

Finding and sharing a place to live



Learner guide

Ready for work

Pre-employment skills

Finding and sharing a place to live

Version 1.2



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Finding and sharing a place to live

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Finding a place to live

You may be moving to a city for the first time, or perhaps you want to leave home and live independently. You have the task of finding a place to live.

You need to:

- decide what type of place you would like to live in
- know how to find places that are available
- know how much money you need.

But first, you need to learn the meanings of some words.

Word	Meaning
Accommodation	Accommodation is place to live; for example, a house or unit.
Rent	Rent is the money you pay to live in your accommodation.
Tenant	You are a tenant when you pay rent to someone to live in their accommodation.
Landlord	The landlord is the person who owns the place you are renting.
Income	Income is the money you receive from wages or benefits.
Shared housing or shared accommodation	Shared housing or shared accommodation is when you live with a person or group of people.

Story

Three friends, Rex, Allie and Brad, are about move to the city.

Rex is going to start a plumbing apprenticeship.

Allie has just left school and is looking for a job in retail.

Brad has been unemployed for a while and is receiving a Newstart Allowance.

Their first task is to each find a place to live.



Deciding what you want

You need to think carefully about some things before you decide where to live. Think about:

- the different type of accommodation available
- where you would like to live
- what type of place you can afford.

What type of place would you like?

Here are some housing options.

Type of housing	What it means
<p>Shared housing</p> 	<p>Many young people choose to live in shared housing. This is because it is usually cheaper than paying for accommodation by yourself.</p> <p>In shared accommodation you usually have your own bedroom, but you share the rest of the house with your housemates. You also share the rent and bills.</p>
<p>Boarding house</p> 	<p>In a boarding house the owner or a caretaker controls the property. They decide who lives there. You may have your own bedroom or share a bedroom with someone else.</p> <p>The tenants of a boarding house share the bathroom and kitchen, but there is not usually any living room.</p>
<p>Private boarding</p> 	<p>If you are away from home for the first time, you may like to board privately. This means living with a family in their home.</p> <p>You still pay rent, of course. You have a bedroom of your own and usually your meals are cooked for you. You may have to do your own washing or help around the house a bit – just as if you were a member of the family.</p>

Story

Rex likes the idea of finding a place to share with others. He likes the thought of being so independent.

Allie is quite nervous. She decides she would like to board privately with a family.

Brad is not at all sure what to do and knows he needs help.

Activity 1

1. What type of accommodation do you live in now?

2. Would you like to move somewhere else?

3. If you would like to move, what kind of accommodation would you prefer to live in?

4. Do you feel more like Rex, Allie or Brad?

[Click to complete Activity 1](#)

Where would you like to live?

When deciding where to live, you should think about proximity. This means how close your accommodation is to the other places you visit in your daily life. For example:

- How far is the accommodation from where you study or work?
- Would travelling to work or school take a long time?
- Would you be able to walk or cycle?
- What is the public transport like? Are there trams, buses or a train station nearby?
- Is it close to where your family and friends live?

Find out about the areas in the town or city you want to move to. For example:

- Are there shops, restaurants and pubs nearby?
- Are there amenities such as a library, gym, park or sports ground?
- Is it a safe area?
- Is it quiet or lively?
- Is it cheap or expensive?



How much money do you have?

Work out exactly how much money you can afford to spend on rent. Remember, you have other things to pay for too, like food, power, water, transport and clothes.

If you don't have enough money you will learn later in this learner guide where you can go for help.

Story

Rex doesn't have much money. He has never had a job before. His parents can't afford to give him any money. However, because of his apprenticeship he is entitled to Youth Allowance through Centrelink at the Department of Human Services. He will have to be very careful with his money though.

Allie isn't too worried about money. She has saved up a lot from babysitting jobs. Her parents are also going to help her with money until she gets a job.

Brad thinks it will be very hard to live in the city with only his Newstart Allowance.



Looking for accommodation

There are many ways to find a place to live. You can search by yourself or look with friends. Finding accommodation can be difficult, so you may need some help.

Looking by yourself

You may be looking for shared housing where the tenants want another person to join them. You can look for such a place using the following information.

