

Scottish
Property
Centre

14 Questions Every Landlord Should Ask To Help Find The Perfect Tenant



**The essential
guide on things
landlords
should ask
their
prospective
tenants**



A Landlords' biggest fear is having tenants from hell!
Tenants who don't take care of their property, who don't pay on time and/or who are noisy and unruly.

If you're looking to let your property, there is a process you can follow to give yourself the best possible chance of finding truly reliable and long term tenants. This guide will show you the questions you need to ask in order to identify red flags and find perfect tenants.

1

Why are you moving?

This is a great opening question to ask tenants. It can also tell you a lot about him or her, so listen closely.

You want to look for legitimate reasons such as changing jobs or wanting more room. Beware of red flags, such as being evicted or getting into arguments with their landlord or neighbour.

If a tenant has not rented in the past it will be your choice as to whether you want to proceed or not, but remember every tenant has to start somewhere.



3 How many people will be moving in?

Just because a pair of tenants come to view the property it doesn't mean that they will be the only ones living there – they may squeeze more in.

You will want to look for a maximum of two people per bedroom. The fewer people the less wear and tear there will be on your property.

More importantly, legally, insurance conditions and House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) regulations may limit the number of people that can rent and live in the property.



4

What is your income?

In conversation we shy away from talking about our salaries, but when letting a property it's important.

The tenant needs to confirm they are able to pay rent every month. A copy of a bank statement should confirm whether he or she can afford the property as well as monthly living costs. A proper reference will confirm details.

It's also worth finding out whether your prospective tenant has a permanent job, is on a contract or a probation period. Realistically, you're looking for someone who has a permanent and steady job. But do not be too worried about full-time or permanent positions as many companies do not offer this and prefer renewable contracts.

5

Do you have a month's rent in advance and deposit available?

If you are in any doubt that the tenants are unable to hand this over by the move-in date, the likelihood is that this could be the same with the rent in the future. So beware.

Tenants may be able to get a budgeting loan from your local Jobcentre Plus or help from your local council if they need help covering the upfront costs associated with renting. The deposit should be protected in a tenancy deposit protection scheme.



6

How long do you want to rent the property for?

Ideally, you don't want to go through all of the hard work now, just to go through the entire renting process again a few months down the line.

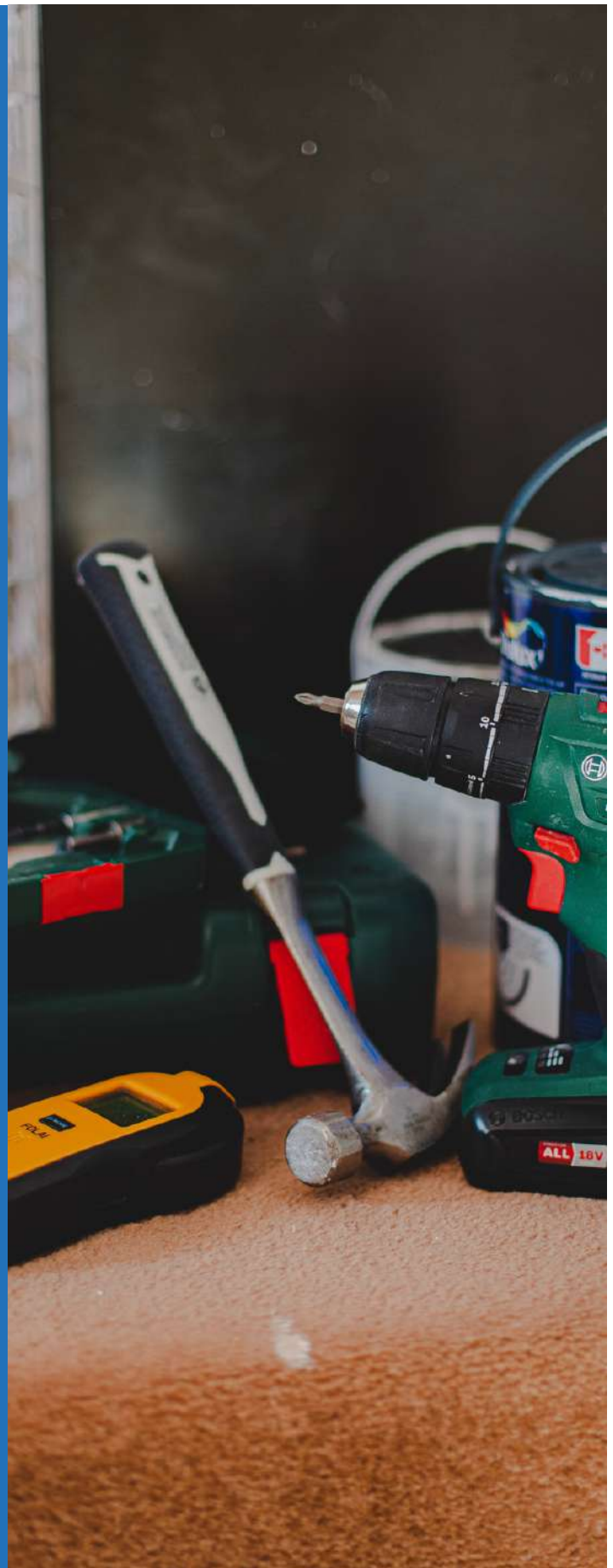
Since 1 December 2017, all new tenancies in Scotland have to be a Private Residential Tenancy (PRT). This means that no period can be legally included within the agreement and your tenant will be able to give 28 days' notice to leave the property at any point.

