

Guide to finding a flat in Berlin

USEFUL TIPS AND ADVICE FOR FINDING
A FLAT IN BERLIN IN 11 STEPS

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Own flat or shared flat?

In your own flat you have

- a main tenancy agreement
- a lot of privacy and freedom to design your home

In a shared flat you

- often have a subtenancy agreement, sometimes for a limited period of time
- have your own room
- have company from your flatmates - especially young people live in flat-shares
- have cheap rent - even in the city centre
- share the work (e.g. cleaning) and purchases (e.g. appliances)
- share activities
- may find a room faster than an own flat, even without a title of residence

The project "Zusammenleben Willkommen" supports people with finding a flat share



Where can you find flats? I

You can find many flats and shared flats online on platforms:

- www.immobilienscout24.de
- www.ebaykleinanzeigen.de
- www.immowelt.de
- www.immonet.de
- www.inberlinwohnen.de
- www.immonet.morgenpost.de
- www.tagesspiegel.immowelt.de
- www.wg-gesucht.de
- www.wgcompany.de

Rental companies also post vacant flats on their websites, as they with new construction projects:

- www.degewo.de
- www.gewobag.de
- www.howoge.de
- www.stadtundland.de
- www.wbm.de
- www.gesobau.de
- www.hws-berlin.de



Where can you find flats? II

- www.vonovia.de
- www.deutsche-wohnen.com
- www.allod.de
- www.adler-wohnen.com
- www.berlinovo.de
- [Genossenschaften in Berlin](#)

and many more!

There are also housing cooperatives (Wohnungsbaugenossenschaften). These are particularly social rentals. You can find an overview online here:

<https://www.berlin.de/special/immobilien-und-wohnen/adressen/wohnungsbaugenossenschaft/>

You can find private rentals mainly on ebay Kleinanzeigen. Shared flats often share their offers in Facebook groups.



How big does the flat have to be? What may it cost? I

How big should the flat be?

You should calculate with one room and 12 sqm per person, for children under 6 years with 10 sqm to meet the requirements of housing companies / landlords. Couples and siblings can of course share a room (the legal requirements are a bit lower).

How much can the rent cost?

Do you earn money yourself and receive no money from the state? The total rent must be one third of your net income.

Unless you have sufficient income, there are limits to the rent covered by Jobcenter, LAF and Social Welfare Office, stated in the so-called AV-Wohnen. You will find a table at the end of this guide.

Attention! If you are homeless or will soon be, you will get 20% extra. If you are in a situation of particular hardship (e.g. single parents, elderly people, disabled or chronically ill people, etc.), you get an additional 10%, as well as 10 % for WBS flats.

You can add the percentages.



How big does the flat have to be? What may it cost? II

LAF, Social Welfare Office and Jobcenter check the rent to make sure it's within the given limits:

1. Gross cold rent = net cold rent (Nettokaltmiete) and cold operating costs (Betriebskosten, this includes e.g. garden maintenance, waste disposal etc.), including 20% surcharge for homelessness:

	= 511,20€
	= 618,54€
	= 761,28€
	= 856,44€
	= 1.029,38€
 + 	+ 121,10€

2. heating costs (see table on last page for Heizkosten)

Both together result in the gross warm rent (Bruttowarmmiete).

ATTENTION: Gross cold rent (Bruttokaltmiete) and heating costs must be individually appropriate.



How big does the flat have to be? What may it cost? III

Deposit:

- LAF, Sozialamt and Jobcenter can give you a loan for the deposit.
- If you change district, you have to apply for the loan with the host (new) Jobcenter
- The deposit may not be more than three times the net cold rent.

Duration of the tenancy agreement:

- As a rule, tenancy agreements are for an indefinite period. There are only a few exceptions, e.g. subtenancy agreements can be for a limited period. We recommend a length of at least six months, even better at least 2 years.

You can find more information on limited tenancy law with e.g. the [Mieterverein](#) oder [Mieterbund](#).



CHECKLIST ON NECESSARY DOCUMENTS

KEEP A PRINTED FOLDER OF ALL DOCUMENTS OR A PDF IF YOU SEND YOUR DOCUMENTS ELECTRONICALLY

- ☐ **Cover letter:** Opportunity to introduce yourself (and your family) and your situation to the rental agency.
- ☐ **Prospective tenant form:** Form from the rental company - personal data is requested here (usually given out during the viewing or afterwards via e-mail).
- ☐ **Identity card** or passport of all household members & **residence permit** (both pages)
- ☐ **"Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung":** Certificate that you do not have any rent debts. You can get it from your current landlord / in your accommodation.
- ☐ **SCHUFA:** Statement on your "creditworthiness" (whether you are able to pay your bills and whether you can do so in the future). You can get it at the Postbank, Volksbank or on the internet. You can get the "Datenkopie" free once a year via mail. The "Bonitätsauskunft" costs roughly 30,-€ and is available immediately
- ☐ **Proof of salary for the last three months** or the current **benefit notification (Leistungsbescheid)** from the Jobcenter, Social Welfare Office or State Office for Refugee Affairs (LAF), permission to rent a flat from the LAF, if applicable.
- ☐ If you are studying or undergoing training:
Certificate of enrolment or **training contract**
- ☐ **Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS):** For social housing at a low rent, possibly "with special housing needs".

