

Your Tenants' Handbook – Welcome Home



Dear Tenant,

Welcome to your new home at HOWOGE. We are very pleased that you have moved in with us and we hope that you will settle into your new neighbourhood quickly.

HOWOGE is the best performing municipal housing association in the federal state of Berlin and ranks among the biggest housing associations in the whole of Germany. Our motto “More than just living” is the guiding principle for our actions to stay close to you as a tenant, and for service, quality and cost awareness as well as for sustainability to protect the climate. If you have any questions about your apartment, or generally on any aspect of your accommodation, please do not hesitate to contact our staff at your customer service centre. Moreover, we are always be pleased to help you with any problems you may have, too, so please just get in touch.

We hope your move goes smoothly and that you settle into your new home quickly.

Yours sincerely, HOWOGE

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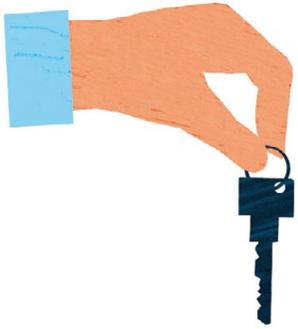
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Moving in

You are nearly there. Those things that were carefully packed and unloaded now have to be unpacked and put away. And let us not forget all the people you have to let know that you've changed your address in the days after you have moved in. This aim of this chapter is to provide you with the most important information about moving in and about your new tenancy agreement.





What do you need to know for the apartment handover?

We will write a handover inspection report together with you at the apartment handover. This lists, for example, any fixtures and fittings or defects in the apartment, and also the number of keys that you receive. The report will be signed by us and also by you and we will both get a copy to keep. Please keep the report in a safe place so that you are not liable for any defects or damage that have been listed when you move out. At the same time, you will receive a report with all the meter readings at the start of your rental period (water meter, electricity meter, heat cost allocator or heat meter).

What is in your new tenancy agreement?

The tenancy agreement regulates all the important things with respect to the tenancy agreement between you and us. This includes, for example, information about the apartment, the amount of basic rent (excluding service charges) and the payment of service charges. Please keep the tenancy agreement in a safe place.

What are the charges that make up your rent?

As a rule (depending on your tenancy agreement) the total amount of monthly rent you have to pay consists of:

Basic rent (excluding heating, lighting and other service costs)
 + an operating costs prepayment
 + a prepayment for heating and hot water costs

Basic rent (excluding heating, lighting and other service costs) is the charge for providing the rented property, this means the actual rent. Operating costs are running costs that arise from the use of the building and the plot of land such as rubbish collection, maintaining the outdoor area, cleaning the building, the water supply, building insurance, land tax, etc.

Every month you make a prepayment for operating costs along with the rent. Every year, the actual costs that were incurred in the previous year are then calculated. Based on this calculation your prepayment account is then either in credit or an additional payment is required. The same is true for the bills for heating and hot water, which are charged by the relevant utility companies. Your tenancy agreement will specify precisely the costs that you will have to bear and the allocation system that will be used to calculate them.

Why do you pay a deposit to HOWOGE?

At the start of your tenancy, you will pay a deposit of a maximum of three monthly basic rent payments. For us as the landlord, the deposit is taken as a precaution in case we subsequently have any outstanding claims against you arising from leaving your home in a poor decorative condition, unpaid service charges or overdue rental payments. In such cases, once you have vacated the apartment, the money owed to us will be offset



against the rental security deposit and the balance, if any, will be paid to you. If you have fulfilled all the obligations arising from the tenancy agreement, we will close the account and transfer the full amount, including interest, back to you.

What is a certificate of eligibility to low-cost housing?

When you move into an apartment that is being subsidised by the state and, therefore, where the rent is cheaper, before you sign the tenancy agreement you have to provide a certificate of eligibility to low-cost housing (*WBS – Wohnberechtigungsschein*). The same applies for apartments that are subject to special occupancy rights. The allocation of apartments with certificates of eligibility to low-cost housing is restricted to certain groups of people with certain income limits. You can get more information about the existing conditions and income limits from the housing office (*Wohnungsamt*). The *WBS* will also be issued to you here.

TIP

The HOWOGE Tenants' Portal is another option for all those who would like to be able to access their tenancy information online at any time. Once you have completed your registration you will be able to access details for your most important contacts. You will be able to find more information about your apartment and your personal account information. Moreover, you can view your latest service charge statements and use our room design tool.

