



# Accommodation in Berlin

## Guide to flat hunting

### Berlin: A city of neighbourhoods

Here is a brief guide on finding a place to live in Berlin. Despite being a large city with various neighbourhoods (known as *Kiez* or *Bezirke* in German), Berlin's extensive public transport network offers a significant advantage. So, no matter if you find a place far away from your HWR campus, chances are, you can reach campus nice and easy.

**Note:** This guide has been created as part of the Studierendenservice's **NICE Project** (DAAD Stibet 1 – 2024) initiatives. The author is not responsible for the content of any external links or references.

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### Scams: The Elephant in the Room-share

Be cautious. Unfortunately, some people try to exploit house hunters in Berlin. Avoid agreeing to anything in a hurry. If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is. Make sure you fully understand any documents before signing, and don't let anyone rush you into making decisions. Stay informed on your renter's rights:

- <https://www.habyt.com/blog/what-are-the-rights-of-tenants-in-berlin>

Here is a detailed guide on how to avoid unfortunate confrontations in the housing market:

- <https://www.wg-gesucht.de/artikel/fake-ads-what-people-searching-for-accommodation-need-to-know>

### Start house-hunting early / Official Partner: Studierendenwerk

The HWR Berlin does not provide any student accommodation on-campus. We recommend that you start looking for a place to live as early as possible. Students usually live either in a hall of residence (*Studentenwohnheim*), a shared flat (*WG / Wohngemeinschaft*) or a flat (*Wohnung*). The Studierendenwerk Berlin provides information about accommodation:

- <https://www.stw.berlin/en/housing/faq/>

### Halls of residence provided by Studierendenwerk Berlin

Student halls of residence (*Studentenwohnheim*) are across the whole city, and travelling up to 60 minutes to study is common in Berlin. Applications for a place in a student hall of residence go through Studierendenwerk Berlin. As the number of places is restricted, we recommend that you



also look for private accommodation at the same time. Even if all places are full at the time of application, sign up to several waiting lists. If your studies in Berlin are to last a couple of years or more, maybe you will not manage to be granted a place at a Studierendenwerk residence hall for your first semester, but an offer may come in a later semester.

### Private Student Residences (*Private Wohnheime*)

They are also residence halls for students (*Studentenwohnheim*) but are neither owned nor subsidised by the State:

- <https://www.stuwo.de/wohnheim-region/berlin/>
- <https://neonwood.com/de/city/berlin/>
- <https://request.home-in-berlin.de/offering>
- <https://www.berlinovo.de>
- <https://www.studentenwohnen-osw.de>
- <https://www.campusviva.de/mieten/berlin/>
- <https://www.the-fizz.com/en/student-accommodation/berlin/>

### A room in a shared flat

A shared flat (*WG*) is a popular alternative to a hall of residence. These websites list rooms for rent in shared flats:

- <https://www.wg-gesucht.de>
- <https://www.wg-suche.de>
- <https://www.housinganywhere.com>
- <https://www.immobilienscout24.de>
- <https://www.immowelt.de/>
- <https://www.wgcompany.de>

### Private accommodation

Private accommodation in Berlin is usually more expensive than a place in a hall of residence. The majority of flats are unfurnished.

- Landlords typically require a deposit of three months net rent (not including utilities).
- You will recover this deposit upon moving out, as long as you have maintained the flat in a good condition.
- To learn more about your rights as a tenant, read this article:  
<https://www.habyt.com/blog/what-are-the-rights-of-tenants-in-berlin>
- You can find advertisements for flats and shared flats in a range of listings, including the Berlin daily newspapers and magazines, the university noticeboards and online:
  - <https://www.inberlinwohnen.de>
  - <https://www.uniplaces.com>
  - <https://www.areaone.io>



- <https://www.spotahome.com/de/s/berlin>
- <https://www.kleinanzeigen.de/s-wohnung-mieten/berlin/c20313331>  
(Kleinanzeigen is a popular classified ads portal like Gumtree or Craigslist. You can also find second hand objects / furniture / utensils etc.).

### **WBS (*Wohnungsberechtigungsschein*):**

The *Wohnungsberechtigungsschein* (WBS) in Berlin is a certificate that entitles low-income individuals or families to apply for social housing:

- <https://service.berlin.de/dienstleistung/120671/>

### **Housing Associations (*Wohnungsbaugesellschaften*)**

They are property management companies that provide listings directly from housing associations, which can sometimes offer more stable and long-term rental agreements. (Some require a WBS.)

- <https://www.howoge.de/>
- <https://www.gewobag.de/>
- <https://www.gesobau.de/>

### **Housing Cooperatives (*Genossenschaften*)**

A *Genossenschaft* (housing cooperative) in Germany is a member-owned organization where individuals collectively own and manage housing properties, providing members with long-term rental apartments at stable, affordable prices.

- <https://www.berlin.de/special/immobilien-und-wohnen/adressen/wohnungsbaugenossenschaft/>
- <https://www.wohnungsbaugenossenschaften.de/regionen/berlin/ueber-uns>

### **Social Media groups**

Sometimes the quickest way possible to find an apartment or a room might be through Social Media groups. However, you should be aware of scams and that many listings are for short-term, hence without a possibility for an *Anmeldung* (city registration). Make sure to check groups of your communities or in your native languages (e.g. "Spaniards in Berlin"). Below are some examples:

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/393237407451209>
- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/420217034693983>

### **Quick pieces of advice about flat hunting from our own HWR staff:**

- VB: „Use your network to ask for any room openings and ask your friends what they think of a place if you are not sure if it is legitimate.”
- AN: „Social media groups with people of your nationality living in Berlin might be the best marketplace to start with.”