What do you have to keep in mind when viewing a flat?

It is best to compile the documents from the "Checklist for Application Documents" as a folder and bring them with you (copy). Otherwise have them ready in the form of a PDF to send digitally.

- Ask the rental agency to make you a personalised offer.
- Often you have to fill out an application form. Ask how to get the form.
- Check whether the rent, number of rooms and size of the flat are as stated in the offer.
- Do the doors and windows close?
- Do you see mould anywhere (damp patches)?
- Are the electrical cables OK?
- Do the taps work?
- Take someone with you who speaks German.



Application for cost approval

At the LAF:

- Submitting an application with a personal offer to the rental department at Darwinstr. 14-18, 10589 Berlin or by mail or e-mail.
- Only after receiving the cost approval sign the tenancy agreement.
- With the cost approval, an invitation letter + tenancy agreement you will have an appointment for the transfer of rent, deposit a fee for the first-time home furnishing.

At the Jobcenter:

- Obtain cost approval by handing in a personal offer (in person or via e-mail).
- Sign the tenancy agreement after obtaining the cost approval.
- Apply for accommodation costs with the tenancy agreement (KdU - Kosten der Unterkunft) and apply for the deposit loan.
- For the initial equipment for furniture, refrigerator and washing machine, you must submit a separate application.

CHECKLIST – GETTING THE COST APPROVAL FROM JOBCENTER/ LAF / SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE



☐ **Personal offer for a flat / room:** All relevant information about the flat is included in it:

- Address of the flat
- Start of tenancy
- Size of the flat (sqm)
- Number of rooms
- Is a WBS required?
- Net cold rent
- Operating costs (kalte Betriebskosten)
- Heating costs
- Deposit
- Type of heating and size of the building
- Is the flat in a suitable condition?
- Is there a stove/ oven and sink?
- Is the flat (partly) furnished?

☐ **For private rentals:** Proof of ownership (declaration or extract from the land register ("Grundbuchauszug"))

☐ **In case of subletting:** permission to sublet from the tenancy & main tenancy agreement for comparison.

- Is your rent "proportionate" in its share?
- How is the rental period fixed?
- Who is the main tenant?
- Has everyone signed?

Tenancy agreement and handing over the flat - what do you need to know? I

What does the rental contract say?

- All signatories with names
- Amount of rent and deposit
- All rented rooms (kitchen, bathroom, ...)
- Start of tenancy and, if applicable, time limit
- Protocol with deficiencies, meter readings, ...
- House rules
- Personal agreements between tenants

Particular attention should be paid to

- Time limit in the tenancy agreement?
- Does the lease contain rent increases?
- Clarify modernisation measures in advance

Do not pay anything without a receipt and co-reading!
Have everything written down!
Do not sign contracts that you do not understand!



Tenancy agreement and handing over the flat - what do you need to know? II

Handover of the flat

- Inspection of the flat (accompanied if necessary).
- The current condition of the flat is recorded in a written form ("Übergabeprotokoll").
- Both parties sign the handover.
- When you move out, the "Übergabeprotokoll" will be used to decide whether you will get your deposit back or whether you will have to pay for any damage.
- The protocol records damages or defects which still have to be repaired by the rental company / landperson.
- Take a person with you who can communicate in German (for example, ask the integration guides: integration@offensiv91.de).
- Tenants' associations will help you if there are uncertainties and support you.

CHECKLIST - FLAT HANDOVER



WHAT SHOULD YOU PAY ATTENTION TO?
WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD YOU ASK?

- ☐ **Signs of usage:** Is the flat in need of renovation? Are cosmetic repairs still outstanding? Do the heating and electrical appliances work? Damage or defects are e.g. stains on carpets, broken tiles, damaged PVC or wooden floors. Do all windows close? What condition are the washbasins, toilets, shower, bathtub, ...? Are there signs of mould or water damage? Is the cellar empty and the flat swept clean / painted in neutral colours?

- ☐ **What is written in the protocol "Übergabeprotokoll"?**
 - Date, name and address of tenant(s) and rental company / landperson
 - Address of the flat
 - All damages, defects and related agreements
 - Note of meter numbers and readings (water meters, radiators and electricity)
 - Note on keys handed over (front door, flat, letterbox)
 - Promises of future plans
 - Signature of both parties

- ☐ **Recommended:** Check everything and insist on a copy of the "Übergabeprotokoll". Pay attention to the lighting conditions when inspecting the flat. Check everything carefully and take the time you need. Take a person with you as a witness.

