1. Accommodation

**Important:**

Finding accommodation which matches your expectations and budget is not always easy. The demand for student accommodation in Aachen increases at the beginning of each semester namely in September/October and again in March/April. Searching for accommodation requires self-initiative and you should start the search as early as possible.

**Accommodation can be rented unfurnished, partially furnished or completely furnished.** Sometimes you may be asked to buy furniture or furnishings (e.g. kitchen units) from the previous tenant and this can in turn be sold on to the next tenant. If you are staying in Germany for a limited time you may wish to consider a partially or fully furnished apartment. If this is not possible, second-hand furniture can be found easily enough through online advertisements or in newspapers. Please note that in Germany an “apartment” usually consists of one room.

**Other important aspects:**

- Distance to university/to work/to the next supermarket
- Are there good bus and train connections?
- Do you want to live on your own or with other students together in a dormitory or shared apartment?
1.1. University dormitories

**University dormitories of the Studentenwerk Aachen**

Rooms in most of the dormitories in Aachen (Wohnheime) are allocated by the Studentenwerk (student services). Living in a student dorm makes it easier to meet other students. A furnished dorm room costs around 170 to 440€ per month plus deposit. However, there is a very high demand for rooms in these dorms and you will usually be placed on a waiting list because there are rooms for only 10% of all students in Aachen. It is therefore recommended that you enquire about free rooms even before you enroll at the university. It is not necessary to be enrolled as a student (or at Jülich Forschungszentrum) until you sign the lease. For general information about waiting lists, you can contact the relevant student officer wohnen@stw.rwth-aachen.de or on 0241 80 93260.

You can request a dorm application form from the Studentenwerk or you can apply online at: www.wohnheime.rwth-aachen.de

The locations and contact details of the student dorms can be found here:
www.studentenwerk-aachen.de/en/wohnen/lageplan.asp

There is a special application system for exchange and program students. Those students will receive a personal applicant number by the Incoming Student Service and need to register in a different housing portal. Unfortunately, it is not possible for PhD students and interns that are not enrolled as a student of RWTH Aachen to live in a dormitory.

For general information about waiting lists you can contact the student services at the Studentenwerk at wohnen@stw.rwth-aachen.de or on 0241 80 93260.

**Zentrale Wohnheimverwaltung des Studentenwerks**
Pontwall 3 (2nd floor)
52062 Aachen

**Office hours**
Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.: 09:00am - 12:45pm
& Tues.: 02:00pm - 03:30pm

Tel.: 0241 80 93261
Fax: 0241 80 93264
birgit.anhalt@stw.rwth-aachen.de
www.studentenwerk-aachen.de/wohnen

Online application: www.wohnheime-aachen.de

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**Other student dormitories (not run by Studentenwerk)**

Private dormitories and those who are run by church have comparatively fewer rooms. Please contact the different student dormitories directly for more information about room offers and requirements for application.

**Studentenwerk der Kath. Hochschulgemeinde Aachen e.V. (KHG)**
Pontstr. 72, 52062 Aachen,
Tel: 0241 4700100
Fax: 0241 4700144
stwhkg@web.de
www.stwhkg.de

**Evangelische StudentInnengemeinde Aachen (ESG)**
Nizzaallee 20, 52072 Aachen,
Tel.: 0241 918670
Fax: 0241 91867-18
esg-wohnheim@rwth-aachen.de
www.esg-aachen.de

**Newton Apartments**
Kühlwetterstraße 8, 52072 Aachen,
Tel.: 0241 1686755
Fax: 0241 1686756
info@newton-apartments.de
www.newton-apartments.de

1.2. Private landlords

**Searching for accommodation around the campus area**

INCAS (Intercultural Center of Aachen Students) provides accommodation assistance to all international students. They offer support in searching for accommodation as well as German language support in making appointments and dealing with tenancy related questions: http://www.incas.rwth-aachen.de

Further detailed information on housing and housing offers can be found on the ASTA (Student Union) website (www.asta.rwth-aachen.de) and at EXTRARAUM, http://www.extra-raum.de/, a project run by the City of Aachen and the universities.
There are numerous notice boards in the cafeterias and big lecture buildings (e.g. Mensa building at Turmstraße 3, Audimax or Kármán Auditorium) offering last-minute or short-term renting. You can also place your own ad on the so-called “Schwarzes Brett”. The KHG (Katholische Hochschulgemeinde) at Pontstr. 74 also has a notice board for apartment rentals.