However, it is still important to ask how long they plan to stay. Although there is no guarantee, the majority of people will be honest and it will give you a guide and help with your decision making.

7 Are you happy to rent the property as-is or are there improvements that you require?

Having a tenant to move into a property and then suddenly demand a new bed, curtains or dishwasher can get things off to a bad start.

The best thing to do is ask if the tenant is happy with everything and, if not, to let you know beforehand.





8

Do you have references?

It is highly recommended to back up any conversations you've had with a prospective tenant with references.

Obviously, if you require checks and he or she will not consent to them, this will eliminate them from your new tenant pool immediately.

You'll need the following:

- Work reference: References from an employer will help verify income and stable employment.
- Landlord reference: You will want references from a former landlord because their current landlord may



not tell you the whole truth because they may just be trying to get the tenant off of their hands. It is often prudent to obtain this information on your own to prevent forgery.

- Utility bills: This is a good way to confirm a previous address.
- Credit check: Running a credit check will enable you to see if they've had problems paying bills in the past. It's not a legal requirement and you'll need written permission from the tenant.
- Bank Statement: This should confirm the tenant's ability to pay as it would be best to set up a standing order for rent.



- I.D: A copy of valid passport or driving license.
- National Insurance number.
- You may also have to ask a tenant to prove he or she has the right to stay in the UK and the right to rent.

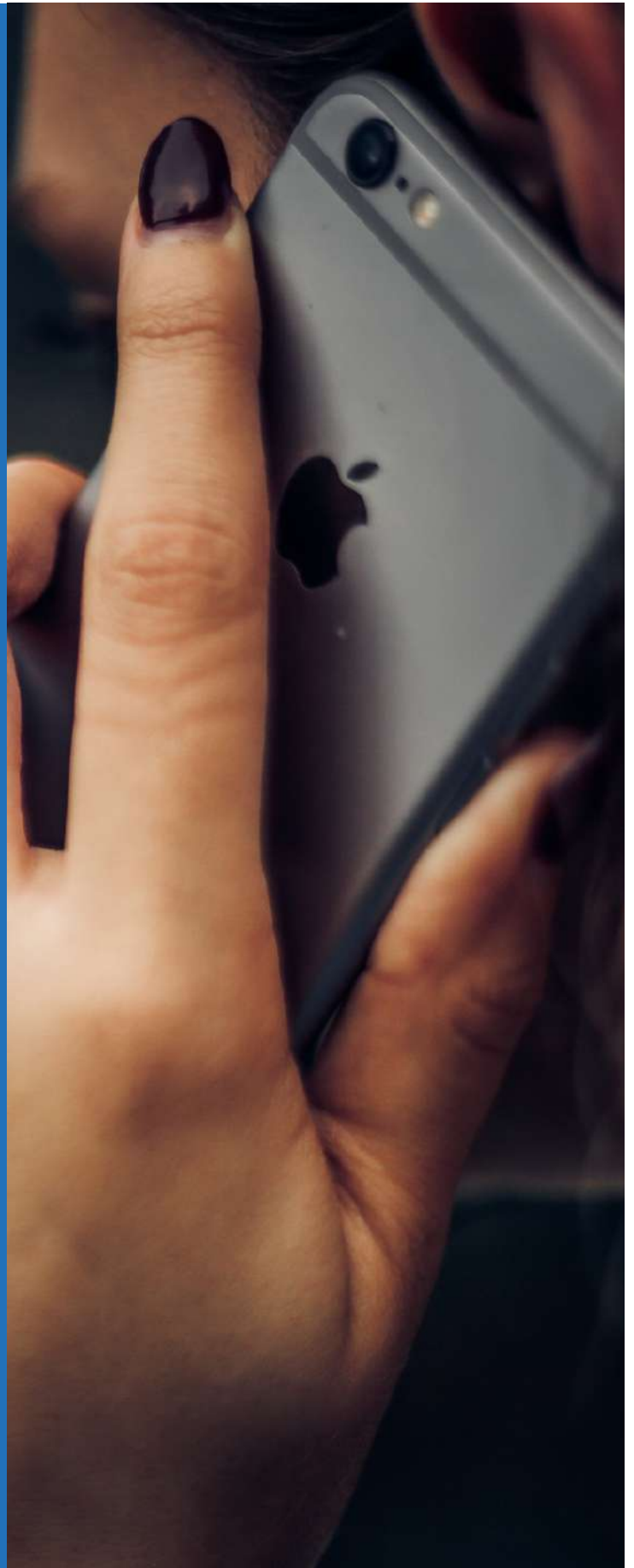
If the prospective tenant hesitates or makes excuses as to why they cannot provide references, they could have something to hide.