What are the next steps?

Furnishing of the flat ("Erstaussstattung"):

If you need money for the first furnishing of the flat from LAF, Social Welfare Office and Jobcenter, you have to make an extra application including a list the furniture you need.

Where to find cheap furniture

- ebay Kleinanzeigen
- Social shops and flea markets
- Facebook groups like "Free your stuff Berlin", "Donate furniture for refugees".

You will need to sign contracts for

Electricity, internet, gas for cooking
Insurances like household or liability insurance

You pay for these contracts yourself

Register at the citizens' registration office and inform BAMF, LEA, bank, health insurance, etc. of your address.

New school registration, in some cases you might need to find a new Kita, too.



GLOSSAR (WORD EXPLANATIONS)

- Befristung (limited contract): Must be justified in the tenancy agreement. [More information.](#)
- Kautiön (security deposit): Security for the tenancy for cases of damage and rent arrears. Maximum of three times the net cold rent.
- Nettokaltmiete (net cold rent): Rent without operating costs per square metre of rental space.
- Bruttowarmmiete (gross warm rent): Total rent including cold operating costs and heating costs.
- Nebenkosten (service charges): cold = operating costs // warm = heating costs
- Makler*in-Provision (broker's commission): Another person brokers the flat for the tenant. The "buyer principle" (Bestellprinzip) applies. Usually has to be paid by the tenant. Beware of fraud!!!
- Abstandszahlungen: Fee to take over existing furniture in the flat from the previous tenant.
- Wohnberechtigungsschein (WBS): Social housing at a low rent reserved for people who have little income or receive welfare support (Jobcenter, LAF, Sozialamt). "Mit besonderem Wohnbedarf" >with special need for housing, for example, in the case of homelessness and already one year of residence in Berlin or other cases of hardship.

CURRENT ADEQUACY LIMITS FOR JOBCENTER, LAF AND SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICE (AS OF 01/2022)

AV Wohnen - Ausführungsvorschriften zur Gewährung von Leistungen gemäß § 22 SGB II und §§ 35 und 36 SGB XII
Stand: 14. Dezember 2021

Größe Bedarfs-Gemeinschaft	Richtwert Bruttokalt in Euro	Bruttokalt + 10% in Euro	Bruttokalt + 20% in Euro	Bruttokalt + 30% in Euro	Bruttokalt + 40% in Euro	Gebäude- Fläche in m²	Grenzwert Heizkosten Erdöl in Euro	Grenzwert Heizkosten Erdgas in Euro	Grenzwert Heizkosten Fernwärme in Euro	Abschlag bei dezentraler Warmwasser- versorgung
1 Person	426,00	468,60	511,20	553,80	596,40	100-250	75,50	71,00	94,00	-7,00
						251-500	73,50	66,00	87,50	
						501-1000	71,50	61,50	82,00	
						>1000	69,50	58,50	78,50	
2 Personen	515,45	567,00	618,54	670,09	721,63	100-250	98,15	92,30	122,20	-9,00
						251-500	95,15	85,80	113,75	
						501-1000	92,95	79,95	106,60	
						>1000	90,35	76,05	102,05	
3 Personen	634,40	697,84	761,28	824,72	888,16	100-250	120,80	113,60	150,40	-11,00
						251-500	117,60	105,60	140,00	
						501-1000	114,40	98,40	131,20	
						>1000	111,20	93,60	125,60	
4 Personen	713,70	785,07	856,44	927,81	999,18	100-250	135,90	127,80	169,20	-12,00
						251-500	132,30	118,80	157,50	
						501-1000	128,70	110,70	147,60	
						>1000	125,10	105,30	141,30	
5 Personen	857,82	943,60	1029,38	1115,17	1200,95	100-250	154,02	144,84	191,76	-14,00
						251-500	149,94	134,64	178,50	
						501-1000	145,86	125,46	167,28	
						>1000	141,78	119,34	160,14	
jede weitere Person	100,92	111,01	121,10	131,20	141,29	100-250	18,12	17,04	22,56	-2,00
						251-500	17,64	15,84	21,00	
						501-1000	17,16	14,76	19,68	
						>1000	16,68	14,04	18,84	

Zuschlag +20% für Wohnungslose oder von Wohnungslosigkeit bedrohte Menschen

Zuschlag +10% für Härtefälle (Alleinerziehende, Schwangere, Kranke, Behinderte, Ende der Jugendhilfe,...)

Zuschlag +10% für Sozialwohnungen (WBS)

Diese Zuschläge zum Richtwert der Bruttokaltmiete können je nach persönlicher Situation addiert werden.

Klimabonus und Zuschläge müssen im Einzelfall beantragt werden. Heizkosten Wärmepumpen sind extra geregelt.

Quelle: SenIAS zusammengestellt von XENION, Wohnraum für Geflüchtete

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