**Flat hunting via internet**

If you are looking for private accommodation, you can try the following websites:

- [www.wg-gesucht.de](http://www.wg-gesucht.de) (available in English)
- [www.studenten-wg.de](http://www.studenten-wg.de)
- [www.zwischenmiete.de](http://www.zwischenmiete.de)
- [www.mietwohnzentrale.de](http://www.mietwohnzentrale.de)
- [www.aachen.studenten-wohnung.de](http://www.aachen.studenten-wohnung.de)
- [www.immobilienscout24.de/](http://www.immobilienscout24.de/)
- [www.campuslife.de/anzeigen](http://www.campuslife.de/anzeigen) (see category “Wohnungen”)

**Note:**

A furnished apartment for sublet might be a quick solution for a couple of months. Offers can be found in newspapers or on the internet. For a room in a student dormitory check the “Belegungsausschuss” in the dorm.

**Flat hunting in newspapers**

On Wednesdays and Saturdays [Aachener Zeitung](http://www.aachener-zeitung.de) and [Aachener Nachrichten](http://www.aachener-nachrichten.de) share an announcement section where rented accommodation is listed. We recommend that you buy the newspaper as early as possible and start making phone calls as soon as you can. You can also post your own announcement at:

Dresdner Straße 3, 52068 Aachen,
tel.: 0241 51010-790,
Advertising Office: 0180 1001200.

You can view the ads section for free on the internet.

[SuperMittwoch](http://www.aachenerwoche.de) and [SuperSonntag](http://www.aachenerwoche.de) are delivered free of charge to every household on Wednesdays and Sundays. The [Annonce](http://wwwannonce.de) comes out on Tuesdays and Fridays and can be purchased at any newspaper kiosk.

**Housing agencies**

**Mitwohnzentrale HomeCompany.** arranges short-term accommodation for a fee:

Kapuzinergraben 24, 52062 Aachen
Tel: 0241/19445
Fax: 0241/873264
aachen@homecompany.de
http://aachen.homecompany.de

**Commercial Agencies** arrange accommodation, but charge high commission fees ( Provision).

Normally the commission is about two times the cold rent. If you do not wish to pay commission, look for accommodation that is “provisionsfrei” (no commission).

### 1.3. Short notice overnight stays

In case you couldn’t find a room or flat before your arrival in Aachen, you should organize a transitional accommodation for the first days to continue your house hunting locally.

A possibility would be “couch-surfing” ([www.couch-surfing.de](http://www.couch-surfing.de)) to sleep a few nights at a person’s flat for free and to get to know people in Aachen. You can also rent a room at a youth hostel, boardinghouse or a hotel.

**Jugendgästehaus Aachen**

Maria-Theresia-Allee 260, 52074 Aachen
Tel.: 0241 711010
Fax: 0241 7110120
Aachen@jugendherberge.de
http://www.jugendherberge.de/de-de/jugendherbergen/aachen434/portraet

You can reach the youth hostel with bus line 2 from Misereor (near the main train station) and from the main bus station. It is recommended that you book a room before you arrive.

**Hostel Aachen**

Mauerstraße 116, 52064 Aachen
Reservation Hotline (daily 11am - 10pm):
0241 4305288 or 0176 20508129 (not available at night)
www.hostel-aachen.de/index_en_html

**Boarding House preStep GmbH**

Römerstraße 13, 52064 Aachen,
Tel: 0241/16069069
info@prestep.de
www.prestep.de/prestep/
2. Important Information on Rental Agreements

Basic Rules:
Please remember to put all agreements regarding the tenancy in writing. You should get written confirmation for any phone calls and spoken agreements as it will be the only way to protect yourself in case of legal conflicts. Any letters to the landlord/landlady should be mailed by registered delivery.

