make a good first impression. Rather than focusing on the property you are viewing, give some thought to how you are going to make a good impression on the landlord who owns the property.

Broadly speaking, landlords want three things in a tenant:

- someone who will look after the place
- a tenant who pays their rent on time
- a person who will get on with the neighbours and other people living at the property.

Landlords also want to let their property quickly. If the property remains empty for a long period of time, it is not covering the landlord's mortgage payments.

Make a good impression

Once you have made an appointment to view the property, a landlord might wait for you to arrive in their car parked outside the property. They will see you arriving the moment that you turn into the street and therefore it's important to be aware that you might be under some scrutiny before you even know it!

For example, if your landlord has said "no smokers" in his advert and sees you putting out a cigarette before you arrive, he isn't going to give you the benefit of the doubt about not smoking in his property.

Be prepared.

Landlords want to rent their property as quickly as possible. They also want to let it to the 'right' person. Chances are they may ask you some questions. They may ask you these on the phone when you call to make the initial appointment to view the property. They might ask you some questions when they meet you, or they may ask you when they contact you after the viewing. There is no definite list of questions, but, bearing in mind the 3 things listed above, it would be a good idea to have an idea of what questions a landlord might ask and have some answers prepared.

Questions you might be asked:

- Where are you living now?
- Why are you looking to move?
- Do you work?
- Have you rented property before?
- When do you need accommodation from?
- Do you have any references?
- Do you have funds for a deposit and rent in advance?

Have your answers prepared. If you are not working and the landlord asks you if you are, you can explain that you are actively seeking work (if that is the case) or that you are working part time (if true) or that you are doing voluntary work (if that is appropriate). If you are not working and will most likely have to claim Housing Benefit to help you pay your rent see the tip sheet called “No DSS”, which might be helpful.

References

Try to get hold of a couple of references. Landlords are most interested in references from previous landlords as this gives them an indication of how you have been as a tenant in the past. If you cannot get a reference from a landlord then a reference from an employer or manager or key worker or voluntary work placement would be alternatives. Make sure that you take references with you when you go on a viewing and offer to show them to the landlord.

After the viewing

Chances are you will not be the only person viewing the accommodation. It's a good idea to have a card with your name and phone number written on it. This will jog the landlord's memory as to who he saw. The landlord will probably make a quick decision about who he wants to let his property to, and he will most likely call you the following day with the outcome. If he does not phone, there is no harm giving the landlord a call yourself.

Don't assume that all landlords will follow the same procedure, although many will work in similar ways. Some landlords have been letting property for years while others are more inexperienced. Some landlords will have set ways of working while others may be more flexible. The key thing for you as a potential tenant is to be prepared and make a good impression.