Where	What this means
http://aspirelr.link/flatmates-website	<p>This is a great website if you want to share accommodation with other people. On this site you can make lots of choices; for example, where you want to live, how much rent you can pay and when you need the place.</p> <p>Other choices include whether you would live with people who smoke, if you can have a pet, and whether you want to share with only males or females.</p>
http://aspirelr.link/flatmate-finders	<p>This is another website for people looking for shared accommodation. It is a good site if you know you want to share with other people. However, you need to sign up to this website to see what is available.</p>
http://aspirelr.link/real-estate-share	<p>This is another website for people looking for shared accommodation. It contains a lot of information and even has a photo of the person you will be sharing with!</p>
Noticeboards	<p>Other places to look are noticeboards at your TAFE or learning centre.</p> <p>Sometimes there are even advertisements on noticeboards in the local supermarket or community centre.</p>

Looking with friends

Perhaps you have a group of friends who want to share a house together. You need to find an empty house or apartment. The best place to start is the internet. You can look for rental properties on the following websites:

- <http://aspirelr.link/real-estate>
- <http://aspirelr.link/domain>

You can also visit a real estate office. The estate agent can tell you what places they have available. They may take you to see the place. Sometimes they give you the keys to inspect the place yourself.

If you are studying, your TAFE or college might have an accommodation service.



Activity 2

Use a computer to access this website: <http://aspirelr.link/real-estate>

Write down some of the choices you can make when you use this website to look for a place to rent or share.

[Click to complete Activity 2](#)

Going to look at a place

When you apply to move into a share house, the other tenants need to meet you first. They want to see if you are the type of person they want to live with. You probably want to do the same.

If you visit any of the places you have applied for, go along with someone else. Make sure you feel safe with the other people in the house. Make sure you feel safe in the area. Have a look at the area at night. Would you feel safe getting home by yourself after dark?

Write yourself a list of things to check about the place. For example:

- How big is the bedroom? Can I fit my desk, bed, etc.?
- Are the living areas big enough for the number of people sharing?
- Is there a car space? Can I use it?
- What are the kitchen, laundry and bathroom facilities?
- Is there a washing machine and clothesline or dryer, or will I need to go to the laundrette?
- Is the house or apartment block well maintained?



Story

Rex looks at the websites for housemates. He finds a place that looks interesting. He phones the people who live there and agrees to meet them at the house where they live. It's quite near the TAFE where Rex goes for some of his training.

He likes the people, who are also students, in the shared house. They seem to get on well and the house is clean and tidy. However, he has to find out more about how much money rent and bills will cost.

People and places that can help

You may find looking for a place by yourself is too hard. You may also not have enough money. There are many people with the same problem, and many people or organisations that can help you.

Here is some more information.

Person or organisation that can help	How it can help
Student services	If you are studying at a TAFE or training organisation, there may be a student services officer who can help you. They can tell you what accommodation is available and where you can get financial help.
Centrelink	If you have trouble finding an affordable place to live, Centrelink may be able to help. Centrelink is an Australian government agency that provides services to the Australian community. People there may be able to help you, no matter how old you are. You may be entitled to rent assistance if you don't have enough money for rent, depending on your situation.

Person or organisation that can help	How it can help
State or territory Office of Housing, and community housing organisations	<p>The Office of Housing can give you a list of community housing organisations that can help you find accommodation. If you live in Victoria, for example, go to the following site for advice about finding accommodation: http://aspirelr.link/housing-vic</p> <p>You can also go to a regional housing office and apply for public housing. People on a low income or those finding it hard to find affordable accommodation are entitled to public housing.</p>
Religious organisations	<p>Many religious organisations also help young people find accommodation. The Salvation Army has a housing service in every city. Wesley Community Services in Sydney also has independent living programs. These provide medium-term accommodation for people aged 16–22 who can't live at home or who want to live independently.</p>

Story

Allie is lucky. A friend gives her a notice from a TAFE student noticeboard. An older lady is offering board. She wants a young woman who can help with the household chores. Allie goes to meet her. They like each other instantly. Allie can afford the rent, so she moves into the house immediately.