Should you receive documents from the landlord/landlady, it is also very important to also keep the envelope of the letter/documents, as the dates on the envelope and letter may differ. You should always keep all receipts, photos and invoices related to the rented accommodation. It is very important to meet any deadlines mentioned in written correspondence. Please respond to letters in a prompt manner especially regarding letters from court.

In case of legal disputes, please also contact the ASTA-lawyer (www.asta.rwth-aachen.de). This service is free of charge for students.

2.1. Before moving-in

Rental contract
The contract should always be made in writing, although a spoken agreement is also valid (proven by regular rent payment). The advantage of a written agreement is that both parties can refer to exact stipulations that both have agreed to in writing. The agreement is binding after it has been signed. Even if you have not moved into the new accommodation, you cannot withdraw from the contract prior to the agreed notice period. Your landlord should also deliver you a “Wohnungsgeberbestätigung” which you will need in order to register your address at the residents’ registration office.

Be wary of:
- Increasing rent (rent increase already stipulated in the rental agreement)
- Fixed-term rental agreement (here you are bound to a fixed period and you cannot cancel the contract earlier)
- Obligatory purchasing of furniture etc. (the previous tenant may be trying to sell you his/her scrap)

Deposit
The landlord/landlady must transfer the deposit to a savings account with a legal cancellation period separate from his/her assets. The interest will augment the deposit and be paid out at the end of the rental period (except for student dorms – here there is no interest paid on the deposit). The deposit amount must not exceed three months rent without heating (Kaltmiete) and may be paid in installments. In any case, the first installment is due with the first month’s rent. The deposit must be returned within six months upon expiration of the tenancy. However, the landlord/landlady may withhold an appropriate amount as a security against any subsequent utility bills for a maximum of 12 months after you move out.

2.2. During your stay

Moving in
We recommend that you write a protocol or inventory which lists any existing defects when you move into the apartment. A detailed list will provide both parties with legal security. The protocol should also state any repairs to be made (and by when) by the landlord/landlady and further details and agreements (e.g. space in the basement). It is generally a good idea to bring a German-speaking friend to make sure that there are no misunderstandings.

Apartment Defects
In the case of defects in the apartment the tenant must exercise his/her duty of proper care (in accordance with § 536c Article 1 of the German Civil Code BGB). This means that the tenant must immediately report any defects to the landlord/landlady. If you do not comply you will lose the right to rent reduction, and the owner may also claim compensation from you (Duty of Damage Abatement, § 536c Article 2 BGB).

Notice of Defects
A notice of defect should be made in writing with a detailed description (type of defect, location and scope) and include an appropriate deadline for the repair. Should the defect be considerable, you may also request a rent reduction. If the landlord/landlady has acted with gross negligence you may be able to claim compensation.

Rent reduction
Rent reduction is only possible if the landlord/landlady does not repair the damage within the agreed deadline. There is no fixed amount for rent reduction and the rates vary on a case-by-case basis. Previous court judgments should serve as a guideline in similar cases. In principle rent reduction until the complete correction of defects is justified (incl. painting), and where applicable, a gradual adjustment to the reduction should be made over the course of the repair work.

Cosmetic Repairs
The responsibility for cosmetic repairs may be imposed on the tenant through the rental agreement. Should these repairs be demanded at regular periods (e.g. “every three years”), the complete obligation to carry our cosmetic repairs becomes obsolete. However, legally valid stipulations are “in general” or “usually every three years”. There is a general guideline for each type of room which may serve as an orientation: Kitchen/bath/shower: every three years; living room and bedroom: every five years; remaining rooms: every seven years. A combination of the deadlines for ongoing repairs and compulsory repairs is not allowed.
**Additional/Utility Expenses**

As a general rule, only additional expenses defined in the rental agreement and actually incurred may be charged. The utilities (Betriebskosten) that may be charged according to the rental agreement are detailed in the third annex to § 27 of the Second Regulation on Calculation (II. BV). The utilities are usually covered by monthly on going pre-payments.

The billing of utilities must be available for at least the 12 months prior to the termination of the billing period. After the end of this deadline the landlord/ landlady may not make any supplemental claims (unless he or she has not caused the delay). We recommend that you pay attention to whether the billing is distributed correctly (e.g. per person/ per sqm) and whether it includes any hidden repair costs allocated to you. As a tenant, you have the right to see all invoices and receipts that the utility costs are based on. If you ask to see the invoices you should make copies as the landlord/ landlady does not have to disclose the information twice.

