

# 8 Tips for Landing a Great Rental Property



Finding suitable accommodation for your term placement is a really important part of setting yourself up for success. Getting this right can make your transition to a new community so much easier. Here are some tips that will help you secure the right accommodation for your needs.

## 1. Start early

Do some research ahead of time to get an idea of what the rental market is like in your new community. The goal is to get an idea of how competitive the market is and confirm the amount you will need to pay to get something you are happy with. Find out as much as you can about the different neighbourhoods. Real estate agents or the local Visitor Information Centre are a good source of local intel around the “best” areas in town (and areas you may wish to avoid). Using [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au) and Domain plus Google Maps should give you an idea of what’s available in your price range. If you sign up to these two sites they will keep you updated as new properties come on the market.

Allow yourself time to choose carefully. Leaving it all to the last minute is likely to force you to make hasty decisions that won’t always turn out for the best. You are much more likely to end up satisfied if you haven’t rushed the process.

## 2. Be clear about what you want

Spending some time getting clear about exactly what you are looking for will make the entire process much quicker and less stressful. What features are a ‘must have’ for you and which ones are just ‘nice to have’s’. Once you know exactly what you want and the areas where you can be flexible, you can start to shortlist the properties that really interest you rather than wasting time looking at properties that were never going to meet your needs.

If you are having trouble finding properties that meet your criteria within your available budget, you may need to consider being a bit more flexible about what you are looking for, where you are willing to live and how much you are willing to pay.

### 3. Get your paperwork prepared

Having your paperwork organised in advance allows you to submit applications quickly. This is particularly important if you are in a competitive market.

One of the first things that will be checked by a property manager will be your credit record. Before you start applying for properties it is a good idea to check your own credit report and correct any errors. If you do have blemishes on your credit record, be upfront about them and prepare a letter of explanation that you can submit along with your applications. Failing to declare issues can look deceitful and will go against your application.

Prepare an application pack that you can take with you when you inspect properties so that if you find a property you like you can submit an application straight away. Some property managers or real estate agents will let you pre-apply for properties so that when the right property becomes available they can recommend you to the landlord. Your pack should include:

- References and contact details from previous landlords (it is a really good idea to stay on good terms with your landlords if you want great references).
- Bank statements for proof of income
- A current employment contract, payslips and employer contact details
- A letter explaining any anomalies in your credit rating or gaps in your employment history (if required)
- Photocopies of several items of personal identification

#### Personal Identification

Real estate agents typically expect '100 points' worth of personal ID with the rental application. The point system can vary slightly between agents or property managers. The following is an example from Century 21 Rich River Real Estate:

The following identification can be used to verify your identity:

| Documentation                             | Value          |
|---|----------------|
| Rates Notice                              | 50 points      |
| Your last four Rent Receipts              | 50 points      |
| Photocopy of your Drivers Licence         | 40 points      |
| Photo ID                                  | 30 points      |
| Passport                                  | 30 points      |
| Current Car/Motorbike Registration Papers | 10 points      |
| Copy of Phone, Gas or Electricity Account | 10 points each |
| Copy of Birth Certificate                 | 10 points      |
| Copy of Medicare Card                     | 10 points      |
| Copy of Eftpos/Credit Card                | 10 points each |

### 4. Provide verifiable references

Including the names and contact details for your past two or three property managers or landlords on your application is very helpful. You might even want to offer a previous neighbour as a referee. If you personally don't have a rental history, you may need to use a previous employer or someone who can give you a solid character reference.

It is a really good idea to call your referees at least a day or two before you think the landlord will contact them, giving them time to prepare a response and sing your praises.

### 5. Build positive relationships with the local property managers

Where possible, personally contact the agents or property managers for those properties on your shortlist to schedule an inspection. Make sure you also ask if they have any other similar properties available or becoming available in the near future because sometimes the online listings are not fully up to date.

If you have pets, check that the places you are inspecting will take pets – nothing worse than finding the perfect place if they won't accept you bringing your dog or cat with you. You can ask the real estate agents for pet friendly properties or put it in your search requirements.

If you are only expecting to be in the region for one semester, ask for properties where the owner will accept a six month lease. This way you will not have to pay a fee for breaking a 12 month lease.

Be polite, honest and respectful toward the property managers. Making an effort to build a positive relationship with a property manager will make them much more likely to notify you about suitable vacancies and put in a good word for you with landlords. If you need to say something negative about a property or tenancy arrangement, use a non-argumentative tone and always keep your interactions professional.

## 6. Increase your budget if necessary

If you are trying to get access into a competitive rental market you may need to pay more to get the property that works for you. Sometimes, offering a larger deposit may just give you the edge necessary to beat out the competition and secure the property you are after. Offering a larger deposit is also a good option if you have less than perfect credit. Showing that you are able to provide more money upfront helps to demonstrate that your negative spending history is not a fair reflection of your current financial situation.

## 7. Treat the inspection like an interview

The property inspection is an opportunity to demonstrate that you are reliable and responsible and will take care of the property. Dress appropriately, be prepared, and always behave professionally and courteously. Arriving on time demonstrates that you are accountable and respectful of the property manager's time.

Don't be afraid to ask questions about the home, neighbourhood or past tenants. You are the one who may end up paying to live there so you want to be sure you know as much about what you are signing up for as possible. Make sure you are also very clear on who pays for what, particularly with regards to utilities and any gardening or lawn mowing services.

The property manager is likely to want to know a bit about your situation as well so be prepared to give reasonable and honest answers for questions like:

- Why do you want to rent here/this place?
- Where did you live before and why are you leaving?
- Do you have pets?
- What are your regular hours?
- Are you quiet?

## 8. Complete the application thoroughly

Take the time to complete the application forms neatly and thoroughly. This is part of how you present yourself and an incomplete application is likely to be overlooked if other applicants have done a more thorough job.

If you want to go the extra mile, include a copy of your resume with the application demonstrating your professional history, education, current employment, community participation and the details of your past two or three addresses with contact information.

If for any reason you think that there may be an issue with the application, be proactive and attach a note explaining the circumstances. If you feel your finances might not be up to the requirements, offer a larger deposit or have a co-signer on the lease. These kinds of measures show that you are willing to address problems and take responsibility.