



# GUIDE TO SPRING CLEANING.

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**Springtime is the time of renewal and rejuvenation, a time to shake off the winter cobwebs and welcome in the new season.**

It's also a perfect time for landlords to give their rental properties a deep clean and prepare them for a busy rental season ahead.



**A THOROUGH SPRING CLEAN NOT ONLY HELPS TO MAINTAIN THE GOOD CONDITION OF YOUR PROPERTY AND ENHANCE ITS CURB SIDE APPEAL, IT ALSO ENSURES YOUR TENANTS HAVE A SAFE, HEALTHY AND ATTRACTIVE LIVING ENVIRONMENT.**

With so many areas to cover, spring cleaning can seem overwhelming to tackle, so we've put together this spring cleaning guide to help landlords get their rental property ready for their next tenant.



## SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST:

# Exterior-focused tasks.

## EXTERIOR MANAGEMENT LIST

- ✓ CLEAR THE GUTTERS OF LEAVES AND DEBRIS FROM THE WINTER MONTHS, AND CHECK FOR HOLES IN THE GUTTERING, REPLACE IF NEEDED.

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- ✓ WASH THE OUTSIDE OF THE WINDOWS AND FRAMES.

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- ✓ WIPE AWAY COBWEBS.

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- ✓ SCRUB DOWN YOUR DOORS TO REMOVE ANY GRIME.

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- ✓ CLEAN THE WELCOME MAT AND THRESHOLD AREA.

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- ✓ CHECK FOR ANY OUTSIDE REPAIR WORK INVOLVING STRUCTURAL REPAIRS TO WALLS, OUTSIDE DOORS, AND WINDOWS.

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- ✓ HOSE DOWN THE GARAGE DOOR.

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- ✓ CONSIDER FRESHENING UP ANY EXTERNAL PAINTWORK THAT HAS FADED OR CHIPPED.

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- ✓ CLEAN THE BINS. IS YOUR WHEELIE BIN IN GOOD CONDITION? THEY USUALLY NEED REPLACING EVERY 7 YEARS.

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- ✓ IF YOU HAVE ANY EXTERIOR LIGHTING, CHECK THAT BULBS ARE SECURED, AND ALL FIXTURES ARE WORKING.

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## GARDEN TASKS LIST

- ✓ DE-WEED AND TIDY UP FLOWER BEDS AND BORDERS.

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- ✓ PRUNE ANY TREES AND SHRUBS.

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- ✓ CONSIDER PLANTING SOME SUMMER-FLOWERING BULBS AND SEEDS.

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- ✓ CHECK YOUR FENCES, WALLS AND GARDEN GATES FOR ANY ROTTING WOOD OR BROKEN PANELS AND FIX WHERE NEEDED.

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- ✓ IF YOUR OUTDOOR AREA HAS WOODEN DECKING, MAKE SURE TO LOOK OVER THE WOOD FOR ANY SIGNS OF DECAY OR DETERIORATION, AND REPAIR IT IF NEEDED.

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- ✓ IF YOU HAVE PATIO SLABS, CHECK FOR ANY CRACKS OR LOOSE PAVING THAT NEED TO BE FIXED.

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- ✓ POWER WASH ANY DRIVEWAYS, PATIOS AND CONCRETE AREAS THAT HAVE COLLECTED MOSS AND DIRT.

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- ✓ DID YOU SUPPLY A WASHING LINE OR GARDEN FURNITURE? CHECK THAT THEY'RE IN GOOD CONDITION, WIPE DOWN, AND CONSIDER REPLACING IF NECESSARY.

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## PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CHECKS!

**WHILST MAINTAINING THE EXTERIOR, NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO CHECK IN WITH YOUR TENANTS AND PERFORM A PROPERTY INSPECTION. IT'S BEST IF YOU WRITE THESE INTO THE TENANCY AGREEMENT, AND YOU SHOULD ALLOW YOUR TENANT PLENTY OF NOTICE. MAKE THE INSPECTION IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS TOO! YOU CAN ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THEY MAY HAVE, OR THEY CAN ALERT YOU TO ANY POTENTIAL PROBLEMS, SUCH AS MOULD AND DAMP.**



## SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST:

# Interior-focused tasks.

Need to do a deep clean?  
Or want to pass a spring  
cleaning checklist onto  
tenants for end of tenancy?  
The best way to tackle spring  
cleaning your rental property  
is room by room, so we've  
broken it down this way.



## GATHER THE RIGHT SUPPLIES! YOU'LL NEED:

- LIMESCALE REMOVER
- ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER
- OVEN CLEANER
- STAINLESS STEEL
- CLEANER
- WOOD FLOOR CLEANER
- POLISH
- BAKING SODA
- WHITE VINEGAR
- BLEACH
- DISH DETERGENT
- GLASS CLEANER
- GROUT
- TILE CLEANER.



## SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST:

# Kitchen-focused tasks.

**LANDLORD QUESTION:**

**"I've had a professional clean on the property to remove strong cooking smells left by the tenant. Can I deduct from the deposit for this?"**

**ANSWER:**

**A claim of this nature would need to be supported by the written word of the check-in report e.g. 'free from odour', and the written word of the check-out report e.g. 'strong odour of cooking'. It would also need to be shown that a professional clean had been undertaken to eradicate the odour, such as an invoice from a cleaning contractor which details the work they have done. Cleaning disputes around smoke, pet, and cooking odours highlights the importance of conducting a detailed and thorough check-in and out of the property, including smells!**



**TOP TIP**

**FOR MARBLE, GRANITE OR QUARTZ WORKTOPS, CLEAN WITH GENTLE DISH DETERGENT AND WARM WATER TO PREVENT DAMAGING THE STONE'S SEALANT.**

**KITCHEN TASKS LIST**

- ✓ OPEN WINDOWS TO ALLOW FRESH AIR TO CIRCULATE.
- ✓ CLEAN AND POLISH THE WINDOWS.
- ✓ SPRAY AND WIPE DOWN ALL WORK SURFACES.
- ✓ SPRAY AND WIPE THE HOB.
- ✓ CLEAN AND DISINFECT THE BACKSPLASH.
- ✓ SCRUB THE SINK AND DISH DRYING AREA; TRY LIMESCALE REMOVER IF THERE ARE HEAVY WATERMARKS.
- ✓ WIPE DOWN ALL DOORS AND HANDLES.
- ✓ WASH THE WALLS, ESPECIALLY NEXT TO LIGHT FIXTURES WHERE FINGERPRINT MARKS HAVE BUILT UP.
- ✓ CLEAN THE EXTERIOR OF YOUR OVEN WITH A MULTI-PURPOSE SPRAY. DON'T FORGET THE EXTRACTOR FAN.
- ✓ CLEAN AND SCRUB THE INSIDE OF YOUR OVEN USING OVEN CLEANER TO REMOVE STUBBORN GREASE.
- ✓ CLEAN THE FRIDGE FREEZER INSIDE AND OUTSIDE. DEFROST IF YOU HAVE ICE BUILD-UP.
- ✓ DUST THE TOP OF THE FRIDGE, BEHIND THE FRIDGE, AND THE TOPS OF ALL CABINETS.
- ✓ WIPE DOWN THE INSIDE OF ALL CABINETS AND DRAWERS.
- ✓ RUN THE DISHWASHER ON A CLEANING CYCLE.
- ✓ CLEAN INSIDE YOUR WASHING MACHINE; THE RUBBER SEAL AND SOAP DISPENSER CAN HAVE MOULD BUILD-UP.
- ✓ SWEEP, VACUUM AND MOP THE KITCHEN FLOOR.



## SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST:

# Bathroom-focused tasks.

**LANDLORD QUESTION:**

**"My tenant has complained of mould; how can I get rid of it?"**

Mould in the home a **very common** complaint and can be difficult to determine responsibility. It thrives in **damp conditions** and could be caused by tenants showering or drying clothes without ventilation. However, keep in mind other causes, such as rising damp or penetrating damp. Mould spores can cause **health conditions** and damage your property so it's important to act quickly to resolve.

**HOW TO GET RID OF MOULD IN THE HOME:**

- 1 PREVENTION: FIX ANY LEAKS, USE A DEHUMIDIFIER AND ENSURE YOUR HOME IS BEING WELL HEATED AND VENTILATED.
- 2 DIY: TRY VINEGAR! VINEGAR IS A NATURAL CLEANING AGENT THAT CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE IN KILLING OFF MOULD SPORES. MIX EQUAL PARTS WHITE VINEGAR AND WATER AND SPRAY DOWN THE AREA. LET IT SIT FOR AN HOUR BEFORE WIPING CLEAN.
- 3 IF THIS DOESN'T WORK, YOU'LL NEED SOMETHING STRONGER. HYDROGEN PEROXIDE IS A STRONG ANTI-FUNGAL AGENT THAT KILLS MOULD. USE A 3% HYDROGEN PEROXIDE SOLUTION AND LEAVE IT TO SIT FOR 10 MINUTES, THEN SCRUB AWAY WITH A STRONG BRISTLED BRUSH AND WIPE CLEAN.
- 4 IF THE MOULD IS PARTICULARLY STUBBORN OR YOU HAVE A LARGE AREA AFFECTED, IT'S BEST TO CALL A PROFESSIONAL. THEY HAVE THE EXPERIENCE AND EQUIPMENT NECESSARY TO SAFELY REMOVE MOULD FROM YOUR HOME.