Brad goes to the Office of Housing. They give him the phone number of a community housing organisation. When he phones them, they are very helpful. They even manage to find Brad a room in a boarding house straightaway. The room has a bed, wardrobe, cupboard and a fridge. He'll share the bathroom and kitchen with others. Brad has to pay one week's rent up-front and agree to the rules of the boarding house. He must also sign a residential tenancy agreement, which is a legal document stating the conditions of renting in the boarding house.



Other things to know

Signing agreements

When you agree to become a tenant you must sign a residential tenancy agreement. If you share accommodation, everyone living there may sign the agreement. Sometimes just one person does it.

You may find a residential tenancy agreement hard to understand. If so, ask someone for help. You could contact your state or territory's tenants union, which can give advice and assistance. You could also ask a family member or someone at your learning centre. You must understand all the terms of the agreement. Always read a document in full before you sign it.



Bond and rent in advance

You must pay a bond when you rent a house or apartment. This is money (usually one month's rent) that the building owner keeps in case you break or damage part of the property. They keep the bond until you leave the place. If you have not done any damage, the owner repays the bond.

If you share accommodation, everyone in the group may pay a share of the bond.

When you rent accommodation you also have to pay some rent in advance. This is also usually about one month's rent.

If you don't have enough money for the bond and rent, you can go to:

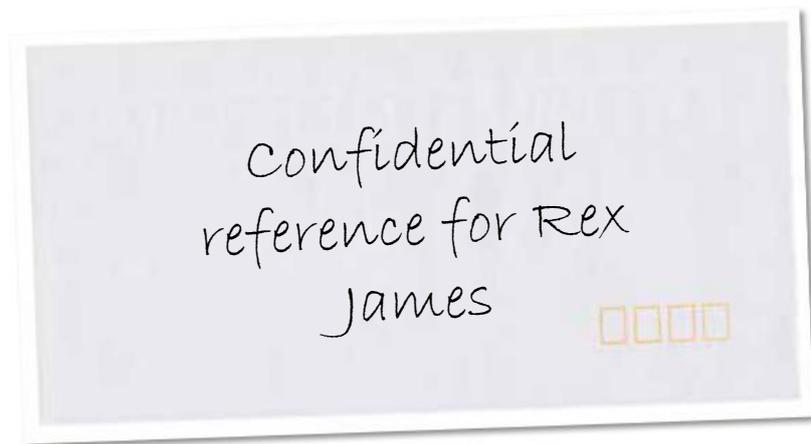
- a Centrelink office to see if you are entitled to rent assistance – when people have a money crisis, they can sometimes get a crisis payment
- the Office of Housing in your state or territory, which can lend bond money to people on low incomes; however, they are strict about who they lend money to.

References

Sometimes a landlord or real estate agent will ask you for a reference. This is a letter from someone saying you are a reliable person who would make a good tenant.

If you have rented a place before, the owner may give you a reference if you were a good tenant. You can also ask an employer for a reference. You can also ask someone like a teacher, minister or sports coach. A reference may be from anyone who knows that you are a reliable person.

The owner or real estate agent may also ask about your income. They are allowed to ask this, so that they know you are able to pay the rent. However, they are not allowed to ask you about your religion, race, political views or anything personal.



Story

Rex is surprised to find out about a bond. He has just enough money to pay his share of the bond, but he won't be able to spend much money for quite a while.

The students also ask Rex for a reference. Luckily he has one from his rugby coach. The coach says Rex is a very reliable and honest person. The students agree that Rex can join them to live in the house.

Allie doesn't need to pay a bond as she has private board.

Brad doesn't have to pay a bond at the rooming house.

Activity 3

List some people who would be able to give you a reference. Perhaps they could be a teacher, an employer (even from a part-time job), a sports coach or a religious leader. They should be someone who knows you are honest and reliable.

[Click to complete Activity 3](#)

Sharing accommodation – money

Living with other people can be fun. It can also be cheaper than living by yourself. However, it can sometimes be quite difficult, as people sharing must learn to live together happily. When you share housing with others you also must share all the expenses. You have already read about sharing the bond.