9

Do you have a rental guarantor?

This is always helpful to have as an added security blanket if you think someone may struggle.

In the unlikely event that anything does go amiss with a rental payment then you have a back-up to ensure you are not left out of pocket.



A black and white cat is sitting on a wooden staircase railing. The cat has a white chest and paws, with black patches on its body and face. It is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The railing is made of dark wood with black metal balusters. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

10

Do you have any pets? Do you smoke?

This seems like obvious questions to ask, but many people forget.

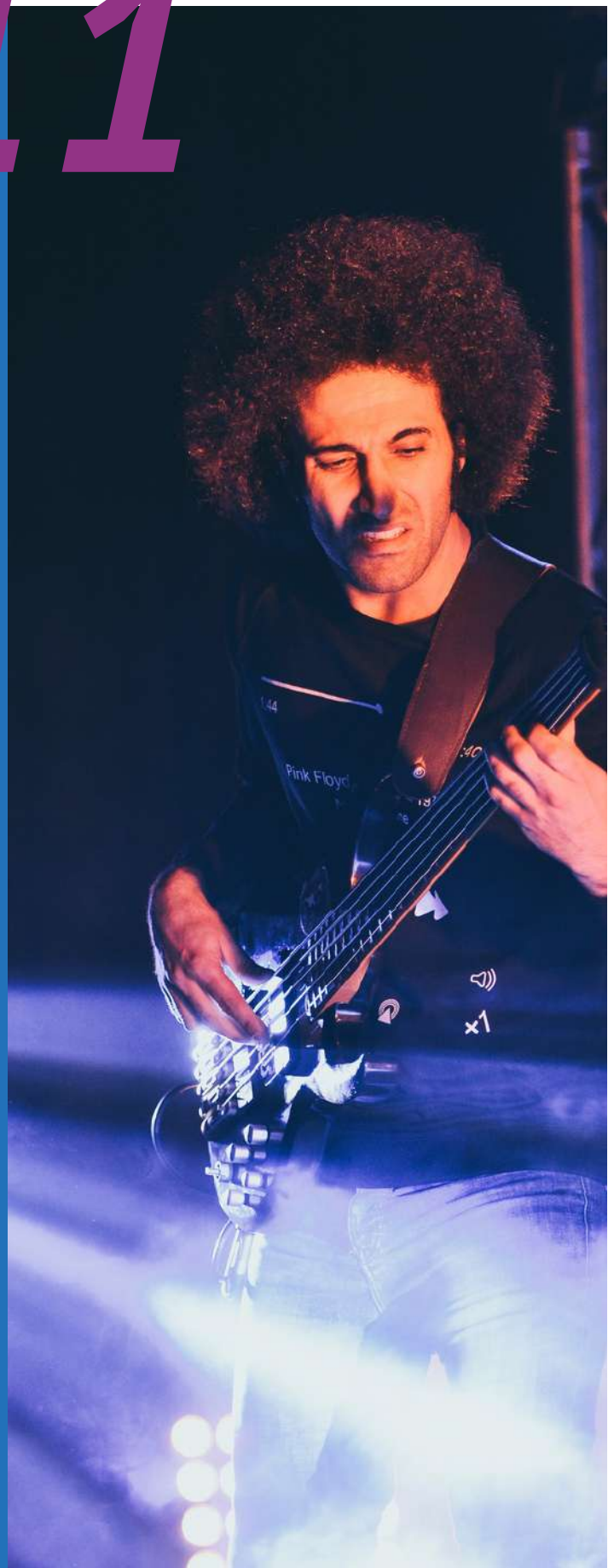
If you have a 'no pet' or 'no smoking' policy, a yes to this question will quite quickly rule out a tenancy.

However, if you are open to allowing pets in your property you may want some more information about what type of animal they have or how they plan to care for their pet without damaging your property.

Can you tell me what your lifestyle is like?

This does not only relate to a party lifestyle. You could also ask whether they work night shifts or if they play musical instruments, which could determine their suitability to your property and its area.

1 1





Do you know what you will be responsible for?

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Many tenants renting for the first time will have no idea what they are responsible for as a tenant.

It is best to confirm all arrangements with regards to utility bills and maintenance for your property before going forward with a tenant.

Confirm which bills they would have to pay, confirm who repairs any appliances at the property if they breakdown and who would be expected to maintain the gardens.

It would also be good practice to inform the tenant of any restrictions such as relating to satellite dishes and use of communal areas.

13 Have you ever been evicted?

While the prospective tenant may not tell the truth, it is still worth asking. A direct question will give the tenant an opportunity to explain the situation. Anyone can fall on hard times and an eviction may have been a one-off circumstance.



Do you have any
questions for me?

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This simple question could unearth a reason that this property might not suit this tenant - which they may otherwise not realise until they move in.

If a potential set of tenants do not suit your property you need to walk away as having people living in your property when it doesn't suit can be very costly, stressful and time consuming.



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