



LANDLORDS GUIDE TO PROPERTY INVENTORIES





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Introduction

For landlords, navigating the rental market can be a complex task, laden with numerous responsibilities. One of the key responsibilities that often gets overlooked is the creation of a comprehensive property inventory.

This guide covers the essentials of inventories, explaining their importance, how to create them effectively, and how to utilise them to avoid potential disputes at the end of tenancy.



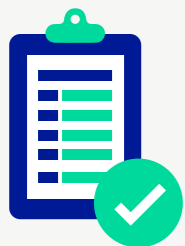


Inventories, Check-In and Check-Out Reports

An inventory/check-in report is a comprehensive document detailing the condition and standard of cleanliness. It lists all fixtures, fittings, and contents of the property, along with their condition and any existing damage. The inventory serves as a baseline record that can be compared to the property's state at the end of the tenancy, should you need to make a deposit deduction.

The **check-in report** should be passed to the tenants on the date they move in, and they should be provided with an opportunity to comment on its findings. Once signed and/or returned with comments, it is the tenant's agreement to the inventory, on record. And the **check-out report** records the cleanliness and condition of the property when the tenancy ends, to identify what has changed. These records hold great significance in a successful tenancy. They are a crucial tool in protecting both parties' interests and serve as a reference point in case of disputes regarding property damage or changes in condition.

A well-documented **inventory and check-in/check-out report** can facilitate smooth negotiations at the end of a tenancy, reducing potential disagreements over deposit deductions. Deposit protection scheme rules do not insist on the preparation of an inventory or check-in and check-out reports. However, without them, you may face difficulties during the adjudication process, which can be time-consuming and challenging to prove your deductions are justified. Property inventories are not just practical tools; they are also legally significant documents.



When Should Landlords Create an Inventory?

The ideal time to create an inventory is just before a new tenant moves in, after any necessary cleaning or repairs have been completed. This ensures that the inventory accurately represents the state of the property at the start of the tenancy.

The check-in should be completed by visiting the property with the new tenant(s), if possible, to make sure they agree with the property's cleanliness and condition (the 'check-in'). Alternatively, giving the tenant the means to provide feedback remotely and agree on the contents within a given time period (usually 7 days).



It is important to consider the timing of property reports, which should be as close to the start of the tenancy. If there is a large gap between producing them, it could result in disputes over their accuracy. For instance, if a property is left unattended for a long time, it may become dusty, and the garden may become overgrown. Also, if a property is closed up and lacks proper ventilation, mould could start to appear. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the reports are produced in a timely manner.



Can I do a Property Inventory Myself?

Experienced landlords can prepare a **comprehensive inventory report** without the help of a professional clerk, but there are pros and cons to consider with both options. By opting for a DIY approach, landlords can save money on tenancy setup costs, and there are numerous resources available online to aid with the process. However, especially for landlords who are new to letting out their property, might not have the necessary professional expertise to produce an inventory report that meets the standards required by deposit scheme adjudicators.

Additionally, it can be challenging to identify all defects within the property if you are too familiar with it, and some landlords might struggle to assess any damage objectively due to their financial or emotional investment in the property. Lastly, an inventory inspection carried out by an independent third party cannot be questioned.



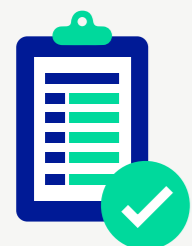
It's always wise to go through the inventory and check-in report with the tenant. This allows the tenant to read the report and make sure that there are no misunderstandings of the property's condition. Once the tenant signs the report, it becomes legally binding, indicating that they have read and agreed to the report's content. This eliminates any potential future problems that tenants could highlight in the future, such as not receiving a copy or the report being inaccurate.



Key Elements of an Inventory

Your property inventory should include the following:

- 1 A CLEAR TITLE EXPLAINING WHAT IT IS E.G. "INVENTORY, CHECK-IN AND SCHEDULE OF CONDITION"
- 2 PROPERTY ADDRESS
- 3 A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY E.G. 2 BEDROOM FLAT WITH GARDEN
- 4 THE TENANT'S NAME (S), AND THE AUTHOR OF THE REPORT
- 5 PHOTOGRAPHS TO SUPPLEMENT THE WRITTEN DESCRIPTIONS
- 6 DATE AND TIME STAMPS
- 7 METER READINGS FOR ALL UTILITIES
- 8 SAFETY ALARM TESTING FOR SMOKE ALARMS, CARBON MONOXIDE READERS.