Expense	What it is
<p>Rent</p> 	<p>The rent is also shared. It is divided up among the number of people sharing the accommodation. For example, if the rent is \$400 a week and four people share the accommodation, each person would pay \$100 a week.</p> <p>Sometimes housemates make special arrangements. For example, one person may pay more rent for a bigger bedroom, or two people may share a bedroom and pay a bit less. Everyone has to agree how the rent is shared.</p>
<p>Food</p> 	<p>Sometimes housemates share the cooking. If this is the case, then the cost of the food is shared. Many shared houses also have a kitty. This is a container where the housemates each put a certain amount of money each week. They then use this money to buy the shared food.</p> <p>If anyone wants special food for themselves, they pay for it separately. In some shared accommodation each person buys their own food. You must only eat your own or the shared food you pay for.</p>

Expense

What it is

Bills



A shared house gets a power bill for electricity and gas. Stoves, heaters, hot water services, televisions and all other appliances use power. The power bill is divided between the people sharing the accommodation.

You must also share the water bill. Water is used for showering, washing clothes, cooking and the toilets.

Story

In Rex's shared house, his housemate Josh organises the rent. Rex and the other students give Josh their share of the rent money every week. Josh gives them a receipt, so there are no mistakes. Then Josh pays the landlord and gets a receipt from her.

After a few months, the students sharing the house with Rex find their bills are very high. It has become hard for them to pay their bills. They have a meeting to decide what they can do to reduce costs.

They decide to plan their meals together to save money and not waste food. They also do some research and find a cheaper gas and electricity supplier. The supplier gives them a discount if they pay their bills on time each month. Rex offers to be in charge of paying the bills as Josh is already responsible for paying the rent to the landlord. All the housemates are very happy with this agreement and the money they will save.

Activity 4

1. Do you have any idea how much power and water cost each month? If you do, write some details here.

2. If you don't, ask someone how much they pay for power and water. Ask your family or friends. Write your findings here.

[Click to complete Activity 4](#)

Sharing accommodation – living peacefully

When people share accommodation, they may agree on some rules. This is necessary to live together happily. It can also help avoid arguments and problems.



Organisation

In some shared accommodation one person takes charge. This person collects the rent and money from the other housemates to pay the bills. They deal with the landlord and sort out any problems. In other shared accommodation, everyone takes a turn.

Setting up

Sometimes a group of friends may move into an empty house. They may need to buy many things to set it up. They'll need furniture, and appliances such as a fridge and a washing machine.

Sometimes each person may bring something they own, like a television, which everyone can share.

If you need lots of things, look for places where you can buy things cheaply. You can go to opportunity shops or charity stores like the Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul or the Brotherhood of St Laurence. You can get cheap household goods from garage sales. You can also access websites such as Gumtree (<http://aspirelr.link/gumtree>) or eBay (<http://aspirelr.link/ebay>). People sell their new or used goods on these websites and they are often very affordable. You don't need to spend a lot of money and buy everything new.

Story

Rex searches online to find a bed and some other furniture for his bedroom. He finds a great price on Gumtree for a bed that someone is selling in the next suburb. His housemate Josh has an old van. Josh helps Rex collect and move the bed into the house.

Rex also wants to contribute something to the shared house, so he goes to a few local op shops. He finds a jaffle maker and a popcorn maker for a few dollars each. His housemates are very pleased!

Sharing the shopping and cooking tasks

In some share houses each person takes a turn buying the food. They use the kitty money, which is combined money that everyone adds to. For example, each person may put in \$40 a week for groceries. Always try to shop wisely. Don't buy things you don't need. Look for specials at the market or supermarket. Plan meals so you know exactly what to buy.

Often each person may be given one day to do the cooking. Some share houses also have a rule that whoever cooks must clean up. That's because some people make a big mess when they cook.

Other shared jobs

Every housemate should be prepared to share the jobs around the house. This includes cleaning – not only your own room but also the shared rooms. This means cleaning the bathroom, the kitchen and the living room.

Other jobs also include putting out the rubbish, keeping the garden tidy and mowing the lawn.