Where can I get important forms on all aspects of housing?

You can get important forms in your customer service centre and also on the HOWOGE tenants' portal at
→ www.howoge.de/mieterportal

Your moving in checklist

- Electricity, water gas: Notify the utility companies that you are moving.
- Residents' registration office (*Einwohnermeldeamt*): Go in person to notify them of your new address – bring along the landlord's certificate (*Wohnungsgeberbescheinigung*).
- Post: Get your mail forwarded to your new address.
- Motor vehicle registration: Re-register, or notify them of your new address.
- New neighbours: Just go and introduce yourself.
- Surrounding area: Explore your new neighbourhood. If you have children discover your new route to kindergarten or the school together.

Remember to forward your new address to:

- Relatives
- Friends / acquaintances
- (Health) insurance companies
- Broadcasting licence fee collecting agency
- Employer
- Banks
- Local tax office

Forwarding your new address to the following might be relevant for you:

- Subscriptions
- Clubs and associations
- School
- Kindergarten
- Student loan agency
- Employment Agency



Your home and your neighbours

A well-functioning neighbourhood community is worth its weight in gold. Families, seniors, single people and couples – many generations, often from various cultures and with different interests, come together to make up your community. They all have different lifestyles and habits. In order for everyone to be able to feel comfortable in their own home and in the immediate surroundings it is important to follow a few rules.



Why are there house rules?

The house rules contain the most important regulations for achieving peaceful coexistence with your neighbours – for example, by specifying the quiet hours in your apartment block. The house rules are an integral part of your tenancy agreement.

Which quiet hours have to be observed?

The quiet hours are between 1pm and 3pm and from 10pm to 7am as well as all day on a Sunday and on public holidays. Stereos, radios and televisions should not be too loud during these periods in particular.

TIP

If a neighbour is on occasion too loud then try to have a friendly conversation with them and ask them to turn down the television or stereo a little. If a neighbour frequently disturbs you and a friendly conversation does not help then please contact your customer service centre. We will then find a solution with everyone concerned. During the evening and the night please do not hesitate to use our free service: our “mobile caretakers” are out and about during the evening and the night, ensuring that there is a safe atmosphere everywhere. You can find the telephone number for your respective contact person in the information box in your apartment building.



The most frequent reason for disagreements between neighbours is noise from a party. If you are having a party on a balcony or a terrace then you must be quiet from 10 pm. Many tenants assume that there is a law that allows you to be noisy in exceptional cases. However, there is no such law. A birthday celebration, even a round-number one, does not entitle you to disturb the peace at night.

Do you wish to have a pet in your apartment?

You can keep small pets such as ornamental fish, canaries and hamsters in your apartment. However, if you wish to acquire a larger animal, such as a dog or a cat, then you will require permission from us as your landlord. The general rule is that if you keep pets in your apartment then they should not be a nuisance to other tenants and the pets must not cause any damage to the apartment.

You can find more information on this topic at
 → www.howoge.de/ratgeber

**Do you need a spare key?**

Should you require further keys for your apartment then please contact your customer service centre. Frequently, our residential complexes have central locking systems so you yourself cannot have a duplicate key made, or only with our permission. This ensures the security of all our tenants.

Do you want to sublet your apartment?

You are allowed to sublet your apartment under certain conditions. However, you will need our permission for this. We would therefore ask you to contact our customer service centre in this respect.

Are you expecting visitors?

You may invite visitors to your apartment as often as you wish. However, when you do so please be considerate of your neighbours. Before you can have someone come to live with you permanently you have to let us, as your landlord, know in advance.



Are you looking for accommodation for your visitor?

As a tenant of HOWOGE we can provide you with various types of guest accommodation for your visitors. As many tenants like to use this service, please ask in good time about the availability and prices at your customer service centre.

You can find more information on this topic at
→ www.howoge.de/gastwohnungen

Do you wish to invite friends or relatives to a barbecue?

If you would like to have a barbecue on your balcony then please only use an electric grill and talk to your neighbours beforehand. Otherwise they could feel bothered by the smoke and the smell. The use of a grill on the open spaces around your apartment is only allowed if there is a space that has been designated for this.

Are you going on holiday?

