**SGSU Accommodation Tips**

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| **1) Talk to your friends**  It is worthwhile having a frank discussion with your friends about expectations, e.g. rules about guests, cleaning, washing-up, sharing food, payment of bills, etc, at the outset. This will help avoid small irritations developing into big disputes. It is surprising how easy it is for friends to fall out over something really trivial. If you like peace and quiet, you should think long and hard about moving in with a Slipknot fan who playes loud music late at night. If you only have two potential housemates then you may end up spending a large portion of your meagre student income on accommodation. The more of you there are, the cheaper it will be, although too many people and you may have trouble finding a place. |  |  |

**2) Decide how rich you are**  
 Set a ceiling limit on how much rent you are prepared to pay. If your parents just happen to be millionaires, try to give consideration to the poorest member of your group on this matter. Also be cautious of the bills a house is likely to have. All students are exempt from paying council tax fees, so although Wandsworth Council may send a hefty bill for council tax, all you need to do is get a council tax exemption letter from our good friends in the registry to ensure you don’t pay! Don’t forget to set up direct debits for your rent as well.  
  
**3) Decide how lazy you are**  
 Cheaper houses are to be had if you are of an intrepid nature, so be prepared to venture further afield. Having said this, most of us (being rather lazy) prefer to stay as close to George’s as possible.  
  
**4) Don’t panic**  
There are lots of cheap, student friendly houses about in Tooting. That’s one of the great benefits of George’s - there is no need to start looking for houses months in advance. Most landlords want you to move in within a month of agreeing to take their property, and most students don’t want to paying rent months before they move in.  
  
**5) Get your skates on**  
You may want to start looking for houses some time before summer holidays. Once the summer exams are over it pays to move fast as it is then that everybody starts looking and the bargains will be snapped up. This is also when older students start moving out when their contracts run out, so get in there quick...  
  
**6) Check out the local estate agents**  
It can be hard to find student-priced accommodation in some estate agents, so keep looking and don’t let them convince you that you’ll need to pay hundreds of pounds in rent each week.  
  
**7) Final tips**  
Make friends with final year students - they are the ones who are about to qualify and vacate their houses... If ever there was a reason to go to the Finalists Disco...  
  
**8) Compose a checklist**  
Do not fall into the trap of going to view a house and being so impressed by its psychadelic carpet that you fail to notice that it has no central heating. Write a list of all the important things to look for before you go!  
  
**9) House hop**  
Try to visit several houses/flats before you make a final decision, so you can make an informed choice based on a knowledge of the range of properties available. If a landlord tries to coerce you into getting a property, be calm and only make a decision if you are happy to do so.  
  
**10) Don’t get gazzumped**  
An estate agents’ word is about as good as a wind powered fan. A holding deposit paid to the landlord or agent while you make up your mind may be a good idea but disreputable estate agents have been known to disregard it, in which case you may get screwed anyway. Until you have your final agreement signed, sealed, and paid for you cannot rest assured that someone else won’t jump the queue. So when it comes to making a decision, as long as you’re sure, don’t dilly-dally and act ASAP to get the best deal.  
  
**11) Get, read and sign a contract**  
There is no legal requirement for a landlord to provide a written contract, but push for one as it is in your interest more than theirs’. That way everybody knows the score, and if problems arise you can always refer back to it. Never sign anything you don’t understand or agree with. The University of London Accommodation Office (ULAO) can check a contract over for you for free, so use them!  
  
**12) Remember your chequebook**  
 Expect to pay one full months rent as a deposit against damage. If no damage occurs during your tenancy you can expect your full deposit returned on vacating the property. You may also be required to pay the first months rent when you sign the contract.  
  
**13) Get an inventory**  
 Ideally your landlord should provide you with a list of every item that will be in your possession for your duration in the property when you move in, along with a schedule of condition indicating the state of these items. Check that the list you receive is correct, do not take for granted that it will be anyway. If one is not provided, it is worth drawing one up yourself. You and the landlord should then both sign and date it. This can also be done through your estate agent. You cannot then lose your deposit if the landlord says items are missing or damaged unless you have actually lost/stolen/damaged them, so an inventory list is worth having for your own benefit. Maybe take some photos of the place as proof..  
  
**14) Pay your rent**  
This is usually by cheque or standing order/direct debit. Some people choose to pay different amounts of rent depending on the size of the bedrooms. This is up to you but if there isn’t much difference between rooms, it may cause more trouble than it’s worth and you may be better off just drawing straws and accepting what you get!  
  
**15) Pay your bills**  
Short and sweet: Best done before they cut you off...!  
   
**16) Communicate with your landlord**  
If your house is falling to pieces, don’t be afraid to call your landlord or estate agent. If your landlord is refusing to budge then seek advice.  
  
**17) Ultimately, move out**  
Hopefully you will be so happy you won’t want to move until you leave George’s. Unfortunately this is often not the case. If the house is a disaster (or you are all killing each other) you may want to escape. You may have a break clause in your contract which means you can break the contract off after a specified number of months. Otherwise you must continue paying rent for the full 12 month duration. If you decide to renew the contract, you do not need to involve an estate agent. If only one person wants to move out at any point they will have to continue paying rent until a replacement is found, but they can just not resign the contract at the end of the year, leaving the rest of the house to find an extra person if they want to renew the tenancy.