**Rent Increase**

A rent increase by the landlord/ landlady must be communicated in writing, and the letter must include a reason for the increase. Upon receipt of the notice of rent increase, you will have two months to verify whether you approve of the rent increase or not. In the case of approval, the rent increase enters into force at the beginning of the third month after receipt of the notice. The landlord/ landlady may only impose a rent increase if the following three conditions are met at the same time:

- The rent has stayed the same for one year
- The rent increase does not exceed the rent index in the residential area
- The rent has not increased by more than 20% in the last three years

For further information on rent increase please visit www.aachen.de.

**Subletting**

As a tenant you do not have the right to sublet your apartment or parts of it without the consent of the landlord/ landlady. If you sublet without permission, the landlord/ landlady has the right to terminate the contract without notice or prior warning. If you have a legitimate reason for subletting you may ask for permission to do so if there is no general reason which would make the subletting unacceptable. If you do not get permission to sublet the premises, you have the right to cancel the tenancy agreement without stating an important reason with a three months notice period.

Subletting an apartment in a student dormitory is possible for three months. You can also extend this to six months on request. Applications are available at the “Wohnheimsverwaltung” or “Belegungsausschuss” of your student dormitory. Nevertheless you will remain the main tenant for the whole period.

**Apartment Sharing**

If you decide to share a flat you should consider carefully who will be on the lease. Should the rental agreement be signed only by one person, this person will be the sole point of contact for the landlord/ landlady and will be legally responsible for rent payments and other contractual obligations. The other roommates will be subletting from the main tenant. Should every tenant sign the lease, they will be jointly responsible with respect to fulfilling the contractual obligations and rent payments. The rental contract must then be cancelled jointly by all tenants. If the tenants are likely to change on a regular basis this may become complicated.

**2.3. Before moving-out**

**Giving Notice**

As a general rule, you will have a three-month notice period as a tenant, unless you have made a different agreement. Further exceptions are fixed-term leases, student dorms, accommodation offered by senior citizens and furnished rooms. Fixed-term leases are only valid if a specific reason is stated on the lease as to why the contract term is fixed. If a reason is not given, the tenancy will be regarded as indefinite. For the landlord/ landlady the following notice periods apply: For a tenancy of up to five years: three months; five to eight years: six months; over eight years: nine months (for agreements prior to 1 September 2001 up to 12 months). However, there is a “new” form of fixed-term contract which stipulates a mutual agreement not to cancel the contract for up to four years. You should consider whether you want to get tied up in such a long-term agreement.

**Apartment Handover (moving out)**

You are generally responsible for undoing any changes made to the apartment when you move out unless you have agreed otherwise with the landlord/ landlady. It is also helpful to write an itinerary or protocol and perhaps even take photos in order to prevent any unjustified claims made by the landlord/ landlady. Do not sign a protocol that you do not agree with (e.g. obligation to repair damages), as the landlord/ landlady can insist on his/ her claims if you do. If you documented any existing defects and damages in the apartment when you moved in, you will be able to prove that you did not cause these damages.
3. Living in Aachen

Registering/changing your address

Registering address at the city registration office
If you intend to stay in Germany for more than 3 months, you need to register your address at the residents’ registration office at the Bürgerservice.
You should register your address within 7 days otherwise you may incur a fine.

Where to register?
For residents of Aachen and the surrounding areas:

Bürgerservice am Bahnhof (building next to the Aachen train station)
Verwaltungsgebäude Bahnhofplatz
Hackländerstraße 1
52064 Aachen

Bürgerservice Katschhof,
Backside of town hall
Johannes-Paul-II.-Straße 1
52062 Aachen
Bus stop: Elisenbrunnen

Contact for both offices:
Tel.: 0241 432-7777
buergerservice@mail.aachen.de

For the residents outside of the city of Aachen:
www.staedteregion-aachen.de

How to register?
To register your address, fill in the registration form below (Meldeschein) and present it with your passport:
http://www.aachen.de/BIS/FO/antrag-anmeldung_meldebehoeerde.pdf
Since 01.11.2015 you do also need a confirmation of your moving in given by your landlord ("Wohnungsgeberbestätigung"). You can find the required form and further information here:
http://tinyurl.com/q4um2wh

If you are a non-EU national the Residents’ Registration Office will forward your documents to the Foreigners’ Office, where you can apply for your residence permit.