Please holiday-proof your apartment before you depart. If possible, leave your contact details during the holiday with a neighbour or an acquaintance, or give an emergency contact number to your customer service centre. That way you can be reached in an emergency, for example, if a pipe bursts. It is also a good idea to leave a key to your apartment with someone you trust. This person will be able to water your flowers and collect your post. Close all windows and your entrance door. As a precaution against the risk of a lightning strike you should unplug all your electric appliances and leave no devices on stand-by. However, pay attention to the mains switch – this should remain on, otherwise your fridge and freezer will defrost. Remember also to empty your rubbish bins before you go on holiday.



FOR THE SAKE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In Berlin, on average, 380 kilograms of rubbish are generated per person annually. That is quite a lot. However, waste that has been separated correctly can be recycled into new products. For the sake of the environment you can play your part by separating your waste correctly.

Where should your rubbish go?

In your apartment complex there are usually rubbish containers, in different colours, for waste separation. Packaging with the Green Dot (*Grüner Punkt*) label – metal, plastic and composite materials – should go into the yellow bin or the yellow sack. Waste from organic components such as fruit peel, coffee filters, tea bags, garden waste or egg shells can be disposed of in the brown compost bin. If this is not provided then all the organic waste should go in the grey residual waste bin. Other waste that cannot be recycled should also go in there. This includes hair brushes, disposable razors, candles, ballpoint pens, and files. In the blue paper collection bin you should put wrapping paper, egg boxes, tissues and newspaper. Please dispose of glass packaging in the glass containers – there are separate ones for white, brown and green glass. If there are no glass containers where you live then you can put your glass bottles and jars into the containers provided for this outside of your residential complex. Cleaning products, batteries and thermometers are classified as hazardous waste. They can be handed over to the mobile collection service for hazardous waste, the bulky refuse collection service and the recycling yard. If you wish to dispose of furniture or other larger items please contact the bulky refuse collection service.

What do you need to know about internet, telephone and electricity?

Unless otherwise agreed in your tenancy contract, you have to set up individual accounts for internet, cable and telephone services. This applies to the supply of electricity, too, and – if you have a gas central heating boiler in your apartment – also for gas. There are many providers for all these services and you can research them online, for example, at www.verivox.de.

How to wash and dry your laundry properly?

Please ensure that washing and drying your laundry does not give rise to any damage in your apartment such as, for example, mould or water damage on the floors or on the walls. You will find advice as to where you can best dry your laundry in your tenancy agreement or the house rules.



How can you save energy?

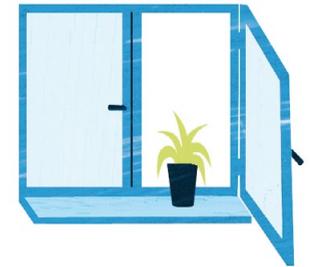
Watch out for so-called power guzzlers in your apartment. Electrical appliances, such as washing machines, refrigerators, ovens, televisions and computers, actually use around half the electricity in households. For this reason, when you buy a new appliance you should always bear in mind the energy consumption. Your appliances hum, glow, emit heat – even though they are actually turned off? Some devices such as, for example, computers, uprights or coffee makers continue to consume electricity. And plenty of it. The best antidote is to use a plug or extension with a switch. The power supply is switched off at the touch of a fingertip – and for several appliances in one go.

TIP

You can find recommendations for energy-saving appliances at www.ecotopten.de, www.blauer-engel.de or at *Stiftung Warentest* at www.test.de.

How to heat and ventilate your apartment properly?

When it is cold you can ensure that your apartment is warm with the help of the radiators. You can regulate the radiators through the thermostats. Cooking, washing laundry, showering and bathing create humidity in your apartment. So, in order to prevent mould you have to ventilate regularly. We would ask you to please open the windows wide three or four times a day for five to ten minutes. Please do not heat and ventilate at the same time. Before you open the windows please set the heating to ZERO (*). Once the windows are closed again then you can turn up the heating once more.



You can find more information on this topic at
→ www.howoge.de/ratgeber

Do you have questions about the annual service charge statement?

For any questions concerning your service charge statement, please do not hesitate to contact the staff member responsible who is specified in your bill. They would be pleased to explain your statement and, upon request, will let you see all the documentation that is relevant to you.

What should you do if you find defects in your apartment, in the apartment building or in the residential complex?