The people in each share house make their own rules. In some, each person has a week in which they must do all the cleaning. In other places each person is responsible for one particular cleaning job.

Whatever the rules, everyone must do their share.

Activity 5

Imagine you are going to share a house with five other people (so there are six of you altogether). Write down your ideas of how all the jobs could be shared.

[Click to complete Activity 5](#)

Other rules

Usually all the housemates get together to decide on a list of rules. These may be about whether anyone:

- is allowed to smoke in the house
- can have a pet
- is allowed to have a friend stay overnight in their bedroom
- can organise a party without asking the others first.

All these rules help make sure the housemates live as happily as possible together without upsetting or annoying each other.



Story

One day Rex has a visitor. She smokes in the house. The other housemates are very annoyed when they get home and Rex apologises. They have a meeting and all agree that no-one should smoke in the house – not even visitors.

What you have learnt

Put a ✓ in the box when you have learnt these things.

- The main types of accommodation for young people are share houses, boarding houses and private boarding.
- You can find out about accommodation:
 - on the internet
 - in newspapers
 - from student services at a TAFE
 - at Centrelink offices and the Office of Housing
 - at real estate agencies
 - from religious organisations such as the Salvation Army.
- You can get help and advice, and sometimes help with money, from:
 - Centrelink
 - the Office of Housing.
- If you are sharing accommodation you need to pay your share of the bond, the rent and the bills.
- If you are sharing accommodation you must share the jobs around the house.
- You must follow any rules agreed to by all the housemates.

Check your learning

Imagine you are looking for a new place to live. Answer these questions.

1. How would you find a place to live?

2. Where would you go if you need help to find a place?

3. Where would you go if you don't have enough money to pay a bond or much rent?

4. Who would you ask if you couldn't understand the meaning of a residential tenancy agreement?

5. Now imagine that you are going to share a house with a group of friends. On a piece of paper, write a list of rules that you would like everyone in the shared house to follow.

[Click to complete](#)

Answers

Answers to activities

Activity 1

Answer to Question 1

Answers will vary, but may include: at home, in a share house, in a unit or with grandparents.

Answer to Question 2

Answers will vary according to the person.

Answer to Question 3

Answers will vary according to the person. A person living at home with their parents may like to live in a share house with people their own age.

Answer to Question 4

Answers will vary according to the person.

Activity 2

Choices for renting include: suburb, property type, number of bedrooms, minimum and maximum price per week.

Choices for sharing include: a room or flatmate, and suburb.

Activity 3

Answers will vary greatly according to the person. An appropriate person, such as those listed in the question, should be given.

Activity 4

Answer to Question 1

Answers will vary greatly depending on the area and type of property. A dollar amount should be given.

Answer to Question 2

Answers will vary. A dollar amount should be given.

Activity 5

Answers may vary, but may include: one person each week could be responsible for, grocery shopping, cooking, doing the washing up, cleaning, paying the bills and mowing the lawns.

Answers to check your learning

Answer to Question 1

Answers will vary. This is an example answer.

I would use the internet, as this is the fastest and easiest way to search large areas. I can also be very specific in my search on a website such as www.realestate.com.au

Answer to Question 2

Answers will vary. This is an example answer.

I would again use the internet. I would also visit real estate agents, check local noticeboards and ask family and friends.

Answer to Question 3

Answers will vary. This is an example answer.

I could also go to my state or territory's Office of Housing; go to a community house organisation, Centrelink or a religious organisation; ask family or friends; or go to student services, if studying.

Answer to Question 4

Answers will vary. This is an example answer.

I would contact my state's tenants union, which can give advice and assistance. I could also ask a family member or someone at my learning centre.

Answer to Question 5

Answers will vary. Here is an example answer:

- Rent must be paid to Sarah on or by the first day of every month.
- All housemates will put in \$40 per week for common groceries and household items.
- No-one is to smoke inside the house.
- Any parties or events must be first agreed to by the other housemates.
- We will all take turns to cook, clean, shop and pay bills according to the roster.
- One month's notice must be given to move out.
- Pets are not allowed (according to the lease).