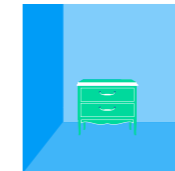


Inventories

INVENTORY, CHECK-IN AND SCHEDULE OF CONDITION



Property address
1 The High Street
Chigley
CH1 2GL



Property description
Three bedroom unfurnished flat



Date
15th February 2024
Weather conditions
Bright and sunny

This report has been prepared on the basis that in the absence of comments an item is free from obvious damage or soiling. You should check the report thoroughly.

Any queries or discrepancies relating to the description(s) or contents in this report must be addressed to [name/organisation] within 7 days of you receiving this report.

If we do not hear from you in writing within this period, we will assume you agree that this report is an accurate representation of the cleanliness and condition of the property and its contents.

PROPERTY SUMMARY

General	This three bedroom unfurnished flat appears as new.
Property occupied?	No.
Furnished?	No.
Decorative order	This property has carpets which appear as new. There are no visible marks or defects noted to the woodwork, walls, and ceilings.
Cleanliness	Cleaned to a professional standard except where noted, as per cleaning invoice provided.
Tenants present	Yes.
Length of tenancy	3 years, 4 months.

Inventories

1 Inventory Lane, Inventory, 1NV T0R
email@inventories.com

**KEY ELEMENTS OF AN INVENTORY:****AN OPENING SUMMARY IS A HELPFUL WAY OF PROVIDING AN OVERVIEW OF A PROPERTY'S CONDITION.**

This can include brief descriptions of important factors such as the overall condition, cleanliness, decorative order, presence of tenants during check-in/check-out, length of tenancy, and number of occupants. For instance, you might write **"This unfurnished two-bedroom flat looks like new,"** or **"The property has been cleaned to a high standard, except for a few noted areas."** It's also important to note whether the tenants were present during the check-in or check-out inspection, as well as the length of their tenancy (e.g. "3 years and 4 months"). The number of occupants is also relevant in determining **"fair wear and tear"**.



It's important to be thorough when documenting your inventory. You never know what you might need to claim for, so it's crucial to cover all areas. Some commonly overlooked areas that are often missed are the inside of fridges, ovens, and washing machines, the oven and the extractor hood, and the inside of cupboards, wardrobes, both sides of mattresses and bathroom units.

THEN, IN DETAIL, ALL ITEMS AND STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS THAT COULD POTENTIALLY BE DAMAGED. FOR EXAMPLE:

- ✓ WALLS (NOTE ANY PRIOR DAMAGE, DENTS, OR SCRATCHES)

- ✓ FLOORING (NOTE WHETHER IT IS CARPETED OR NOT, AND DETAIL ANY DAMAGE)

- ✓ CEILINGS (NOTE ANY SCRATCHES OR STRUCTURAL ISSUES)

- ✓ FIXTURES (E.G. LAMPS, OVERHEAD LIGHTS)

- ✓ FITTINGS (E.G. KITCHEN TAPS, SINKS)

- ✓ BULBS – WORKING OR NON-WORKING

- ✓ SOCKETS AND SWITCHES

- ✓ HEATING APPARATUS (RADIATORS, RADIATOR CAPS)

- ✓ FURNITURE

- ✓ APPLIANCES

- ✓ STORAGE UNITS (SHELVES, CUPBOARDS, CHESTS OF DRAWERS)

- ✓ WINDOWS & CURTAINS/BLINDS

- ✓ DOORS AND DOOR HANDLES

- ✓ PAINT OR WALLPAPER (DOCUMENT CONDITION, COLOUR, AND OVERALL HEALTH OF WALL PAINT)

- ✓ GARDEN (OR OTHER OUTDOOR SPACES. NOTE THE STATE OF THE LANDSCAPING, AND CONDITION OF GARDEN FURNITURE, FENCES, GATES AND WALLS)

- ✓ OTHER BUILDINGS (SHEDS, outhouses, GARAGES)



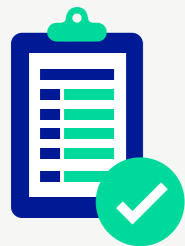
KEY ELEMENTS OF AN INVENTORY:

HOW TO COMPILE AN INVENTORY

When creating an inventory for a rental property, it's important to thoroughly inspect and document the condition of each room, fixture, and item.

Take note of any existing marks, stains, or signs of wear and tear, as well as the general condition of the room.

Make a list of all furnishings, appliances, and other items provided, and include details such as the make, model, and condition of each item. This will help ensure that both landlords and tenants are aware of any pre-existing damage before the tenancy commences, preventing any disputes about responsibility. Be sure to document any issues, such as scratches or paint chips, and include high-quality photographs or videos as visual evidence of the property's condition.



