

Finding a rental

Applying for a rental can be challenging. This factsheet explains where to find rental listings, how to apply, and other ways to secure a place — including joining a share house or taking over an existing lease. And watch out for scams. If a rental seems too good to be true, it probably is.

New leases

Where to find rental listings

Major websites for finding rentals in Victoria include these websites:

- [Realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au)
- [Domain.com.au](https://www.domain.com.au)

You can rent directly from a landlord (officially called the rental provider). However, renting through a licensed real estate agent does provide some extra protection and accountability.

It is common for renters to submit many applications before securing a home, especially where there is high demand for rentals.

Inspect the property for rent

As you look around the property, note if anything needs fixing that you can see. If the property is vacant when you inspect it you can test things such as the light switches, exhaust or overhead fans, taps and heaters. Also, check you can open and close all the windows and lock and unlock the external doors.

If repairs are needed, once you have signed the lease ask the agent or landlord to fix them before you move in, or as soon as possible after. Under the law the landlord must fix any items that fall under the legal minimum standards for rentals – and other repairs as well. For more information see the repairs page on our website.

How to apply

Many real estate agencies require you to apply via a rental application platform. Common ones include Ignite (used on Realestate.com.au), 2Apply and tApp. Some real estate agents may still allow you to apply directly without going through a platform.

Be prepared and have the right documents ready when you apply, such as:

- Identity documents such as a driver's licence or passport
- Payslips and other evidence of income (which might include employment from overseas)
- References from previous landlords or housemates, employers or work colleagues or character references (make sure they consent to being contacted)

There are some things agents and landlords are not allowed to ask you about. These are bank or credit card statements with daily transactions, and personal information that could be discriminatory under the law, including ethnicity, gender identity, and disability.

Lease and bond

The lease (which is officially called the rental agreement) is a legally binding agreement. If it is in writing it must be on the template form laid down by Consumer Affairs Victoria, the Victorian government consumer regulator.

In most cases you will need to pay a month's rent in advance and a bond that is equal to one month's rent. The bond is used as security for the landlord against potential loss or damage caused by the renter.

If the lease is for a fixed term rather than periodic (month to month), remember that costs generally apply if you decide you need to leave before the fixed term expires. Keep in mind there may be ways to minimise or avoid these costs. Find out more on our website, on the page about ending or breaking your lease.

Remember that if you haven't been given a lease on the Consumer Affairs Victoria form, or don't have a written lease at all, generally Victoria's rental laws still apply to you, if:

- You pay rent
- The place is your primary place of residence
- The property is exclusively yours – meaning you control the premises to the exclusion of all others, including the landlord, subject to the terms of the lease and rental laws.

If you are not sure if the rental laws apply to you, or you want to get your landlord to put your oral agreement in writing, contact Tenants Victoria or another community legal centre for information.

Other ways to find a rental

Besides applying for new leases (officially called rental agreements), you can:

- Take over someone else's lease
- Join a shared household and take over part of an existing lease

Where to find rental listings

Opportunities to take over a lease or join a share house are commonly advertised on:

- Facebook Marketplace
- Facebook groups like Fairy Floss Real Estate – run by the Snug rental application platform
- [Gumtree.com.au](https://www.gumtree.com.au) – Australian marketplace website
- [Flatmates.com.au](https://www.flatmates.com.au) – run by [Realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au)

Be sure to watch out for scams. See the information about scams on page 3 of this factsheet.

Check out the property

Make sure you inspect the property and ask to see the original condition report – this is a record of the condition of the property when the lease started.

Considering a share house? Check out the household

As well as inspecting the property, make sure you meet the current housemates before signing anything, so that you can judge whether they will be satisfactory housemates.

You will be living with them until any move out and everyone agrees on new renters to replace them, or until the lease ends.

Renters are generally jointly responsible for issues such as damage, cleaning and rent arrears, including issues that started before you joined the household. If you are transferred onto the lease, you will be treated as if you were one of the renters at the time when everyone initially moved in.

Transfer the lease

You need the landlord's written consent to change who is on the lease. This is sometimes called 'assignment' or a 'tenant transfer'.

The current renter or renters must make the request to the landlord or agent in writing. They should include the new person's details – their name, income, and rental references – just as if this was an application for a new property. This helps the landlord or agent decide whether to approve the change.

The law states that the landlord cannot unreasonably withhold consent. If they delay or refuse consent and you think this is unreasonable, you can challenge it. See Tenants Victoria's website page on lease transfers for more information.

Transfer the bond

As well as transferring the lease, the bond also needs to be transferred.

If you take over someone else's lease you should agree with the current renter that you pay the bond money directly to them, in exchange for them transferring the bond to you.