**BATHROOM TASKS LIST**

- ✓ OPEN WINDOWS TO ALLOW FRESH AIR TO CIRCULATE.
- ✓ CLEAN AND POLISH THE WINDOWS.
- ✓ DUST THE CEILING FAN AND VENTS WITH A DUSTER, OR VACUUM CLEANER DETACHMENT.
- ✓ SPRAY THE BASINS, SURFACES, AND TAPS AND WIPE AWAY ANY SCALE.
- ✓ POLISH THE MIRRORS AND GLASS SURFACES.
- ✓ WIPE DOWN THE WALLS, LIGHT SWITCHES AND DOOR HANDLES.
- ✓ CLEAN THE EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR OF BATHROOM CABINETS AND DRAWERS.
- ✓ CLEAN AND SCRUB YOUR SHOWER WITH A LIMESCALE REMOVER. IF IT'S PARTICULARLY BAD, LEAVE THE SHOWERHEAD TO SOAK OVERNIGHT IN A WHITE VINEGAR AND WATER 50/50 SOLUTION.
- ✓ CLEAN AND DISINFECT THE TOILET. REMOVE AND CLEAN THE SEAT AND SEAT BOLTS.
- ✓ SWEEP OR VACUUM THE FLOOR AND MOP OR POLISH TO FINISH.



**HAVE ANY OLD NEWSPAPER? USE IT TO CLEAN THE WINDOWS, MIRRORS AND GLASS. IT PREVENTS STREAKING OR LEAVING FABRIC FLUFF BEHIND.**





# Safety regulations to keep in mind when switching to HMO.

In addition to providing reasonable accommodation and amenities, as a landlord of a student property you should understand and meet your legal obligations to ensure you're housing them safely.

As a landlord of an HMO, you will be required to make sure:

- 1 Each unit (bedroom or bedsit) must be equipped with a smoke alarm.
- 2 Your HMO has had a written risk assessment.
- 3 All escape routes are protected by automatic closers fitted onto fire doors.
- 4 A fire extinguisher is available on each floor, and ideally a fire blanket in the kitchen.
- 5 A mains-powered fire alarm system is correctly fitted.



## Q&A COMMON STUDENT LET DISPUTES.

**"My neighbours have complained about frequent late-night parties with loud music. How do I approach the students and keep both my neighbours and tenants happy?"**

Antisocial behaviour, specifically excessive noise has a knock-on effect within the local community; one noisy neighbour can make an entire street miserable. If you don't deal with the problem, it might escalate and turn into a more serious issue such as aggrieved neighbours contacting environmental health.

If you are contacted about noise complaints, remind the students to ensure that future parties are held until reasonable hours and that music is turned down after 11pm. Advise it's best practice to let neighbours know about party plans and hold them at weekends when people who have work the next day can sleep soundly. No one should mind a tenant throwing a soiree every now and again, but if they receive frequent noise complaints, then further action needs to be taken.

**Make sure to include a clause in the tenancy agreement related to excessive noise and quiet hours. This will deter any 'party animal' students.**



**TOP TIP**

**"One of our students has put up a lot of posters and caused marks on the walls. Can I deduct for a full and professional repaint?"**

Blu-tac and nails are considered avoidable damage and therefore, are not considered fair wear and tear. In this case, if the tenant is not permitted to make any alterations to the property without first obtaining the permission of the landlord, then you will be able to submit a deposit deduction. If the tenant did get permission to alter the property in any way to include adding fixings to the walls, the tenant should be able to provide written evidence of this permission in support of their statement. Assuming the walls were freshly painted prior to the student moving in, you would likely be awarded compensation.

**It is essential that your tenants are aware of the obligations placed on them by the tenancy agreement. Highlight key dos and don'ts at the beginning of the tenancy, so the students are aware of what's expected of them.**



**TOP TIP**



# Reduce the chances of a deposit dispute.

Many landlords have experienced costly delays, stress, and extra administration time due to deposit disputes. Here are a few pointers to help you avoid such disputes at the end of a tenancy.

- ✓ Before signing a tenancy agreement, perform reference checks on all tenants, or request a reference from the university or student housing provider if they are coming straight from residence halls.
- ✓ A parent or other adult family member can serve as a guarantor. This will ensure that any owed monies are repaid even if the student cannot do so.
- ✓ Provide a move-in pack that describes where things are, how to use appliances, the signed inventory, and how to avoid causing damage. Give clear directions so there is no doubt about what is and what is not allowed, such as avoiding driving nails into the walls or keeping the garden tidy.
- ✓ It's crucial to include the right clauses in a contract so that deposit deductions can be negotiated if necessary. A well-drafted tenancy agreement will help your tenant understand their duties.
- ✓ Perform a check-in and inventory. Prior to your students moving in, ensure you have a detailed inventory of all your fixtures, fittings, contents, and décor. Include photos and thorough descriptions of the condition of each item in the inventory. Have all your tenants sign this inventory at check-in.
- ✓ Keep an open channel of communication! It's important to ask if the students require anything, as this may be their first time living independently. You may find that you need to give more pointers and provide more assistance than you would with seasoned tenants.
- ✓ Conduct regular inspections and write them into your tenancy agreement.
- ✓ Provide a moving out summary. Remind tenants to review the inventory and return the property in the same condition and to the same standard of cleanliness as it was at the start.

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