- 1 **PREPARATION:** BEFORE YOU START, ENSURE THAT THE PROPERTY IS CLEAN AND ALL ITEMS ARE IN THEIR CORRECT PLACES. THIS WILL MAKE THE PROCESS EASIER AND MORE ACCURATE.
- 2 **LISTING ITEMS:** START BY LISTING ALL ITEMS IN EACH ROOM. THIS INCLUDES FURNITURE, APPLIANCES, FIXTURES AND FITTINGS, AND EVEN SMALLER ITEMS LIKE KITCHEN UTENSILS.
- 3 **DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS:** TAKE NOTE OF ANY EXISTING MARKS, STAINS, OR SIGNS OF WEAR AND TEAR, AS WELL AS THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE ROOM. MAKE A LIST OF ALL FURNISHINGS, APPLIANCES, AND OTHER ITEMS PROVIDED, AND INCLUDE DETAILS SUCH AS THE MAKE, MODEL, AND CONDITION OF EACH ITEM.
- 4 **PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE:** TAKE CLEAR, HIGH-QUALITY PHOTOGRAPHS OF EACH ITEM. THESE WILL SERVE AS VISUAL EVIDENCE OF THE ITEM'S CONDITION AND CAN BE INVALUABLE IN CASE OF DISPUTES.
- 5 **TENANT VERIFICATION:** ONCE THE INVENTORY IS COMPLETE, PROVIDE A COPY TO THE TENANT. THEY SHOULD BE GIVEN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME (USUALLY 7 DAYS) TO CHECK THE INVENTORY AND CONFIRM ITS ACCURACY.
- 6 **SIGNING OF INVENTORY:** ONCE THE TENANT IS SATISFIED WITH THE INVENTORY, BOTH PARTIES SHOULD SIGN THE DOCUMENT. THIS CONFIRMS THAT BOTH PARTIES AGREE ON THE CONDITION OF THE PROPERTY AT THE START OF THE TENANCY.



It's important to remember to include all keys given to the tenant(s). This includes communal entrance keys, window keys, shed keys, spare keys, bin room keys, and any other keys or fobs that were provided. Failing to return all keys could result in costly replacements, and if it's not recorded in the inventory, you'll be unable to make a claim.



Can I do an Inventory After the Tenant has Moved in?

It is possible to do an **inventory check-in** after the tenant moves into the property, but this is not recommended. It would be challenging to determine if any damages or issues were caused by the tenant before the inventory check took place, and areas covered by the tenant's belongings may prevent full inspection and may not be as accurate.

TDS strongly recommends that inventories are carried out before the tenant(s) move in.

The Check-Out Process

At the end of a tenancy, **a thorough check-out process is necessary**. This involves comparing the property's current condition with the initial inventory/ check-in report and identifying any changes or damages. This comparison forms the basis for any necessary deposit deductions. The check-out report should provide an accurate comparison of the cleanliness, contents and condition of the property at the end of the tenancy. To be considered reliable, the report must be undertaken as soon as possible after the end of the tenancy. Ideally, this will be on the last day of the tenancy after the tenant has vacated fully.

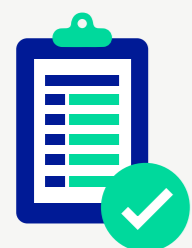




THE CHECK-OUT PROCESS:

POINTS TO REMEMBER FOR A SUCCESSFUL CHECK-OUT:

- 1 THE PURPOSE OF THE CHECK-OUT REPORT IS TO IDENTIFY OBVIOUS OR SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE PROPERTY'S CONTENTS, CLEANLINESS AND CONDITION. TAKE ALONG THE CHECK-IN REPORT SO YOU CAN HAVE A CLEAR REFERENCE POINT.
- 2 YOU SHOULD INFORM TENANTS PRIOR TO THE CHECK-OUT TAKING PLACE, AROUND 2 WEEKS IN ADVANCE (UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED IN YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT) AND ADVISE OF THEIR SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES WHICH SHOULD BE DETAILED IN THE TENANCY AGREEMENT.
- 3 YOU SHOULD ALLOW YOUR TENANT TO BE PRESENT AT THE CHECKOUT STAGE OF TENANCY. THIS CAN HELP AVERT UNEXPECTED DEPOSIT DEDUCTIONS AND GIVES THE TENANTS A CHANCE TO PUT THINGS RIGHT AND TO NOTIFY YOU OF ANY MAINTENANCE ISSUES.
- 4 ARE YOU UPDATING THE CHECK-IN REPORT AS A SINGLE DOCUMENT? IN AN IDEAL WORLD, HAVING "EASY-TO-COMPARE" CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT COMMENTS IN THE SAME DOCUMENT IS BY FAR THE NEATEST SOLUTION. IF NOT, HOWEVER, THINK ABOUT HOW EASILY THE READER WILL FIND IT TO COMPARE THE TWO DIFFERENT DOCUMENTS. INCLUDE A STATEMENT ABOUT WHICH DOCUMENT THE CHECK-OUT REPORT HAS BEEN ASSESSED AGAINST.
- 5 THE READER OF THE REPORT NEEDS TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND EASILY WHAT HAS CHANGED AT THE END OF THE TENANCY. THIS IS AS TRUE OF A LANDLORD, AGENT OR TENANT READING A CHECK-OUT REPORT AS IT IS FOR A TDS ADJUDICATOR.