Both of you, and the landlord or agent, need to complete a bond transfer form to make sure you as the new renter are registered on the bond held by the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA).

If you are moving into a share house you also need to arrange for changing the name listed on the bond held by the RTBA. You pay the bond share of the person leaving, who arranges the transfer for their share of the bond with the RTBA.

Make sure that the transfer paperwork is signed by all the current renters, and the landlord or their agent, and that the renter leaving the household has lodged it with the RTBA.

Checklist before you move in

Use this checklist to help make sure the important steps are completed before you move in.

- ✓ Inspect the property before moving in.
- ✓ Pay the bond, which for new leases the landlord lodges with the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority (RTBA). Make sure you receive a receipt.
- ✓ Get your keys. Every person listed on the rental agreement receives their own set of keys.
- ✓ For new leases get a copy of the lease (if it's written). The landlord or agent must give you a copy, and also the official Renters Guide from Consumer Affairs Victoria.
- ✓ If you are taking over an existing lease or moving into a share house, ensure you have written consent from the landlord or agent.

- ✓ Ensure you have an emergency contact. The landlord must provide an emergency contact number for urgent repairs, including for after-hours situations.
- ✓ You must receive a postal address for sending documents to the landlord or real estate agent, and an email address if they have agreed in writing to receive notices that way.
- ✓ For new leases arrange utility connections (gas, water, electricity) before moving in. You don't have to use the agent's recommended provider — shop around.

Watch out for scams

Rental scams aim to deceive renters into paying money or sharing personal details for rental properties that are misrepresented, not available for rent, or do not exist.

Scammers' tactics

Advertise on classified websites or informal marketplaces. Scams are more common on platforms where real estate agents don't usually advertise, such as Facebook, Gumtree, [Flatmates.com.au](https://flatmates.com.au) and Facebook group Fairy Floss Real Estate.

Post fake property ads. Scammers advertise properties that do not exist or are not available for rent. For example, they rent a property on Airbnb then advertise it for rent.

Use fake photos. Photos in the ads are low-quality, appear AI-generated, may have been stolen from other property ads, or the details don't match the location of the ad, such as US-style sockets in a Melbourne rental.

Put off in-person inspections. Scammers make excuses that the landlord is overseas or give another reason for why you can't inspect the property in person.

Use fake contact details. Scammers use fake owner or real estate agent contact details. You may find the same property listed by a genuine owner or agent at a higher price.

Advertise rentals that seem ‘too good to be true’. They often are, especially when they involve unusually low rents or incredible amenities.

Make early requests for personal documents. Scammers may ask for ID, bank details or other personal information before you even view the property.

Demand upfront payment. Scammers ask for upfront payments as quickly as possible, such as your bond or the first month’s rent before you have signed a lease or even seen the property.

Use unusual and hard-to-trace payment methods. Scammers want payments in cash, gift cards, cryptocurrency, money transfer services or overseas bank accounts. All these methods are hard to trace compared to an Australian bank account.

Tips to protect yourself

Rent through a licensed real estate agent where possible. Check if the agent is licensed on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website: consumer.vic.gov.au/licensing-and-registration/estate-agents/public-register

Verify the agent’s or landlord’s identity. Ask for a credible ID such as a driver’s licence. Keeping in mind that many scammers use fakes, carefully check the licence against yours or a friend’s.

Do your best to verify the contact details given to you. Try searching the person’s or business’s name, phone number, email, and ABN or ACN online to see if anything suspicious comes up — such as reports from others about negative experiences or any inconsistencies in the information provided.

Investigate suspicious photos. Conduct a ‘reverse image search’ by using an online tool, such as Google Image search. It reveals information including where the photo was taken and where it appears online.

Check who owns the property by doing a title search (costs around \$10) on the government Landata website.

Personally inspect the property to verify it exists before making any payments.

Never pay in cash, gift card or cryptocurrency and avoid paying via a money transfer service. Pay via bank transfers to an Australian bank account.

Do not share personal documents before verifying you are dealing with a licensed real estate agent, or if you are dealing directly with the landlord, verifying their identity, and that they own the property.

What to do if you are scammed

Act fast: report the scam to the police – if you have transferred money, alert your bank immediately to see if they can reverse the transaction.

Seek legal advice immediately such as from Tenants Victoria or a community legal centre.

Report scams and find out more information on the Australian Government’s Scamwatch website.

Useful links

Tenants Victoria:

www.tenantsvic.org.au

Consumer Affairs Victoria:

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Federation of Community Legal Centres:

www.fclc.org.au

Landata:

www.landata.online

Residential Tenancies Bond Authority:

www.rentalbonds.vic.gov.au

Scamwatch:

www.scamwatch.gov.au

This information is a guide and should not be used as a substitute for professional legal advice.