

Landlord inventories explained

The inventory is one of the most important parts of any tenancy agreement. At any one time, it can solve disputes, reassure and give peace of mind, and make or break any case or claim. It is a significant weapon, for sure, but what actually is it? Most people have a general idea, or at least think they do, though it's often more in depth and exhaustive than they imagine. As a landlord, it's in your best interests to ensure that you are familiar with one. Here's a foolproof guide to all things inventory related.

An inventory, and a schedule of condition, is a comprehensive list of everything in the property, from walls and ceilings, to fixtures, furniture and appliances as well as everything in between. You name it, floor coverings, paint colours, doors, windows - it should all be included within it. Their condition should be described in detail and backed up with photographs. Don't forget outside areas too. Sheds, garages, gardens and the like should all make an appearance, along with descriptions of their state and photographs. Any inventory worth its salt is going to be a genuinely exhaustive and possibly tedious labour of love.

Sounds like a lot of work right? So, why do you need to do it? To be blunt, you'd be extremely foolish not to. While they have always been important, the introduction of the deposit scheme in 2007 has rendered the undertaking and presence of an inventory absolutely critical. Imagine that the property is not left in the state in which you let it. Except for general and fair wear and tear, you will naturally want some compensation from the negligent tenants. An inventory is your only concrete evidence of mistreatment. See why you need one now?

Essentially, an inventory is your proof that the property was in a certain condition when you rented it out. One thing's for sure - it shows the tenants you cannot be taken lightly!

So, what should an inventory include? The following list is by no means complete but, at the very least, your inventory should include:

- A full and detailed explanation of the responsibilities of both parties, including disclaimers and explanations, to ensure everyone knows what is expected.
- A glossary of definitions. After all, what's the use of putting 'good condition' if you then don't say what you mean by it? One man's 'good condition' is another's 'beyond repair'
- Each item numbered
- Somewhere for the tenant/s to initial, signifying they have read the inventory and agree with the descriptions and explanations.
- Appliance records, including brand, model and condition
- A full list of warranties and manuals for appliances in the property
- An exhaustive list of each inventory item, including all fixtures and fittings, their colour, material and condition. The condition description should include any marks, chips or other damage.
- A list of all interior fittings to cupboards, units, appliances and anywhere else they may be.
- An area for additional comments, adjustments and clarifications to be made.
- A signature and declaration page. This should be right at the end and include a section for the date.

This should only be treated as a rough guide. A safety first approach is by far the best attitude to adopt. Essentially, if you are not sure, put it in there anyway. As far as we are

aware, no landlord has ever lost money as a result of having too detailed an inventory. History is full, however, of those who have overlooked the importance of this document, and suffered as a result. A little melodramatic? Perhaps, but it's a mistake you won't make again, so why make it in the first place?