Changes of Address
Please note that your address details must be kept up to date. Remember to notify the Residents’ Registration Office in person if you move.
Please remember that the university might also send important documents to you by post so it is important to update your contact details in CAMPUS Office.

Electricity
All electrical power points in Germany are designed for 220 volts, 50 Hz. AC and two point plugs. Any adapters you may need can be bought in electrical shops.

Garbage Collection
In Germany garbage is sorted so that the materials can be recycled. Packaging made of plastic and metal must be thrown into the yellow garbage cans or yellow garbage sacks. Paper and glass are collected separately. Sometimes even organic rubbish such as leftover food is separated from the rest. The remaining waste is for the black garbage cans. The garbage is collected once a week. For further information ask your landlord/landlady and refer to the city information page at:

Glass and plastic drinks bottles should be returned to the shop that you bought them from in order to reclaim the “Pfand” or deposit paid on many bottles.

4. FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

What do I have to consider when signing a lease?
• Costs: rent, deposit, utility costs. Some landlords/landladies charge a one-time administration fee.
• Period of notice: usually three months. Please check with your landlord/landlady on their terms with regard to period of notice.

Is a verbal rental agreement legally binding?
• Yes, it is. However, a written agreement is more secure. Should problems arise during the tenancy, both parties benefit if they can refer to a written document.

What do I have to consider when moving out?
• Is the room/ apartment in a good condition (clean, no damages)?
• Did I inform my landlord/landlady in due time about the move?
• Did the landlord/landlady and I agree on a time to handover the room/ apartment?
• Did I return all keys (building, room/ apartment, basement and mailbox)?
• Does the landlord have the correct bank account information to return the deposit?

Who can I turn to in case of questions and problems concerning the lease?
• You may talk to the landlord/landlady directly
• Housing Service of the International Office:
  Templergraben 57, 52062 Aachen
  Telephone: 0241 80 90681
  Fax: 0241/ 80-92662
  housing@rwth-aachen.de
I only receive letters of refusals. What can I do?

• Don’t get discouraged if you receive some letters of refusal at first – the search for accommodation takes some time!
• Apply for many different dormitories, apartments and rooms at the same time!
• What you need to keep in mind when writing an application:
  • Try to avoid grammatical or spelling mistakes!
  • Pay attention to forms of politeness!
  • Use a reliable e-mail address (otherwise your mail could get into the junk mail)
  • Always tell something about yourself – most landlords like to know which kind of person you are!

5. Accommodation Glossary

German terminology and abbreviations

3 Zi.-Whg three room apartment
3 ZKDB three rooms plus kitchen, hallway, bathroom
Abstand you have to buy some of the furnishings (e.g. built-in kitchen)
unmöbliert unfurnished
DG (Dachgeschoss) loft apartment
EBK (Einbauküche) built-in kitchen
EG (Erdgeschoss) ground floor
HH (Hinterhaus) back of the house (might have little light)
K (Kaution) deposit
kalt/KM (Kaltmiete) rent before utilities such as garbage collection, water, gas, heating
NR (Nichtraucher) non-smokers
KN kitchenette
Nachmieter tenant who takes over an old lease
NK (Nebenkosten) utilities costs (heating, water etc)
NMM (Nettomonatsmiete) net monthly rent
MVZ (Monatliche Vorauszahlung) rent in advance
Prov. (Provision) commission
qm (Quadratmeter) square metre (size of the apartment)
TG (Tiefgarage) underground garage
VH (Vorderhaus) front of the house
WG (Wohngemeinschaft) shared flat
WBS erforder. subsidised housing only rented to holders of a special (Wohnberechtigungsschein) permit (WBS)
Wfl. (Wohnfläche) living space
WM (Warmmiete) warm rent /total rent (not including electricity
Zi (Zimmer) room(s)
ZH (Zentralheizung) central heating
zzgl. NK plus utilities