- 6 TENANTS WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR [FAIR WEAR AND TEAR](#), WHICH MUST BE ASSESSED ON THE LENGTH OF THE TENANCY AND THE TYPE OF OCCUPANCY.
- 7 TAKE YOUR TIME. A THOROUGH CHECK-OUT NEEDS TO BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE EVERY ASPECT OF THE CHECK-IN LIST IS COVERED.
- 8 CONSIDER USING AN INDEPENDENT INVENTORY CLERK, A PROFESSIONAL WHO CAN MANAGE AND DEMONSTRATE CHANGES AT THE END OF TENANCY.
- 9 BRING A CAMERA AND TAKE PHOTOS OF ANY DAMAGE. DIGITAL CAMERAS WORK BEST BECAUSE THE PHOTOGRAPHS CAN BE DATED, AND CAN BE EASILY INCLUDED WITHIN THE CHECK-OUT REPORT. OCCASIONALLY, VIDEO RECORDINGS MAY BE APPROPRIATE TO CAPTURE DAMAGE TOO.
- 10 CARRY OUT THE CHECK-OUT PRIOR TO COMPLETING ANY REPAIR WORK. YOU'LL NEED EVIDENCE OF THE DAMAGE REQUIRING REPAIR, IN ORDER TO MAKE A CLAIM FOR THE DEPOSIT DEDUCTION.

Once check-out is done, the report will be completed – comparing the current state of the property to the description in the original inventory. If the property is clean and in the same condition as the start of tenancy (allowing for fair wear and tear), there should be no deposit deductions. In these instances, both the landlord and tenant sign and date the form at the checkout, confirming that no deductions will be made and complete a successful tenancy.

If however, you identify any issues with the condition of the property and intend to make deductions from the tenant's deposit, it is important to inform the tenants at this stage. Our [deposit deductions template](#) has proven to be an effective tool in clearly explaining the reasons for deducting from the deposit.

At this point, the tenant can accept the conclusion, reach a mutual agreement, or dispute the deduction using your deposit protection scheme's [free dispute resolution service](#).



Inventory Disputes and How to Avoid Them

Despite best efforts, disputes at check-out can occur. However, a robust inventory can significantly reduce the potential for this. By providing clear, detailed documentation of the property's initial condition, disputes over "fair wear and tear" versus actual damage can be more easily resolved.

That said, if you are entering a dispute resolution, the following evidence is often helpful to avoid a dispute:

- ✓ A DETAILED INVENTORY LIST

- ✓ THE TENANT'S SIGNATURE ON THE CHECK-IN INVENTORY LIST

- ✓ A TENANCY AGREEMENT WHICH EXPLICITLY REFERS TO THE PROPERTY INVENTORY

- ✓ A PAPER TRAIL, INCLUDING RECEIPTS, COMMUNICATION, QUOTES, CHARGES, AND INVOICES

- ✓ PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEOS TO ACCOMPANY THE LIST (STRONGLY RECOMMENDED)

- ✓ BRAND NAMES, SERIAL NUMBERS, AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION FOR ALL APPLIANCES AND FITTINGS



Want to find out how successful your claim is likely to be? Try our [dispute chatbot](#)! It's completely confidential and will assess your claim, its likely outcome, and give you advice on what evidence you'll need to submit.

Conclusion

Creating a property inventory may require some time and effort, but the benefits it provides are well worth it. By providing a clear record of the property's condition, an inventory can help to protect both landlords and tenants, and ensure a smooth, dispute-free tenancy.

This guide is intended as a general overview of the process of creating a property inventory in the UK. For detailed advice tailored to your specific circumstances, it is recommended to seek professional legal advice.





0300 037 1000



deposits@tenancydepositscheme.com



tenancydepositscheme.com