In this case, please contact technical customer services directly at the following number

→ **030 5464-4000**

In case of an emergency in the evening, or at the weekend – for example, if a pipe bursts, or if the heating or electricity supply fails – there is an emergency service caretaker available for you. You will find the number to call on the notice board in your apartment building.

Do you want to carry out building alterations in your apartment?

If you want to carry out building alterations in your apartment, for example tiling, replacing the bath or shower, electrical installations or other new connections, then please request these works beforehand through your customer service centre. Together with you, we will then discuss the options and general conditions. We will then record the results in an agreement as an appendix to your tenancy contract.

As your landlord, do we have access to your apartment?

Your apartment is your home. However, there are a few situations where we will need to have access to your apartment. This could be if the electricity and water meters have to be read, or if workmen need to repair something in your apartment. Also if, for example, a new tenant wished to view the apartment we would ask you to grant access. Naturally, as your landlord, we will not make any spontaneous visits. We always notify you in advance about our visit and, together with you, we would agree on an appointment.

Do you have home contents insurance or liability insurance?

In order to minimise the costs of any possible damage or loss you should take out home contents insurance and liability insurance. For example, home contents insurance will provide insurance cover for your household contents against risks such as fire damage, burglary, or broken windows in your apartment. As the owner of the building we do not accept liability for your possessions. Private liability insurance will provide compensation for injury to persons and damage to property suffered by other people and for which you are held responsible.

IMPORTANT IN AN EMERGENCY

If you call for help via the telephone number 112 please provide the following information:

- Who is reporting the emergency?
- What has happened?
- How many people have been affected/injured?
- Where has the incident taken place?
- Wait for further questions.

What should you do in an emergency?

In an emergency, such as a fire or an accident, please always call the telephone number 112 to get help. In the event of a fire please get yourself and your family members to a safe place. Do not use the lift if the apartment building is on fire. It is absolutely necessary for you to follow the instructions of the police and rescue workers.



Moving out

Do you need a bigger or a smaller apartment, or perhaps you wish to move to another neighbourhood? Our letting team in your customer service centre would be pleased to provide you with personal advice. Please do not hesitate to contact them. Moreover, on our website you will regularly find apartments that are currently available for rent. Naturally, we hope that you will find your new home with us again and, of course, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions on any aspect of moving to another apartment.



What do you have to bear in mind if you wish to terminate your tenancy?

First of all, you should submit a written notice of termination, with the signatures of all the tenants in the apartment, to your customer service centre. The notice period for all tenancy agreements is usually three months – regardless of the duration of the tenancy. Your customer adviser will then send a confirmation of the termination in which the subsequent procedure will be described in detail. It might include a suggested appointment for the preliminary inspection of the apartment.

Do you wish to move out even earlier?

If you wish to move out before the end of the notice period then please talk to your customer adviser. Perhaps there are already prospective tenants who are looking for an apartment like yours. Please understand that it is up to us to select the new tenants.

What decorative repairs have to be carried out?

At the preliminary inspection of the apartment, together, we will make a list of what sort of work is still required, such as painting, wallpapering, etc., and should be carried out by you and, potentially, what repairs we have to take care of. (By the way, we recommend arranging an appointment in good time for a preliminary inspection.) Please get the apartment ready as agreed in time for the final inspection so that the new tenant can move into a fully functioning apartment.

**What will happen if you do not carry out the decorative repairs as agreed?**

If, contrary to expectations, the decorative repairs have not been carried out as agreed when you vacate the apartment, we would be entitled to engage a specialist firm ourselves to carry out the decorative repairs at your expense in accordance with legal regulations. We would then issue an invoice to you for the costs, or we would offset them against your deposit (see p. 9 – Deposit).

What should you pay attention to during the apartment inspection?

In order for the apartment inspection to run as smoothly as possible we have put together a checklist for you.

- Have you removed your furnishings?
- Unless otherwise agreed in writing, have you dismantled your fixtures and returned the flat to its original condition?
- Has all damage, which did not arise through normal wear and tear, been rectified?
- Have you carried out the decorative repairs that were required?
- Has the entire apartment, including the bathroom fixtures, been cleaned?
- Were all the keys to the apartment handed over during the inspection?



You will receive a detailed checklist for the inspection of the apartment together with the confirmation of your termination.

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