- YS: „Get your documents sorted (SCHUFA, payslips, *Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung*) and have an account with trusted aggregators - most of my leads came that way.“

## Accommodation Agencies

Accommodation agencies are organizations that help people find rental properties by offering listings, assistance with paperwork, and sometimes additional services like temporary housing and furnished apartments. You can try out one of these agencies:

- <https://www.homecompany.de/en/agenturen/berlin/>
- <https://crocodilian.de/>
- <https://www.coming-home.com/en/>
- [https://app.farawayhome.com/clients/sign\\_in](https://app.farawayhome.com/clients/sign_in)
- <https://www.fineandmine.de/en/>
- <https://white-apartments.com/>
- <https://www.wohnwitz.de/en/>
- <https://wunderflats.com/en>

## Accommodation in Berlin: Necessary documents

Every day new rooms become available, but there is competition. So in order to prove you can legally rent it, property owners in Germany typically want to see the documents below. Again, as these documents can contain personal information, please be vigilant about whom you share it with. It is advisable to have these documents handy so you can proceed with any potential offers.

Please note, not every document may be necessary especially for short-term or student housing.

1. **SCHUFA-Auskunft** (credit check) – SCHUFA is a German organization that provides official credit checks. Many rental agencies and landlords will ask you to provide one, especially if it's for a long-term contract. You can easily apply for one on this website:

<https://www.meineschufa.de/>

Some short-term and student-focused places do not require a SCHUFA.

2. **Einkommensnachweise** (proof of income) – Most rental agencies and landlords will require proof that you have stable, regular income, e.g. your last three pay checks, a confirmation of scholarship payments, etc.
3. **Bürgschaft** (guarantor) – If you don't earn enough money yourself, you can ask someone to be your guarantor and promise to pay your rent if you do not. They would sign an official statement and provide an ID to ensure this (you can find templates online or get a form from the landlord or housing agency).
4. **Mietschuldenfreiheitsbescheinigung** – Confirmation from your former landlord that you are not in arrears.
5. **Ausweis** (photo identification) – Your passport or a national identification card.



## Further advice

It will not be easy, and you might feel like pulling your hair out, but follow these tips for the best chance of success:

1. **Plan extra time for your flat-search before the semester begins** – Searching for a flat is time-consuming, so while you can look for an apartment from afar online, it's easier done in-person. Furthermore, in-person viewings and meetings with potential landlords and flat mates can significantly increase your chances.
2. **Have a punchy message template ready to send to potential landlords** – As already mentioned, rooms and apartments are available, but there's stiff competition. If you find a place you like, send a message quickly. Keep notifications or emails from your preferred flat-hunting apps on and have a message template ready. As soon as an apartment pops up, make sure to personalise it a bit and then send it!
3. **Draft your initial message carefully** – The only way for potential landlords to get a good idea of who you are is through your first message, but keep it brief. Landlords have the luxury that they will receive lots of messages, so keep it short and sweet. When can you move in? It need not be too long; just an elevator pitch is fine.
4. **Include a social media handle** – It can help to let people know that you are a real person. Including social media handles may increase your chances of getting replies, but only do this if you feel comfortable with a stranger having access to your social media.
5. **Read the entire ad** – This is crucial and can significantly impact your chances. Often people see photos of a place and send a message without reading the description. Not only can you miss important information this way, but also sometimes people include code words at the bottom for you to use in your message so that they know if you really read the ad or are just sending messages to everyone. Plus, it's generally wise to understand all the details before applying so you know what you're getting into.
6. **The accommodation should allow for an *Anmeldung* (city registration)**. You want this in order to have a registered address in Berlin and to be able to proceed with other bureaucratic processes in Germany (e.g. opening a bank account, applying for your residence permit if you need one, or even getting a job). Even if it is the nicest place, if it does not offer *Anmeldung*, then better look further.
7. **Make the apartment hunt your priority** – Be persistent and devote at least two weeks to finding an apartment. Also, be patient and flexible with meeting times and places.
8. **Keep all necessary documents ready** – Having all your documents organized and accessible will allow you to act quickly and efficiently when you find the right place.
9. **Find groups and connect with people** – Sometimes you can skip messaging the landlord if you know the previous tenant who can put in a good word for you. This saves time and energy for everyone involved. Social media groups can be great for this.



### Once you have received an offer...

- **Be cautious of step-up leases** – Some landlords include a step-up clause in their contracts, meaning your rent could increase regularly over time. Make sure to check for this when reviewing the contract.
- **If you are planning to rent an entire apartment together with other students** and create your own WG, be aware that one or more of you will probably be asked to serve as the main tenant (*Hauptmieter*). The *Hauptmieter* pays the entirety of the rent to the landlord and is therefore also liable for the other flat mate(s).

### Mieterverein (Tenants' Association)

The *Mieterverein* is a tenants' association in Germany that provides legal advice and support to renters, helping them with housing-related issues and protecting their rights. It is not free, but they tend to have special offers for students and/or low-income earners. Then they can provide great consultation or even represent you legally, if need be: <https://www.berliner-mieterverein.de/>

### Summary

That is it for the basics of Berlin flat hunting! In sum: be persistent, have your application materials ready, and watch out for scams. Soon you'll have your very own cosy *Zuhause* in Berlin!

If you would like to read further guides to flat hunting in Berlin, then look below:

#### General Guides:

- <https://allaboutberlin.com/guides/find-a-flat-in-berlin>
- <https://www.movingto-berlin.com/finding-a-place-to-live-in-berlin/>
- [https://www.reddit.com/r/askberliners/comments/zpoq2n/findind\\_an\\_apartment\\_in\\_berlin\\_in\\_20222023/](https://www.reddit.com/r/askberliners/comments/zpoq2n/findind_an_apartment_in_berlin_in_20222023/)

Happy flat hunting and see you in Berlin soon!

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