

Tips to avoid scams on the private housing market

This Information is provided to the best of our knowledge and, when in doubt, does not replace legal counselling!

In order to spot a scam, we encourage you to use your common sense and the information that we provide. Please remember that students in desperate need of accommodation can unfortunately be targeted by scammers. Even if you are urgently looking for accommodation – always think twice before signing or paying anything!

Find out more about local market prices:



- Get to know the rental prices in the city/neighborhood where you are looking for accommodation.
- When comparing apartments, please check if the rent is indicated as **including utilities** ("Warmmiete" or "warm") or **excluding utilities** ("Kaltmiete" or "kalt") in order to be able to compare rent prices.
- Also inquire about the exact costs that are included in the utilities if a particular apartment is listed as "warm" and what additional payments you will have to make yourself, for example for electricity.

Check the exact address of the property and ask for several photos:



- Do a Google search by typing in the property's address. Use the Street View function to visually check whether the listed property truly exists in the indicated place.
- Do a Google reverse image search if you see overly appealing ads promising spacious, well-located housing for a low rental price or ads that look too perfect.



- Scams often include eye-catching ads offering high-end services at incredibly low prices.

Contracts and Deposits:

- In general: Please make sure you understand the contracts you sign (even if they are in German).



- Do not sign a rental contract until you have inspected the apartment. Even if they seem legit, always visit the apartment online or in person. If possible, visit the property together with the owner before signing a rental agreement, and receive the keys in person.
- **Please note:** Signing a contract does not prevent scams.

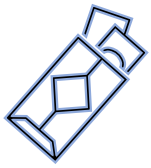
- A rental deposit is only due at the agreed start of the rental contract. If you are asked to pay a deposit in advance, please do not send any money. In general, a deposit of 2 – 3 months of rent without heat (Kaltmiete) are normal.

Beware



- If the property is listed by a private owner, make sure you see or ask for the owner's surname, first name and telephone number.
- Always try to (video-)call them instead of only communicating via text/e-mail. Be aware of any owner who only accepts to be contacted by text message and not by phone.
- Usually, the owners will not send you a picture of their ID, but scammers often do. You will never have to send your ID or other identifying documents to the owner.

Typical Scams:



- The homeowner is currently not in Germany but on a business trip/vacation etc. and, therefore, is unable to show you the accommodation.
- A landlord will not lower the rent for an apartment to "help you out"!
- They actively try to avoid an in person (digital) meeting but offer to send you the keys beforehand.
- The homeowner asks for a fee to view or reserve the accommodation. This is not a typical procedure in Germany.
- They offer to send you the keys via mail **AFTER** you pay a deposit. If money is transferred in advance, the person will disappear.
- They ask for copies of your ID, personal data or even your bank details. They will probably use your personal data for illegal activities or scamming other people.
- They ask you to transfer money via PayPal with the "family and friends" option or to a company's bank account for which they allegedly work.
- They put a lot of pressure on you to sign/pay because they have a lot of people who are interested.

Contact:

If you have any concerns, please contact incomings@uni-mannheim.de or book an appointment with the Accommodation Service. Appointments for the Accommodation Service will be made available in the month(s) leading up to the Welcome Week.